

RSS Ideas for Educators

Version 1.0

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<http://www.TeachingHacks.com>

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Should You Read This?

- With all the information on the web how can we make sense of it all?
- Wouldn't it be nice to be able to filter out what we want from what we don't want?
- Do you visit the same web sites again and again looking for new content; wouldn't it be nice to automate this task?
- Would you like to share great resources that you find with other teachers or your students?
- Would you like to have access to new tools and resources without having to spend hours searching for them?
- Would you like to make connections with other teachers?

If you have asked yourself any one of these questions then the answer that you are looking for is RSS and Atom feeds. They are here to stay and feed offers a new face to the World Wide Web that we are already familiar with.

What is RSS and Atom feed?

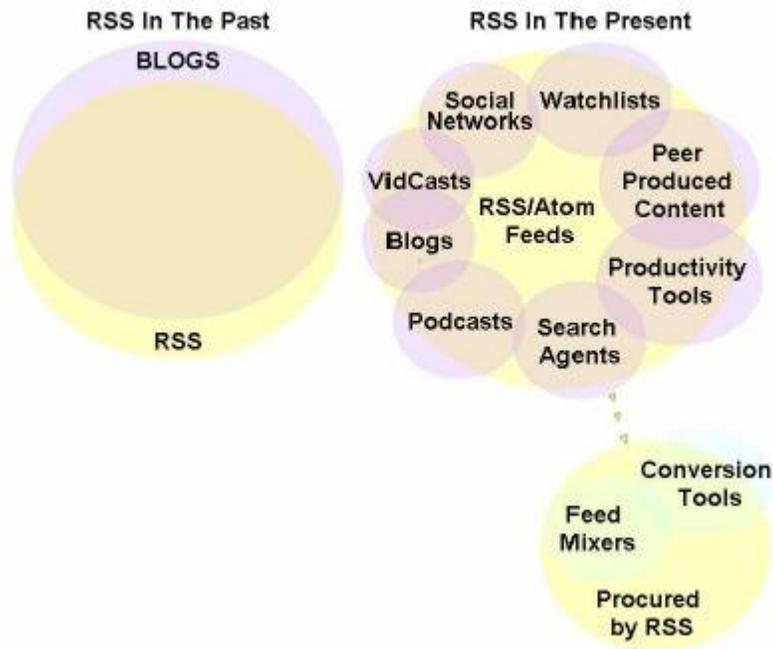
RSS is an acronym that stands for Rich Site Summary, though it's often alternatively defined as Really Simple Syndication. The simplest definition of RSS is an eXtensible Markup Language(XML) format that uses the Resource Description Framework (RDF) for representing information about resources on the World Wide Web. Similarly, Atom is another format based on XML technology.

You might see buttons like these:  

There are a few types of feeds commonly found on web sites RSS 1.0, RSS 2.0 and Atom. There is quite a bit of debate about which type of xml format is better, but for the purpose of simplicity I will often be referring to feeds as RSS.

RSS and Atom feeds are the structures that organize content which is being updated on a regular basis in order for others to retrieve it. This content could be articles, blog posts, photos, PDF documents, PowerPoint Presentations, audio files, video files, or other applications. If the content is the flesh of an orange

then a feed would be its skin. The skin keeps the flesh in place so that it is easier to transport.



In 2003, RSS was more commonly associated with weblogs, known as blogs. Blogs and RSS feeds almost seemed to be an isolated cause and effect. Where there was a blog, you would find an RSS feed.

As this visualization shows, RSS feeds can more recently be seen being used for many different purposes. Bloggers created a different type of media, by adding audio and video files as the primary content to their posts. Listeners can subscribe to their favourite audio blog, also called a podcast, and download the audio files to be played on personal computers or mobile devices. This created a media which resembles a radio show, where the shows are almost always archived for future listening. While video blogs, also known as vlogs, created a type of archived video shows. All types of web applications are using feeds to share data within social networks, through enhancing accessibility to productivity tools, research tools, watch lists, and sharing peer created content. The numbers of applications that are using feeds are growing daily.

New tools have come into existence because of RSS feeds and the trend seems to be continuing to grow. These tools allow you to remix and reformat the content of a feed in a countless different ways.

