Aggregation & Feeds
Aggregation & Feeds

With so much information available online it is now too time consuming to visit all of the websites you want to follow, especially if your students all have their own blogs. Aggregation is an efficient way to gather all the news/information/content you want into one place, saving you time.

RSS Feeds

RSS stands for “Really Simple Syndication” or “Rich Site Summary”, depending on who you talk to. RSS feeds make it possible for people to make content available online for anyone to “pull” down whenever they want it.

Sites that employ feeds enable others to access their content through their own set of preferred tools. Feeds are written according to a machine-readable standard that allows content to be portable. This means that a web site that publishes a feed can be read by anything that understands the standard. In turn, the feed can read by a person who might remix the content with their own and in turn, reuse that content.

How Do I Find A Feed?

Subscribing to an RSS feed of a web site you want to follow allows you to access the site content without actually going to the web site. To subscribe, look for an orange icon like the one to the right. There are a few other icons that also indicate a feed is available. Depending on the web browser you use you can find available feeds:
Feed Readers

Feed readers, sometimes called news aggregators, are software clients that collect the feeds you want to "subscribe" to. The reader then gathers all the latest news and posts from the sites you are subscribed to and allows you to read them all in one place. This is the part that saves you time because you don't have to go to each site and search to find the latest news. The reader searches for you and "pulls" the new content for you to read.

There are numerous readers available to use for free:

Web-based

- Google Reader - http://www.google.com/reader
- BlogLines - http://www.bloglines.com
- PageFlakes - http://www.pageflakes.com
- NetVibes - http://www.netvibes.com

Client Software

- BlogBridge - http://blogbridge.com/
- More clients can be found at the Open Directory Project:
  http://dmoz.org/Computers/Software/Internet/Clients/WWW/Feed_Readers/

Hybrid

- Firefox Extensions (web browser) - http://www.getfirefox.com
Google Reader

Google has an online feed reader called Google Reader (http://www.google.com/reader). To get started with Reader, go to the URL and sign in with your Google account (the same account we used to sign up for Blogger).

After logging in you will see the Reader interface. If this is your first time in Reader you will not see any feeds in your left sidebar.

Subscribe to a feed

1. Copy the feed URL from the web site you want to subscribe to
2. In Google Reader, paste the feed URL in the text box and press Enter.
3. You feed is added
Managing Feeds

After subscribing to a few sites you may benefit from organizing the feeds you're subscribed to. To manage your feeds in Google Reader use the MANAGE SUBSCRIPTIONS link at the bottom of the left sidebar.

Subscriptions are assigned tags so that they are easier to find and so that feeds with similar content can be sorted together. Use the drop-down box to add a new tag if the tag you want to use is not already there. Select that tag and assign it to a subscription.

Subscriptions can also be sorted by folders. The drop-down box on the right of each subscription entry allows you to select a folder, or folders to assign. You can also add a new folder from here.

When you are finished managing your subscriptions use the BACK TO GOOGLE READER link.
Reading Subscriptions

Your subscriptions are all displayed (or are sorted) in the left sidebar of the Google Reader interface. To read them you can either click on a subscription to see all unred content in the feed, or click on a folder to see all of the unread content in the entire folder.

While reading there are a few features to be aware of.

Clicking on the title of a post or the gray arrow beside it takes you to the original source of the article. This is particularly useful if a feed only part of the article.

As you read through your feeds items can be marked as being read. In list view, items are marked as read when you click on them. In expanded view, items are marked as read when you scroll past them. Uncheck the mark-as-read box to leave the item unread.

Sharing

There are two ways to share what you are reading in Reader - The Share button and email. Use the Share button to add an item to your public page. Your public page is an easy way to share items of interest with your friends and family. The Email button allows you to email the item to a specific person.