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## Changing the Ways the Libraries Reach to the User: RSS and its Applications in Libraries with Special Reference to Feedburner

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**Changing the Ways the Libraries Reach to the User:  
RSS and its Applications in Libraries with Special Reference to Feedburner**

By

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*Abstract*

**Purpose:** To describe the RSS technology along with its brief history and how it can be used by taking help from Feedburner in the library environment.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** The paper is based on the previous literature on the topic of RSS technology and experience of the author in using the technology for last 12 years.

**Findings:** RSS technology can be used effectively in the library environment to provide Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI) and Current Awareness Service (CAS) service to the library patron.

**Research Limitations/Implications:** The author has only basic knowledge of the computer coding, so, some other people who have more expertise in coding can find out some other usages of the RSS technology.

**Practical Implications:** RSS can be used in designing the readymade “News and Announcement” section of the library website or blog or digital library, auto posting to Twitter, auto generating the list of “New Arrival” in the Integrate Library Management System (ILMS), provide Email alert to the user and so on.

**Originality/Value:** This paper will be value to the webmaster of library website, blogger, developer of digital libraries and implementer of Integrated Library Management System (ILMS).

**Keywords:** RSS in Libraries, RSS and News and Announcements, RSS in Generating New Arrival List in Libraries, Atom, Rich Site Summary, RDF Site Summary, Web Feed, Really Simple Syndication.

**Paper Category:** Descriptive

**1. Introduction:** RSS is a web feed that allows applications and users to access recent updates from frequently updated websites in a standardized, computer or human-readable format without actually having to go and visit the website. In simple, whenever a website is updated by means of producing new content, it simultaneously produces a document that contains in it the full or summary of all the updates made on the website and is known as RSS or Feed or Atom or Channel and it usually has an “.xml” extension. RSS feed forms a condensed or simplified version of a website that runs in the background.

RSS assist the websites to distribute their content beyond the visitors using internet browsers to different web portal, news reader or in some cases through age-old Email in a form in which no user will ever miss a updates and able to keep track with the latest happenings in the website. RSS feeds can be aggregated or split in the form of widgets, gadgets that make it possible to display updates from blogs, podcasts and thus to achieve something like major news headlines around a topic of interest. RSS feeds are quite popular among the internet users who want to keep up with the information overload in a more or less organized manner.

**2. History:** According to Two-Bit History (2018) “RSS was invented twice. This meant it never had an obvious owner, a state of affairs that spawned endless debate and acrimony”.

In March, 1995, RDF Site Summary (RSS) 0.90 for the 1<sup>st</sup> time was created by Ramanathan V. Guha for use in My.Netscape.Com portal. It was not based on final RDF Recommendation but on an early working draft of the RDF standard. The RSS-DEV Working Group that consists of representative from O’Reilly Media and Moreover Technologies and Ramanathan V. Guha produced RSS 1.0 in December, 2000. It was based on the final RDF 1.0 Recommendation. Therefore, RSS 0.90 and 1.0 were not compatible to each other as they were based on working draft of the RDF standard and final RDF 1.0 Recommendation respectively.

AOL bought Netscape in 1998 and then Ramanathan Guha left the Netscape. In July 1999, Dan Libby who at that moment worked in Netscape produced Rich Site Summary 0.91 version. This version of RSS was relatively easy to use and remains the most common RSS variant. Netscape’s RSS team latter on abandoned the future development of RSS.

In December 2000, Dave Winer published RSS 0.92 specification on the UserLand web site which was a modified version of the RSS 0.91. It introduces the enclosure element which helps in podcasting i.e. transfer of audio files through RSS feeds. In September 2002, Dave Winer released Really Simple Syndication 2.0. In July 2003, UserLand Software and Dave Winer transferred ownership of the RSS 2.0 specification to Harvard Law School’s Berkman Center for the Internet & Society and thus Harvard Law School become responsible for the future development of the RSS 2.0 specification.