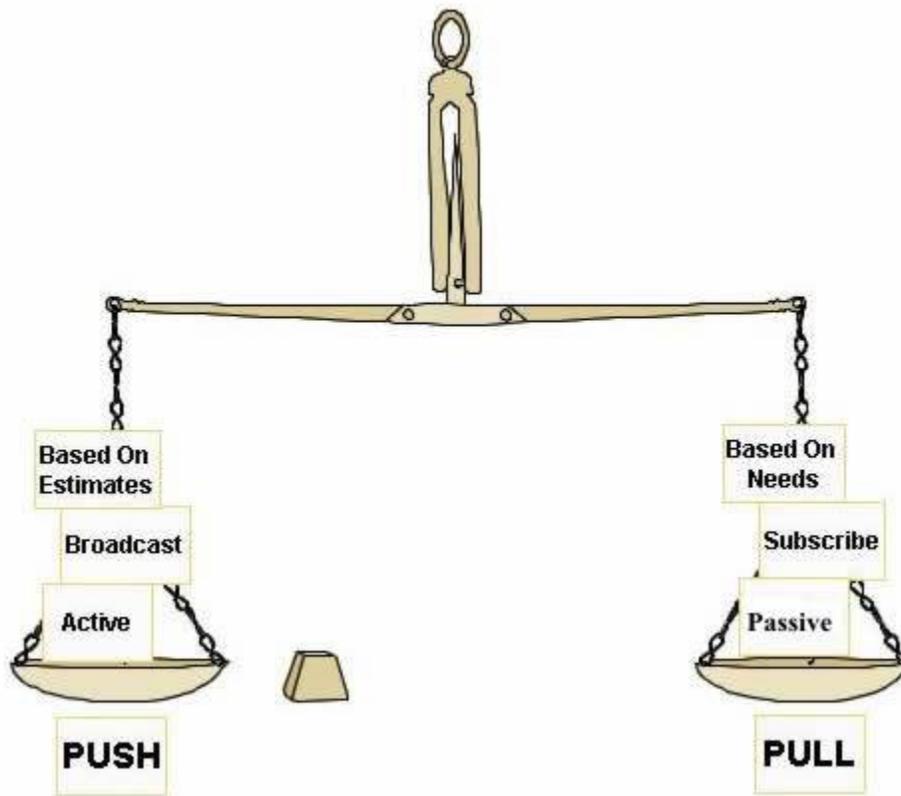
Web 2.0 – I didn't Know There was a 1.0?

There has been shift from a World Wide Web that is “read only” to a Web that is being described as the “Read Write Web.” Instead of content that was for the most part static, we are starting to see the ability to remix content in different ways, in order to suit our needs. The Web is evolving to become more like an area for social and idea networking. The web surfer negotiates the connections within a social or idea network, exchanges bits of content, creates something new, and then the cycle begins again. XML content, but RSS and Atom feeds in particular, is increasingly becoming a standard for sharing data between these web applications.

If you look at the idea of publishing web pages, we would consider the read web as something that was more inclined for the geeks. Where there was some need to understand a server-side language, use FTP, maybe html, or a number of tools to create and publish web content. Now, in less than ten minutes you could set-up a weblog on Blogger.com and have your first idea posted. It would probably take you longer to come up with the ideas for the first post than to setup the weblog. I would call this a transformation from geek to sleek.

What Does a Feed Do?

As stated previously, feeds are most commonly used with web sites that are frequently updated, like blogs and news sites. By creating a ‘feed’, the author can easily syndicate his or her content in a format that others can access by subscribing to the feed. When the author changes the content on the site, it’s automatically updated on the desktop or web page of every single person who subscribes to that feed.



Feeds are most commonly referred to as pulling, rather than a pushing technology. Pushing technology is broadcasting a message and hoping that someone will come by your website or your television station to listen to it. RSS is pulling technology because visitors subscribe to your message and can retrieve it whenever they want.

A person on the internet has access to a large body of knowledge, but they can use pull technologies like RSS to engage in people, resources and information when the need arises. This in itself is a shift towards a “just in time” type of approach to concept understanding.

Imagine that you have a list of bookmarks in your favourite web browser that you visit regularly. Sometimes the content on these sites are updated, other times they are not. What if your bookmarks let you know when these sites have been updated? Then you wouldn't have to waste time with the ones that were not updated. That is what feed **aggregator** can do for you.

How Can You Use Feeds?

The information contained in the RSS feed is accessed by a piece of software called an **aggregator**. The aggregator holds a list of web sites and resources that offer RSS feeds. When it's opened the aggregator retrieves the information from each RSS feed page listed. The aggregator may be a desktop application, a browser or mail application extension, or web-based, some of them are commercial products and others are freeware. A few applications already have aggregators built into them – Apple's Safari browser, Opera Web Browser, Internet Explorer 7(beta) and there are rumours that the next version of Microsoft Outlook will support feeds as well.

The following is a list of free aggregators:

Web-Based Aggregators

Bloglines - <http://www.bloglines.com/>

NewsIsFree - <http://www.newsisfree.com/>

Newsgator - <http://www.newsgator.com/>

Desktop Aggregator

Fuzzy Duck - <http://www.fuzzyd.co.uk/RSSreader/>

FeedReader - <http://www.feedreader.com/>

CITA RSS Aggregator - <http://www.seeita.com/RSSA/>

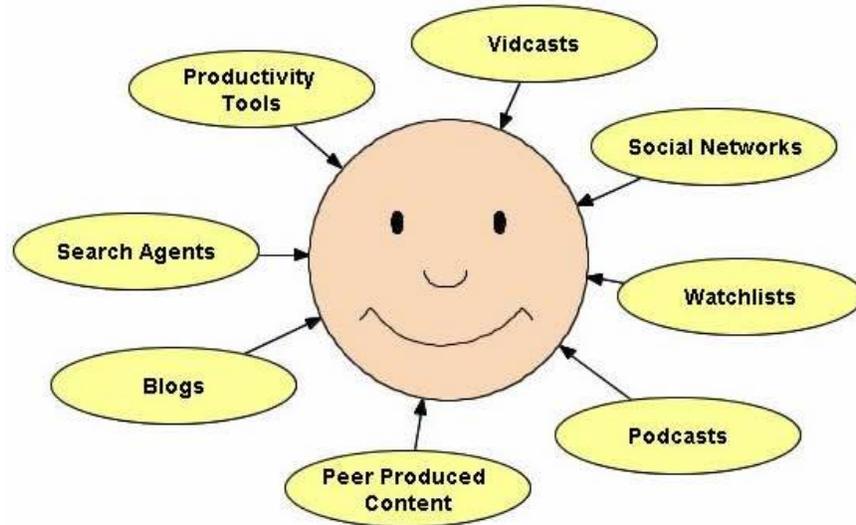
Extensions and Toolbars

Wizz RSS (Firefox) - <http://www.wizzcomputers.com/WizzRSS.php>

My RSS Toolbar – (Internet Explorer) - <http://www.myRSStoolbar.com/>

Attensa (Outlook) - <http://www.attensa.com/>

Another excellent listing of the different types of aggregators is found on Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_news_aggregators).



Many people use RSS feeds as a way to keep current on topics that are of interest to them. Rather than checking every web site they have found that relates to that topic, they subscribe to the RSS feeds for those web sites. When something new is posted to any of those sites, they will get the new information with the date of the posting, whether as a full article or as a title and summary with a link to follow for the complete article. The feed aggregator monitors the feed twenty-four hours a day, three-hundred and sixty-five days a year. Subscribing to RSS feeds saves the time of checking every single site that you access to find out if they have posted anything new.

For the most part these feeds are ad free, but advertising services like Google AdSense are starting to take advantage of RSS feeds by offering embedded targeted ads in the feeds of the content providers. There is an interesting twist to this, because the ads are in XML and easily identified, so some aggregators will block these ads. (NewsFire - <http://www.newsfireRSS.com/> for Macs and CITA RSS Aggregator - <http://www.seeita.com/RSSA/> for Windows)

Feeds can also be manipulated in a variety of ways. One example is the use of server-side or client-side scripts so you can quickly format and republish information from other websites on to your own website. One such example is Feed2JS (<http://jade.mcli.dist.maricopa.edu/feed/index.php>). This tool was created by Alan Levine at Maricopa Community College, where you can enter a feed, format it the way you would like it to appear on your website, and then you are given a bit of JavaScript code which you place on your website. When the feed is updated the content on your website is automatically updated.

Online web applications like Phone Feeds <http://www.phonefeeds.com/>, My Yahoo! Mobile RSS <http://mobile.yahoo.com/> and Lite Feeds <http://www.litefeeds.com/> make it easy to reformat RSS feeds for use in mobile devices like a PDA, Blackberry or mobile phone. Get your feeds over any type of internet connection. There is even a service called Feed Beep <http://feedbeep.com/> that will send SMS alerts to your phone or pager when feeds are updated.

Another feature of RSS is that it contains strictly content from web sites, it removes the eye candy that encompasses many web sites today. You will not see web site templates downloaded within an RSS feed, only the content that the web site is providing. A nice feature of some aggregator is the ability to create your own template and pull the web site content from your feeds into it. Now that is what I call web content customizability. You can see how this is literally changing the face of the World Wide Web.

Where do you find Feeds?

RSS is most commonly found in blogs or news web sites, but it is becoming more common to see on any web site that is updated frequently. Feeds help make web content a powerful communication tool.

You might see buttons like these:



These buttons help you to quickly subscribe to the feed based on the feed aggregator of choice.

You will also find many directories that exist to help you find RSS feeds on topics that interest you. Here are a few of the larger directories.



Top Left <http://www.bloglines.com/> , Top Right <http://www.technorati.com/> ,
Bottom Left <http://www.pubsub.com/> , and Bottom Right
<http://www.syndic8.com/>

Ideas to Get You Started

Social Bookmarking and RSS

1. create a set of resources that can be accessed on any computer connected to the internet
2. conduct research and share that research with your peers
3. track author and book updates

Create an account at del.icio.us(<http://del.icio.us/>) or Furl(<http://www.furl.net/>) to store, sort and share the web sites that you feel have worthwhile information for your students (and colleagues). Share your del.icio.us and Furl bookmarks with your class using their RSS feeds.

These web services use keywords called tags that are freely chosen by its users to organize the links, often referring to as folksonomies, rather than a predetermined set of categories. You will use tagging to sort shared photographs, bookmarks, and in other social software.

An RSS feed can be found on the bottom of almost every page within del.icio.us. You can use your inbox to subscribe to other people's feeds or by tag. The inbox merges all of these feeds together into a central feed. This central feed will keep track of all the bookmarks people are adding to the community that I have flagged.

You can also search through your bookmarks by keywords or by tags, and you can access your bookmarks from any internet connection or through a public feed based on your username.

Another similar service, CiteULike is a free service to help academics to share, store, and organise the academic papers they are reading. Because your citations are stored on the server, you can access it from any computer. You can share your library with others, and find out who is reading the same papers as you. <http://www.citeulike.org/> A great tool for writing and research.

