RSS so Simple

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RSS

RSS, Rich (RDF) Site Summary, or as it is commonly known as Really Simple Syndication facilitates sharing of information by providing data in basic XML text files. These text structures are universally composed enabling web applications to use them building an RSS feed . RSS was created back in 1997 by Dave Winer as an attempt to push blog updates on Netscape home pages. Then it was carried out by Winer’s company to make weblog stand out from normal pages[1].

Dave Winer introduced what is commonly known now as “News Aggregator”, which basically is an application that reads a collection of news from various resources into a single XML-based format. It also identifies news pieces and orders them to be displayed chronologically in a single web page[3] . The mechanism of RSS is based on content publishing, mainly news or articles. When the information is placed within a site as an RSS document, it is registered with descriptive comments on several other directories for RSS publishers. Thus the information is globally positioned and a user with a browser or a news reader on his/her PDA (Personal Digital Assistant) can register or subscribe to read RSS-distributed content on a periodic bases[4] .

To be more specific, RSS has actually two branches, one is RSS 1.0 based on Netscape implementation and based on meta-data models in the form of Resource Description Framework (RDF). The other is RSS 0.91 which is more into an XML model building on XML namespaces structure[5] . For the casual user the difference is not visible because both models support syndicating news and headlines, however, the RDF Site Summary model is concerned with creating structured metadata supporting the overall concept of the Semantic web. The web of data in a way that globalizes the databases creating a structure that is machine readable as per the vision of the creator of the web: Tim Burners-Lee[5] . Semantic web and its use of RDF documents is not a stand-alone infrastructure, it builds on the existence of other applications that would be made available on the web and combine to build a common framework of information that is accessible and manageable in the form of queries that makes the web even smarter and data more tangible.

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In terms of structure, all RSS feed documents adapt the XML based format in spite-off the version adapted. The Extensible Markup Language (XML) is strict and uses the same convention adapted by HTML, however, there are more rules concerning format and structure . A basic RSS file would contain the following: First element is with a mandatory version attribute. The next element is comprising the main container for all RSS data The element is used at the top or within the item element The element indicates a URL that is what users subscribe to. It can be generic or specific to an item The tag details the RSS feed or its items The is the main part and has the headline, link, and the description described above [8] RSS has grown very popular with its icon available nearly in every single website. The main reason why users like RSS is that there is no need to subscribe using prolonged forms providing personal information and email authentication. As a result spam is not an issue with RSS, furthermore, stopping the RSS subscription is as simple as deleting the link without the need to send emails and wait for verification. In addition, RSS is highly compatible with many devices, especially, portal PDA’s and smart phones, thus updated information is available for uses on the fly regardless of their physical location [4].

My Conclusion

RSS is a revolution that we all welcome as the web becomes more and more accessible to more people across the globe. Finding RSS is as simple as clicking the icon within any website to have the browser or any program at the user register with this site to receive feed.

RSS directories are also available such as www.rssfeeds.com. The directory offers search facilities to support digging for different categories. A nice feature in the site is the ability to validate the RSS link, this is important due to the fact that just like websites, RSS links can become inactive as their content seize to exist.

Another site that is a good resource for RSS news update is www.newsisfree.com. Visitors can subscribe to a wide selection of news feed specific to the type of news they need, it being medical, social, entertainment, or business oriented. Furthermore, popular sites like cnn.com, howstuffworks.com and many of those who provide specific information like webmd.com provide links that RSS news reader can access to get daily updates. This by far is the most single point-of-difference that makes RSS stand out as a revolutionary technology. Another point of strength is that RSS is based on an open technology that follows W3C standards. XML, RDF, and HTML all work under an infrastructure that is 100% compatible, setting the platform for RSS is simply part of what has already been established, and this is why RSS can only expand as the web continues to evolve. References

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