All these have fuelled ongoing controversy in the syndication development community as to which entity was the proper publisher of RSS. So, in part motivated by a desire to get a clean start free of issues surrounding RSS, an alternative syndication format i.e. Atom origin in June 2003.

In September 2004, Stephen Horlander created RSS icon for use in the Mozilla Firefox browser. The feed icon used in Mozilla Firefox browser were later on in December 2005, were adopted by the Microsoft Internet Explorer team and Outlook team. In February, 2006 Opera Software followed it. All these development made the orange square with white radio waves a standard icon for RSS and Atom feeds.

In January 2006, Rogers Cadenhead re-launched the RSS Advisory Board with a stated desire to continue the development of the RSS format and resolve ambiguities.

**3. RSS Auto Generating Softwares:** Almost all popular software packages that can be used to design and develop a website, blog, content management softwares, wiki softwares produce a RSS feed by default. For example Blogger (<https://www.blogger.com>) at <https://YourWebsiteAddress.blogspot.com/feeds/posts/default>; WordPress (<http://www.wordpress.com>) at <http://www.YourWebsiteAddress.com/feed/>; Drupal (<https://www.drupal.org>) at <http://www.YourWebsiteAddress.com/rss.xml>; Joomla (<https://www.joomla.org>); Wix (<https://www.wix.com>); Weebly (<https://www.weebly.com>) and so on.

In case of Integrated Library Management Software (ILMS) packages, Koha software, Digital Library Software packages like DSpace, ePrint and lots of other software packages produce the RSS feed by default.

**4. RSS Feed Management Service:** An RSS Feed Management Service provide one with a custom RSS feed along with the facilities to send updates from the RSS-enabled website to the reader by way of Email, managing Email subscribers list, view of usage statistics or analytics, linking to different social media profiles for auto updating and so on. Among all

the RSS feed management services, FeedBurner (<https://feedburner.google.com>) is the most popular one.

Name of the RSS Feed Management Service	Website Address
Feedblitz	<a href="https://www.feedblitz.com">https://www.feedblitz.com</a>
FeedBurner	<a href="https://feedburner.google.com">https://feedburner.google.com</a>
Feedio.co	<a href="http://www.feedio.co">http://www.feedio.co</a>
FeedPress	<a href="https://feed.press">https://feed.press</a>
SpecificFeeds	<a href="https://www.specificfeeds.com">https://www.specificfeeds.com</a>

**Table 1: List of a Few RSS Management Services**

**5. RSS Reader:** An RSS reader or feed reader is specialized software which interprets the RSS feed written in XML language and present it in a readable form for the human being. Using an RSS reader to view the XML document just looks like checking the Email inbox. RSS readers can be divided into two categories - online RSS reader and offline RSS reader. The following is a list of popular RSS reader.

Name of the RSS Reader	Website Address
Bloglovin'	<a href="https://www.bloglovin.com">https://www.bloglovin.com</a>
Comma Feed	<a href="https://www.commafeed.com">https://www.commafeed.com</a>
Feeder	<a href="https://feeder.co">https://feeder.co</a>
feedly	<a href="https://feedly.com">https://feedly.com</a>
Feedreader	<a href="https://feedreader.com">https://feedreader.com</a>
Feedspot	<a href="https://www.feedspot.com">https://www.feedspot.com</a>
Inoreader	<a href="https://www.inoreader.com">https://www.inoreader.com</a>
netvibes	<a href="https://www.netvibes.com">https://www.netvibes.com</a>
Newsblur	<a href="https://www.newsblur.com">https://www.newsblur.com</a>
The Old Reader	<a href="https://theoldreader.com">https://theoldreader.com</a>

**Table 2: List of a Few Popular RSS Readers**

**6. RSS Mixer:** The RSS mixer or aggregator combines two or more RSS feed into one. There may be instances when a website owner can have two or more websites or blog but s/he wants to send the updates to the same subscribers from both the website/blog. In such cases merging or aggregating the RSS feed is the option through s/he need not to bother the readers by asking them to subscribe to different subscription list.