Examples of a Teacher Using Social Bookmarking Sites:

Mr. Kuropatwa is using a Del.icio.us feed for Pre-Calculus and Calculus Classes. <http://pc20s.blogspot.com/>, <http://pc30s.blogspot.com/> and <http://apcalc.blogspot.com/>

Examples of Administrators Using Social Bookmarking Sites:

Tim Lauer - <http://del.icio.us/timlauer>

Automatically Adding Links to Any Web Site

By using a service like Feed2js (<http://jade.mcli.dist.maricopa.edu/feed/>) you can create a set of links or references and embed them in an online course, school or personal website. You are creating a personalized learning object for the class, which evolves over the term, by formatting your del.icio.us feed into JavaScript, and then placing the code on your website.

ePortfolio's

4. use blogs for real-world writing experiences
5. pull class blogs together into one area for easy tracking
6. prolong discussions outside the classroom or for q and a with guest speakers
7. quickly give feedback to students, and students to each other (no stacks of paper)
8. track student writing development

Have your students use blogs instead of paper journals for writing assignments. Services like <http://www.Blogger.com>, <http://learnerblogs.org/>, <http://epnweb.org/blogmeister/> and <http://www.schoolblogs.com/> are free blogging services that your students can join. Some are open to the public, others are password protected.

Both tools make RSS syndication easy. Students syndicate, you subscribe – and their journals are delivered to your desktop every time they update their blogs.

You can also use remixing tools to pull all the content of the separate blogs into a central location that has it's own feed. Tools like Suprglu (<http://www.suprglu.com/>) make this easy by adding the RSS feeds from the blogs that you want to combine and them gives you a template to choose.

Blogmeister (<http://epnweb.org/blogmeister>) combines blogging with the ability to approve posts before they are published. By using an approval system, you can work with students to polish their work before they post it for public comment.

Examples of Classroom Blogs:

- [Mr. Monson's Classroom Weblog](http://monsonclassroom.blogspot.com/) - <http://monsonclassroom.blogspot.com/>

- Clarence Fisher's [Student Blogs](http://classblogmeister.com/blog.php?blogger_id=2734) on Blogmeister – Toronto - http://classblogmeister.com/blog.php?blogger_id=2734

- Darren Kuropatwa's AP Calculus AB class blog on Blogger - Winnipeg - <http://apcalc.blogspot.com/>

- Room 208 and 209 Poetry Blog - <http://bobsprankle.com/writingblog/> - Mr. S and Mr. I Student Poetry

- Ms. Howard's Class <http://dl1.yukoncollege.yk.ca/takpilotblog/> - Yukon, Takhini Elementary

Comments in Blogs

9. encouraging students to help each other with their writing
10. use it for literature circle types of activities
11. get responses on a question without getting the same answer twenty times

Use the RSS syndication feature to monitor the comments in the blogs when using the comment feature to encourage collaboration among students and staff. An RSS feed for the comments are available on some, but not all blogs.

If students have their own blogs, the commenting feature makes it easy for students to comment on each other's work and share thoughts and ideas with each other. Encourage students to comment on each others' work offering critique, suggestions for direction and encouragement. Students who are shy in class often "come out of their shells" online. It's also excellent practice for real world collaborations. 21 Publish - <http://www.21publish.com/> If you are starting out with a class blog you might try having students respond to your posts and track the feeds, rather than each student doing their own blog.

Some blogs offer a multiple author feature which allows students to work together on a single project. All the postings are aggregated in a central area, but each student can contribute to this main space or comment on another student's work. If you are starting out with a class blog you might try having students respond to your posts teacher's and track the feeds, rather than each student doing their own blog.

Track Discussions

12. track classroom discussions from an aggregator
13. create and track responses to specific issues

A teacher may feel that a discussion board will better suit the needs of the classroom, than a weblog. Some discussion boards, like DiscussionApp from Server.com (<http://server.com/communityapps/discussionapp/>) are now offering RSS feeds in order for interested participants to keep track of discussions.

If you would like to create a disposable discussion board that you can use with staff or students try QuickTopic - <http://www.quicktopic.com/>. In less than two minutes, you can create a discussion board, invite contributors, and subscribe to the discussions RSS feed to keep track of contributions.

Sharing RSS Feeds

14. share a subject specific feeds list for students or peers
15. students sharing feed lists with each other

Another idea is to share a list of feeds around specific topics or on a subject area that includes search queries, blogs, research and other feeds. Use an OPML (Outline Processor Markup Language) file to import complete RSS feed lists to a news aggregator. OPML is an XML markup language that was created for outlines.

Using an OPML file you can link to a list of RSS feeds, and import them into another news aggregator to share with students or peers. One great way to use OPML is to create a linked list of all of your students' subscription lists on a particular topic and publish it in one central space so that all students can benefit from the feeds others have found.

Photo Sharing with Flickr

16. share, comment, and add notes to photos or images to be used in the classroom
17. embed your photos into your school or class web space
18. inspire writing and creativity

Share Photos of class and school events using Flickr. This service allows you to embed photos in a blog, web site and share them via RSS. It's a great way to give parents a peek into their children's school day.