Name of the RSS Mixer	Website Address
Feed.Informer	<a href="http://feed.informer.com">http://feed.informer.com</a>
FeedMiX	<a href="http://feedmix.novaclic.com">http://feedmix.novaclic.com</a>
RSS Mix	<a href="http://www.rssmix.com">http://www.rssmix.com</a>
RSS Mixer	<a href="http://rssmixer.com">http://rssmixer.com</a>

**Table 3: List of a Few Popular RSS Mixer**

**7. RSS Splitter:** RSS splitters are the softwares that split one RSS feed into many based on the existence of a particular word or phrase in the content of a post. For example FeedMiX (<http://feedmix.novaclic.com>) split the RSS feed based on the existence of a word in the content of the post. Even there are some software packages that produces one main RSS feed for all of the contents of the website and some other RSS feed for specific content, comments, keywords, tag, label or even for a particular search term.

**8. Feedburner:** FeedBurner (<http://www.feedburner.com>) is a web feed management provider presently owned by Google and was initially launched in 2004. FeedBurner provides RSS feeds management services to the webmasters and bloggers. One can burn the raw RSS feed generated from different software packages with Feedburner to have a custom RSS feed and to provide some more services to the users like Email alert, subscribing options to new posts and RSS feed, last but not the least can automatically link the Blog / Website updates to Twitter account via Feedburner's Socialize tab. There isn't really a good alternative to FeedBurner out there right now to burn the RSS feed. The service is free and easy to set up.

One will need the Feedburner feed for the following reasons.

**a) Change Management:** When one change website or blog platforms (from Blogger to self-hosted WordPress for example), one will often lose the feed address. Same thing happen when one changes the domain names. This means one will lose everyone that has ever subscribed to the website or blog's RSS feed in the event of change of the hosting platform or domain name. No website designer will ever wants such things to happen. Here enter the Feedburner to rescue. Readers subscribe to the Feedburner feed instead of the original website / blog's real feed. Feedburner then simply pulls the feed and forwards it on to them. If in the future, one ever has a change in feed address or URL, simply updating the feed in Feedburner will do all the required jobs.

**b) Providing Updates via Email:** In the event of subscribing to the Email alert by providing the Email id, every time the website/blog is updated the subscriber will receive an Email containing the recent updates in his / her Email address without actually having to go and visit the website/blog.

**c) Increased the Usage of a Website / Blog:** Feedburner help to convert a casual user who are interested in a particular website or blog to its subscribers via Email or in their preferred destination thereby promoting new content immediately to a user who were looking for that type of content in their past. Feedburner even provides with customized tools like to ping various feed-reading services in the event of posting or publishing new content and it enhances the chance of social media shares. One can also use headline animator or BuzzBoost to promote the website / blog in other websites or even it can be used to design and development of News and Announcement section of a website.

**d) Customization Option:** Feedburner provide option to change the RSS feed address without losing the subscribers, change in the name of the feed, change of subject of Email, change of Email delivery time, insertion of logo in the Email, change of Email address for reply mail and so on to match the website's brand look and feel.

**e) Auto Posting in Twitter via Feedburner:** The best way to use Twitter for the website or blog for those who do not have time is to link the Feedburner feed with the Twitter account through Socialize tab. After linking the Feedburner to the Twitter account, whenever a new content will appear in the website or blog, it will automatically be published over the Twitter account.

**f) Option to Subscribe to RSS Feed:** The website or blog owner can also display the customize RSS feed address obtained from Feedburner in the website so that if any user wants to subscribe to the RSS feed via feed reading services or reader he/she can do it. After subscribing to the feed, whenever, the user checks its RSS feed in the RSS reader, it will show the updates that were made in the website. Reading the updates of a website via RSS reader is the fastest and the easiest method to keep abreast with the latest updates from favorite websites / blogs.

**g) Gathering and Showing Analytics:** One can track the subscribers through Feedburner. FeedBurner gives the opportunity to see exactly how many people are looking at each item in the feed and how many of these subscribers are clicking through to the site. If any websites

are having more subscriber, then through Feedburner even one can show the new user the social proof (subscriber count) that the website / blog has already such number of subscribers.

**h) Redirecting Blogger Feed to Feedburner:** If one has a Blogspot blog, then they have an added advantage in using Feedburner. They can have the ability to redirect all the blog feeds traffic to the one burn with FeedBurner.

**9. Applications of RSS in Libraries:** The library can reach to different users across multiple platforms by just enabling RSS feed in the Library Management Software, Library Website, Digital Library or Institutional Repositories. In the event of availability of RSS feed, even, if Email subscription is not enabled, then also the user can subscribe to any RSS feed by way of Email updates through Blogtrottr (<https://blogtrottr.com>). Some of the major benefits of using RSS in libraries are as follows-

**a) Sending / Receiving Updates from Many Platforms in an Aggregated Form:** A library can have a website, library management software, and digital library softwares and so on. The new content added to a platform will appear in that platform only and if a user need to be updated with all new contents added to a site s/he practically need to visit each of the websites periodically. However, if the library merged the RSS feed of all these into a single one and burn it with Feedburner, then the user can stay updated to all the sites by visiting a single platform or receiving the updates via Email by subscribing to the aggregated feed. It can be compared with the library's age old Current Awareness Service (CAS) through which user will keep abreast with the latest posting without the need to physically visit it.

Subscribing to more website content at a time will also itself flood one's mail box and demand a considerable time to find out one's valuable Email out of the whole or to read an Email, shifting it to a required folder or to delete it, user need to spend a considerable amount of time. All these can be overcome by aggregating the similar feeds and later on subscribing it through a RSS reader.

**b) Cross Advertising in Different Platforms of Libraries:** The library can advertise the new article uploaded in the digital library or institutional repository or new books acquired and entered in the library management software in the library website and vice-versa. Even, the librarian can merge all the RSS feed of all platforms into a single one and put it in all platforms under a single heading like "Updates from Library".

**c) Sending / Displaying / Receiving Filtered Contents:** RSS makes it possible for librarian to piped the updates into special programs like RSS splitter to send / receive / display filtered contents that meet ones personal, professional or business needs. The librarian can also generate RSS feed that matches a particular word or phrase in the content of a post, tag, label or a search term and automatically send it to the user via Email updates or via Feed reading services or display it under different heading in website for example upcoming events, new books added to the library and so on.

**d) Receiving Updates in a Favourite Platform:** Some internet users may not like to come to a website to know about the updates. So, in such cases having the RSS feed will have an added advantage. RSS helps to push the latest updates from a website to the favorite platform of a user; it may be a RSS reader of his/her choice or in his/her Email inbox so that the user will be kept aware of the recent advances without the need to visit the website manually.

**e) Time Saving:** The RSS will save the time of the librarian in skipping the time needed to send the manual Email to the user about the recent updates from the library, to post and publish in the Twitter account of the library and so on. In case of the user, they need not to save the file in their browser's favorite folder or bookmark it and visit it regularly or constantly to check for the new updates irrespective of whether new updates are being made or not. Checking the RSS reader or subscribing to its Email alert will save a considerable

time from the busy schedule of website user by directly bringing the recently uploaded content to him/her.

**f) Send / Receive Timely Updates:** RSS will help in sending / receiving timely updates from the library website or content management system or digital libraries.

**g) Sending / Receiving Summary or Full Contents:** RSS may contain either a summary of content from an associated website or the full text. In all cases it will have a link to the original content.

**h) Maintain Privacy:** In the RSS environment, one doesn't have to disclose his/her Email address to others, if s/he wants to read it through RSS reader. The Email otherwise can be easily used by spammers to flood one's mailbox with lots of junk mails.

**10. How to Use RSS in the Libraries:** One of the best way of using the RSS feed is to obtain the raw RSS feed from the Library Management System or Digital Library or Institutional Repository or Library Website and then to burn it with Feedburner.