Lewis Elementary Flickr Feed <http://www.flickr.com/photos/lewiselementary/>

Centre d'Apprentissage du Haut-Madawaska Flickr Feed
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/48336161@N00/>

St. Leo the Great Flickr Feed <http://www.flickr.com/photos/stleothegreat/>

You can also grab feeds from interesting local photographers and bring them into the classroom for discussion, or for writing inspiration. My current favourite feed is photographer Sam Javanrouh. - <http://wvs.topleftpixel.com/>

Community Building

Sharing Learning Object's

19. grab subject specific resources and make them available to students
20. grab peer produced and commercially available content on the subjects that you are interested in

According to Stephen Downes, one of the leading education bloggers in Canada, RSS aggregation "provides greater exposure of (education and training resources) to the wider community. Aggregation also promotes the reuse of resources and encourages the development of interoperable resources."

Downes adds that by creating repositories of 'learning objects' and making them accessible by RSS feed, educators can capitalize on each others' work in true collaborative fashion rather than reinventing the wheel.

At eLearningOntario for instance, educators and the Ministry of Education are actively working together to build a learning object repository. Learning object repositories represent one of the benefits of using Internet resources for education – reusability. The unit that you put together for your class and posted as part of the class blog can serve as a resource for another teacher on the other side of the country or world.

K-12 Learning Objects Shared Through RSS

I am also anticipating adding the Ontario LOR (<http://www.eduontario.ca/>) to this list, as I have heard rumours that it will include an RSS feed as well as aggregate feeds from different school boards.

UK Centre for Materials Education - <http://www.materials.ac.uk/index.asp> New and updated resources feed.

Edna Online - <http://www.edna.edu.au> You need to browse the learning objects or do a search in order to find the RSS feed.

Merlot - <http://www.merlot.org/> Provides 30 feeds.

OSAPAC - <http://www.osapac.org/> Learning materials and resources

Class and School Information

21. create a school website that can be easily updated and visitors can be made aware of those updates
22. create a classroom newsletter by using a multi-user blog for the different topics. I.E. classroom trips, sports, upcoming trips ...

Among the other benefits of using RSS feeds and weblogs in an education setting are the ease of sharing information from many sources, the ability to share the task of information publishing and the simplification of gathering and evaluating information from multiple sources.

A school website could be made up of a series of blogs that are interconnected, allowing each teacher to contribute to their portion of the school website, with the administrator as the aggregator on the home page. Pulling together and highlighting what is going on in the school.

At Centre d'Apprentissage du Haut-Madawaska, for instance, a blog has replaced the school's web site. The C.A.H.M. weblog links to individual blogs kept by students, teachers, department heads and administrators to present a dynamic and up to date picture of the school.

Each week, the school's director uses feeds from classroom and student blogs to post an update of what's going on in the school. The front page may include

recognition of students or teachers, short summaries of classroom work that's being done and information about upcoming events.

The RSS feed makes it easy to pull in and format all the information, and the recognition encourages students and teachers to post their work, questions and information.

Use your own Teacher blog or the classroom blog to keep parents in the loop about what your class is doing. RSS syndication is even easier than putting together a class newsletter – because everyone is working together to add content all the time.

Other examples:

Centre d'Apprentissage du Haut-Madawaska - <http://cahm.elg.ca/> - Clair, New Brunswick

Edgartown School - <http://www.edgartown.mv.k12.ma.us/index.php/learn/> -

Edgartown, Massachusetts

Goochland High School -

<http://www.glnk12.va.us/gateway/go/ghs/teachers/cjackson/> - Goochland County, Virginia.

Lakewood School - <http://lakewood.kpdsb.on.ca/> - Kenora, Ontario

Bloggng with Students

- 23. students using peer networks to develop their own knowledge
- 24. update new information such as homework and assignments

Estimates suggest more than 50 million people are blogging worldwide and the number is growing. Blogs are so incredibly simple to create and edit, that they are ideal for the classroom teacher.

Start a classroom blog to use for posting important information and sharing web resources. Students can easily keep track of the content posted to the blog through the RSS feed. By creating individual feeds for courses teachers can choose a few key resources, while students get the benefit of a subject specific feed.

A few examples:

- Mr. Redknap's Homework Blog [Grade 4](#) - Oshawa, Ontario (feed not available)

- Ms. Howard's Class Writing Blog <http://dl1.yukoncollege.yk.ca/takpilotblog/> - Yukon

- Mr. Tubb's Sixth Grade Homework and Student Blogs <http://jtubbs.21publish.com/> - Wyoming Middle School

Professional Development

Keeping Track of People

25. track the authors, journalists, and news that are important to you

Wouldn't it be great to have a feed for your favourite author, or journalist?

Some media sites, like CBC and TSN, already offer these - <http://www.cbc.ca/RSS/> and <http://www.tsn.ca/RSS/> The Globe and Mail offers feeds of your favourite columnist. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/RSS/> .

And who can forget Rick Mercer feed from blogspot <http://rickmercer.blogspot.com/>

Audio Professional Development on Demand

26. taking control of your own professional development

27. use audio books to enhance classroom programs

28. create a classroom radio show and publish it to an authentic audience.

Blogs with audio feeds are becoming more accessible. The flexible nature of RSS has lead to new tools that are being developed which allow you to convert any textual RSS feed into an audio feed. The free version of Talkr <http://www.talkr.com/> allows you to listen to up to three of your own blog feeds, as well as their feeds as audio files. Feed2podcast <http://www.feed2podcast.com/> is in beta and allows you to convert any RSS feed into an audio file.