The Digital Library, S.B.M.S. College, Assam, India used RSS feed to display recent news, to send the new posting in the digital library to the library users by way of Email and to auto-post the news in the Twitter. The Biju Patnaik Central Library (BPCL), NIT Rourkela, India has used the RSS to display the New Books Arrival below the Koha Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC). So, the RSS feed in DSpace or EPrint can be used to display the recently added item in the repository or send it automatically to the users by way of Email and to auto-post it on Twitter. In case of Koha, the RSS feed can be used effectively to display dynamically the list of new document arrived in the library, to send subject based list of documents to the user of that subject automatically by way of Email or to auto-post in Twitter.

In the following some of the ways to configure the RSS feed are given.



**Figure 1: Application of RSS in the Digital Library, S.B.M.S. College**  
(RSS Applications are marked with Cursor Symbol)

**a) Subscription Option to RSS Feed:** One can enable the subscription option to the RSS feed of the library website or digital library by way of the following.

### Steps

- i) Go to Feedburner (<http://www.feedburner.com>)
- ii) Give the name of the RSS feed address
- iii) Click on **Next** button
- iv) Customize the **Feed Title** and **Feed Address** to meet the requirement (one can use it here the same title one has used in the Digital Library or Library Website).
- v) Click on **Next** button
- vi) Click on **Next** button
- vii) Select **Clickthroughs, Item enclosure downloads (podcast downloads)** and **I want more! Have FeedBurner Stats also track** and then click on **Next** button
- viii) Now the burned RSS feed is ready.

Now one can embed this RSS feed address along with the RSS icon in the website of the library or digital library so that users who are interested in it can subscribe to it via RSS reader or integrate in news portal.

**b) Providing Email Subscription Options to the Updates:** To provide Email subscription options to the content, kindly follow the following steps.

### Steps

- i) Go to Feedburner (<http://feedburner.google.com>)
- ii) Click on the RSS Feed
- iii) Click on **Publicize**
- iv) Click on **Email Subscriptions**
- v) Click on **Activate**
- vi) Now go to **HTML/JavaScript** of the library website or digital library and copy and paste the code obtained from Feedburner in the preferred place of the library website or digital library to enable the Email subscription option. Now when people will subscribe to the content via Email, the Feedburner will delivered the recent updates directly to their Email inbox. One can further customize the Reply-to Address, Email Subject/Title, Insert Logo of the Library, Set delivery time and so on.

**c) Display of “News and Announcement from Library”:** In most of the library website or blog or Digital Library there is a section which is called as “News and Announcement from Library”. Most people used to maintain it by manually posting the heading and link to the full content into it. However, it can also be achieved automatically by inserting the BuzzBoost codes of Feedburner. The BuzzBoost is a good way to promote the title of a post. The steps for this are mentioned below-

### Steps

- i) Log on to Feedburner (<http://feedburner.google.com>)
- ii) Click on **Publicize** tab
- iii) Click on **BuzzBoost** tab
- iv) Select “Number of items to display:” and in the “Open links in:” select “New Window”; and then unselect “Display feed title (or provide your own)”; “Display favicon”; “Display item author name (if available)”; “Display item content”; “Display item publication date”; “Show linked media from a podcast” and “Display link to feed” and then click on “**Activate**”.
- v) Copy the code excluding the codes available inside `<noscript>` and `</noscript>` and paste it in an appropriate place of the library website / blog or digital library where there is a need to place “News and Announcement from Library”. Now, if anyone will update any content in the Library Website or Blog the title and link to it will automatically appear in the “News and Announcement from Library” section.

However, when BuzzBoost is used, below the content “Headline by Feedburner” logo will appear. It gives an odd look to a good endeavor. It can be removed by inserting the following code in the <head> section of the website. The code is

```
<style>
/* Removes Buzzboost Logo (MBT) */
div #creditfooter{
display: none;
}
</style>
```

**i) Unordered List to Ordered List for BuzzBoost of Feedburner:** The BuzzBoost list by default will be an unordered list; to change it to an ordered list one can insert the following code just below the BuzzBoost code.

```
<style>
div.feedburnerFeedBlock ul li {
list-style-type: decimal;
}
</style>
```

**ii) Increase the Gap between Posts in BuzzBoost of Feedburner:** The following code can be used to change the gap between posts in BuzzBoost.

```
<style>
div.feedburnerFeedBlock ul li span.headline {
font-weight:bold;
display:block;
margin:15px 0 0 0;
}
</style>
```

**iii) Customize the Font Size of BuzzBoost of Feedburner:** To change the font size of the BuzzBoost, one can use the following code.

```
<style>
div.feedburnerFeedBlock {
font-family: arial, serif, sans;
font-size: 13px;
}
</style>
```

**iv) Customize the Height and Width of BuzzBoost of Feedburner:** To change the height and width of the BuzzBoost, one can use the following code.

```
<style>
div.feedburnerFeedBlock {
width: auto;
height: auto;
}
</style>
```

**v) Remove Bullet in BuzzBoost of Feedburner:** One can use the following code to remove the bullet in BuzzBoost.

```
<style>
div.feedburnerFeedBlock ul {
margin-left:0;
padding-left:0;
list-style-type: none
}
</style>
```

**vi) Providing a Box to BuzzBoost of Feedburner:** The following code can be used to provide a box to the BuzzBoost.

```
<style>
div.feedburnerFeedBlock {
border: 2px #999999 solid ;
padding: 0em ;
}
</style>
```

**vii) To Hide Title of a Post and Only to Display the Text in BuzzBoost of Feedburner:** One can use the following code to hide the title of a post and only to display the text of a post in BuzzBoost. However, to do this, in the BuzzBoost setting one should enable the “Display item content”, otherwise the system will display a blank section.

```
<style>
div.feedburnerFeedBlock ul li span.headline {
display: none;
}
</style>
```

**d) Linking Feedburner with Twitter for Auto posting:** One can link the Feedburner feed with the Twitter by way of the following. It will help in achieving auto posting of the new content from website / blog or digital libraries in Twitter.

#### **Steps**

- i) Log on to Feedburner (<http://feedburner.google.com>)
- ii) Click on **Publicize** tab
- iii) Click on **Socialize** tab
- iv) Click on **Add a Twitter account** button
- v) Log in to the Twitter with the user id and password and then click **Allow** button to authorize and add the Twitter account to Feedburner.
- vi) In the Feedburner account change the **formatting options** (select Title and Body and include Link).
- vii) Click on Activate or Save button to start the auto-tweet function.

**e) Redirecting Raw Feed to Feedburner Feed:** Some of the platforms provide the option to redirect the raw feed to burn feed like feedburner, for example Blogger, kindly follow the following steps to redirect the raw feed to the feedburner feed in the Blogger platform

#### **Steps**

- i) Go to Blogger (<https://www.blogger.com/home>)
- ii) Click on **Settings** from the Drop Down menu of the blog
- iii) Click on **Others**
- iv) Copy and paste the Feedburner feed in the box of **Post Feed Redirect URL**
- v) Click on **Save Settings**

vi) Now the Blogger feed will be redirected to the Feedburner feed.

**11. Conclusion:** Now-a-days majority of Integrated Library Management System (ILMS), Institutional Repository Software packages / websites / blogs produce a RSS feed by default. RSS is the marketing powerhouse and so if a website is not publishing its RSS feed, it is considered as its drawback. RSS helps to spread the message or send the updates to the user who wants to receive it in their favorite platform. It is the technology that helps people to receive the updates without visiting the original website. The Feedburner push the RSS technology to the next level by providing option to Email subscription, auto posting to Twitter and last but not the least promotion of the new content in the feed by way of BuzzBoost and monitor the usage statistics. All these can be easily used in the library environment especially in the Integrated Library Management System, Digital Libraries, Institutional Repositories, Library Website or Blog that generate a RSS feed.

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