If you are interested in finding some educational podcasters I suggest that you start off with <http://www.epnweb.org/> and <http://www.podcastalley.com/> There are also some really neat audio feeds are those that offer whole audio books to listen to on your favourite MP3 player.

Audio books:

<http://librivox.org/>

<http://audible.com/> - <http://feeds.feedburner.com/AudibleRSSFeeds-FreeAudio>

Podcasters:

<http://radio.cbc.ca/programs/quirks/>

<http://davidwarlick.com/connectlearning/>

<http://edtechtalk.com/>

<http://bobbybucket.blogspot.com/>

<http://www.teach42.com/>

29. add student essays, short stories or other written work into a shared blog. The conversion tool would then convert the text to audio files, so that students could listen to the podcasts to gain perspective on their work and their peers.
30. post student notes from classes into a blog and then convert them to audio feeds to help prepare them for assessments.

Video Professional Development on Demand

31. video professional development on your own terms
32. create your own subject specific videos with your students

Track blogs with video feeds, it is like getting "Video on Demand". Some blogs include audio and video files in their blog postings. The video files can be downloaded to your computer or played online. With new free online media storage solutions appearing on the internet - for example <http://video.google.com> or <http://www.ourmedia.org> - these types of blogs seem to be appearing more and more.

Free tools that can be used to extract/download video and search for new video blogs are iTunes (<http://www.apple.com/itunes/>) and Fireant (<http://getfireant.com/>).

A few video blogs that you might be interested in reviewing:

<http://tilttv.blogspot.com/>

<http://revision3.com/diggnation>

<http://www.photoshopguys.com/>

<http://www.teachers.tv/podcasting>

Personal ePortfolio

- 33. review, remix, produce and share content quickly
- 34. build connections with other educators

Currently there is a shift for teacher to share what they are doing or thinking with other educators. One of the beauties of this emerging use of RSS and blogs in education is how easy it is to share your ideas and your reflections with other educators. Keep a blog of your experiences, lesson plans and reflections as you go, and syndicate it through RSS so that other teachers can learn from your experience.

Teaching Generation Z - <http://gwegner.edublogs.org/>

Bud the Teacher - <http://budtheteacher.typepad.com/>

Remote Access - <http://remoteaccess.typepad.com/>

Smelly Knowledge - <http://forestfortrees.edublogs.org/>

Productivity Tools

Merging Feeds Together

- 35. merge and filter similar feeds together for gap analysis
- 36. merge many similar feeds

Combine a number of feeds using FeedShake (<http://www.feedshake.com/>) and then stick the feed in your aggregator. The result is a single feed that is formatted to your specifications.



New FeedShake started using [Magpie RSS](#)

Write feed addresses here

Welcome to FeedShake! FeedShake can merge, sort and filter multiple RSS, Atom feeds and Podcasts. Just write the URLs (complete addresses) of your feeds above, separating each one with a whitespace. (Include "http://")

New Feed's Title*: Link*: Description*:

Filter items which have these words: and/or doesn't have these words:

Create my feed

[Add to Google](#) [RSS](#) [Set up RSS Feeds](#) [News Feeds](#) [RSS Feed Directory](#) [What is RSS Feeds](#)

[My Feeds](#) | [FeedCatch](#) | [Help](#) | [Blog](#)

Also look at <http://allRSS.com/RSSremixers.html> that includes a list of RSS Mixers.

Consider a class of students that each has their own blog. By merging a set of student blog feeds and filtering for keywords I can get a feel if the content that I am trying to delivery or the point I am trying to get across has succeeded. You might also be able to identify gaps in the knowledge of these students or see what is specifically interesting to them in the classroom.

Finally, it is just convenient to have all the feeds aggregated in a central location for both you and students to view new postings.

To Do Lists

37. track goals and lists and take them anywhere

You can use these web applications to keep track of your life. Each of these online applications has different features, but the all share something in common, they are a place to keep all those lists that you have. And because they have RSS feeds you can reformat them and take them anywhere on a computer, PDA or even a cell phone.

What are your professional goals?

What do you have to do this year and when do you have to do it?

When do you need to start preparing for graduation?

When should you begin working on those course overviews?

Who is going to remind me of all these things?

List Services that support RSS	Ta-da Lists	43 Things	Remember The Milk	trackslife
URL	http://www.tadalist.com/	http://www.43things.com/	http://www.rememberthemilk.com/	http://www.trackslife.com/
Cost	Free	Free (ad supported)	Free	3 tracks for Free, then \$\$\$ depending on the number of tracks
Public List	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Private List	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Blog or Web Site Integration	hyperlink, RSS	Post to blog and 43things in one post, RSS	hyperlink, RSS	hyperlink, RSS
Group Items	No	No	Yes - Study, Work, Personal + more	Yes - Tracks
Tag Items	No	Yes	No	No
Add by Bookmarklet	No	No	Yes	No
Add by email	No	No	Yes	No
Social Networking	No	Yes	No	No
Reminder Service	No	No	Email, AIM, Goggle Talk, ICQ, Jabber, MSN, Yahoo and SMS	Email and RSS reminders
Geared Towards	Simple Lists	Social Networking	Listmakers	Listmakers
Repeated Task	No	No	Yes	No
iCalendar Support	No	No	Yes	No
Ease of Printing within Application	No	No	Yes - Weekly Planner	No
Downloadable	No	No	No	xml, csv, excel
Extra Features		43 places, add Flickr photos	Send tasks to your contacts	spreadsheet and database

This chart was developed by playing around with the different web applications and is not a definitive list of all features that these services may offer. Features offered by these services may change at any time, but are accurate as of December 2005.

Collaborating On Documents

38. track collaboration and team work to see if students are on task
39. identify the written portion of contributions by group members to the project or assignment

Students working on team projects do not necessarily need to work in the same geographic place in order to collaborate on a topic. Using some of the tools that they are already using instant messaging or the phone, and making use of new tools, they can work on the same document. Tools like <http://www.Writely.com> and <http://www.Writeboard.com> help to facilitate collaboration by offering an environment similar to MS Word to do writing.

What makes these tools extremely useful to the teacher is the ability to keep track of revisions to these documents through RSS feeds. By tracking the revisions teachers are able to see the type of written contributions group members make.

There is the ability to have any one of the revisions published for others to view in a read-only format. Students can post to a blog, open the document up to the world or a select a group of people.

Other tools allow you to compare different versions of a document by the written contributions of its group members. Each collaborators contribution is highlighted for easy identification.

Track Wiki's

40. collaborative document creation for the construction of meaning

A wiki, like this one, allows multiple authors to contribute and edit a shared document. Changes to the document are tracked, making it easy to revert to earlier version of the same document. The most commonly known and widely used wiki is Wikipedia (<http://en.wikipedia.org/>)

A wiki gives the classroom teacher the ability to offer the class a collaborative document to work on, negotiate meaning and construct knowledge. Instead of reading the textbook students could use research around a topic to help write a textbook. They might also add to the growing list of wikibooks available for schools, here are a few.

Wiki Books - http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Main_Page

The Free High School Science Texts: Biology
The Free High School Science Texts: Physics
Science for secondary school students
Regents Earth Science (High School)
Geometry for elementary school
Free High School Science Texts: Computer Literacy

Or for teachers...

Classroom Behaviour Management
Instructional Technology
Blended Learning in K-12

How does one monitor the changes to a wiki? Well first wiki's don't necessarily have to be open to the world, it could start off as something that is password protected, where users login to use the wiki. - ie. <http://pbwiki.com> One of the neat features of wikis is the ability to go back and revert to earlier versions of the same work. And of course you can track all the changes made to the wiki if your wiki supports RSS feeds.

Get Your RSS by Email

You can also subscribe to any RSS feed by email. If you use RMail <http://www.r-mail.org/> you can take any feed and convert it to an email subscription. When an update occurs to the feed you will be emailed the posting. If your email service supports rules and/or filters you can move all of these messages into a folder dedicated to the feed.

<http://www.squeet.com/>

Or Get Your Email by RSS

41. subscribe to newsletters and other services without giving away a personal email address
42. create your own RSS feed by emailing your own email account

You can check your email via RSS. Well I have shown you a number of different services that you might be interested in using in your classroom, but the last thing you want to do is give away your email address to a number of different service providers.

What if you are interested in keeping track of these services without giving up your email address?

Answer, get a disposable email address from one of these service providers, and then subscribe to your mailbox through an RSS feed to keep track of what is being received.

<http://mailinator.com/>

<http://dodgeit.com>

<http://www.pookmail.com/>

If you want to create your own feed of resources that you get by email you could forward your emails to the disposable account, and create a personal feed of emails that could be subscribed to by your peers.

Another method of checking your email through an RSS feed is using bloglines. You can create email addresses that show up as subscriptions in your account. Under the "Extras" section, there is a link titled "Create Email Subscriptions." When you give the email subscription a title you are given a unique email address. You may then subscribe to lists, newsletters or you could forward your email to receive through an RSS feed.

Reminders by RSS

43. add reminders to a feed using a remixer
44. send reminders to phones, PDAs and Blackberries by reformatting the feeds

Anyone who needs reminders can set up reminder feeds to be added to an aggregator as a method for keeping on task. A reminder can be setup for daily tasks or individual dates. You could use a remixer to mix into any RSS feed reminders about assignments, projects or other information.

Feed Me...
CREATE A NEW REMINDER FEED

TITLE*

START DATE* 01/09/2006 (MM/DD/YYYY)

END DATE: (MM/DD/YYYY)

LEAVE BLANK TO CREATE DAILY REMINDER

LINK:

E.G. <http://www.colorcombos.com>

DESCRIPTION*

PASSWORD:

OPTIONAL. ENTER TO RESTRICT EDITS.

PASSWORD: (REPEAT)

*REQUIRED

Reset Create

You can also get reminders via RSS - <http://www.reminderfeed.com/>

An RSS feed can be reformatted so that it can be received on portable devices. You could have the reminder feed appear on a student's cell phone or other mobile device, by using services like Lite Feeds <http://www.litefeeds.com/> and Feed Beep <http://feedbeep.com/>.

Calendars

45. make calendar events, homework, anything you want available on mobile devices connected to the internet

Just like the reminders, calendar feeds can be reformatted to appear on mobile devices. There are a number of calendar services that can be used for a variety of purposes in the classroom. You might consider posting district, school or class events for the school community. Students might use the calendar services to keep track of their homework or upcoming projects.

<http://www.RSScalendar.com>

<http://localendar.com/>

<http://www.trumba.com/>

Research Tools

Searching Newsgroups

46. keep current on subject specific information, get new ideas, make connections with other educators.

Keep updated on new posts to your favourite Google Newgroups <http://groups.google.ca/> through RSS. If you add the following `"/feed/messages.xml"` to the end of the url of your [Google group](#), you will receive updates of your newsgroup through an Atom feed.

If you are interested in a particular topic within a group of newsgroups you can use a feed merging utility to search through a series of newsgroup feeds for keywords and serve up to you the filtered feed from all the other feeds. You use Blog Sieve <http://www.blogsieve.com/> or Feed Shake <http://feedshake.com/>.

So say you are interested in the following newsgroups:

k12.ed.tech - <http://groups.google.ca/group/k12.ed.tech/feed/messages.xml>
k12.ed.math - <http://groups.google.ca/group/k12.ed.math/feed/messages.xml>
k12.ed.science - <http://groups.google.ca/group/k12.ed.science/feed/messages.xml>
k12.ed.soc-studies - <http://groups.google.ca/group/k12.ed.soc-studies/feed/messages.xml>
k12.ed.art - <http://groups.google.ca/group/k12.ed.art/feed/messages.xml>

But if you are only interested in topics related to "blog" in the "item" area of all the feeds, you can create a new feed and filter it so that only posts with the keyword "blog" appears.

Tracking People, Places and Things

47. if you are interested in a particular person, place or thing you can track new information being posted about your subject

If you are interested in what people are saying about you, your blog, your school, or school board. Try searching for a person, place or thing on these services and as new instances of the term are discovered you will get an update of them in the feeds.

<http://www.technorati.com/>
<http://pubsub.com/>
<http://feedster.com/>
<http://www.blogdigger.com/>
<http://www.blogpulse.com/>

Creating a Search Feed

48. conduct web searches and research while you sleep
49. use multiple search engines to conduct searches will you sleep

Search for your favourite columnist on Google News <http://news.google.ca> and then subscribe to the search as a feed. When new articles from this author appear you will be updated through your feed.

Create a search feed for school projects using Google or MSN to deliver new information on specific topics directly to your students. Here is a search feed using this query for science project ideas - "Science Fair Project Ideas" -(books) -(homework)-(volcanos) -(earthquake) -(tornado) K-12
<http://search.msn.com/results.aspx?q=%22Science+Fair+Project+Ideas%22+%28books%29+-%28homework%29+-%28volcanoes%29+-%28earthquake%29+-%28tornado%29+-%28college%29+-%28university%29+-%28shopping+cart%29+K-12&format=rss&FORM=R0RE>

You can also create a metasearch feed by building a library of exemplary search feeds for students to scaffold research for projects or you can use <http://www.Gada.be> to quickly create a metaserch feed. This is an excellent tool for searching blogs, news and web search feeds with a single step. Although, complex search queries like the one above become a challenge because the advanced search features don't translate well from search engine to search engine.

All you need to do is tack on “/opml” to the end of the url of your search query. For example <http://gada.be/d/Science-Fair-project-ideas/opml>, if you wanted to create a metasearch OPML on Science Fair Ideas. Save the page to your desktop as an OPML file and then just import this file into your favourite aggregator.

Newspapers

50. track your favourite columnist or topic in the news and bring them into the classroom

This is a large list of US newspapers which have an RSS feed.

<http://www.themediadrop.com/archives/001588.php#more>

And a few Canadian Newspaper websites.

The Toronto Star feeds page - http://www.thestar.com/cgi-bin/star_static.cgi?section=news&page=/RSS/rss.html

The Globe and Mail feeds page - <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/rss/>

The number of newspapers offering RSS feeds is growing, all the time.

Remember, you can use filters to identify topics and keywords that are of interest to you, and have them delivered to you.

Extreme RSS – A Few More

RSS to PDF Conversion

This RSS to PDF conversion tool is just plain old handy - RSS2pdf (<http://www.rss2pdf.com/>) You can take any RSS feed and convert it to PDF on the fly. This includes OPML, RSS and even feeds that include images. A great way to archive the conversations in student, teacher, or school feeds and pull them offline for storage.

Weather by RSS

Get your weather forecasts by RSS Weather (<http://www.RSSWeather.com>) which allows you to further customize their RSS feeds to your specifications.

Web Site Checker

This web sites tool at EhList (<http://www.ehlist.ca>), lets you know who links to your favourite sites.

It also doubles as a nice research tool that helps to triangulate the validity of information contained in a website by identifying the number and type of sites that link to the site that contains the information that you are validating.

RSS Contacts

Keep track of your contacts and share the information with your friends and colleagues.

<http://www.RSScontact.com/RSS2/>

Classified Ads

Use the feeds available from Craigslist (<http://www.craigslist.org>) to create feeds for watching the classifieds or job listings for listings that interest you.

MORE IDEAS TO COME ...

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