



Online community.
Real-world impact.

3 Ways to make your nonprofit more effective with RSS aggregation

by Alexandra Samuel
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RSS aggregation is a powerful tool that can help nonprofits communicate more effectively, both internally and externally. Here's a quick take on three ways that RSS aggregation can help your nonprofit:

Automatically populate websites with content

It's very expensive to create original content on a regular basis. But you can set up a series of RSS feeds on a particular topic that can pump useful content onto your organization's web site. For example, an organization that advocates for women with HIV might create an RSS-driven news section on its web site that pulls relevant web resources from del.icio.us, photos from Flickr, and blog posts from Technorati (the trick is to set up the search as a "watchlist", and then subscribe to the RSS feed for the watchlist.)

Choose a team tag

Choose a tag that your staff, board and volunteers can use to share information and resources. Encourage your team to use del.icio.us, Furl or another social bookmarking service to save web resources they find personally useful or want to share with the team. Encourage bloggers to use that tag on any post they want team members to read. And then make sure your team monitors the tag regularly by visiting your media monitoring site, or adding the RSS feed for the tag to their personal home pages in Google.

What is RSS?

RSS stands for "really simple syndication". It's a format for storing online information in a way that makes that information readable by lots of different kinds of software. RSS has two main uses: it lets people read lots of different news sources in one place using a newsreader, and it lets people republish and remix content from other sites using aggregation.

For an overview of RSS and how to get started, visit <http://www.socialsignal.com/rssocracy>

Create a media monitoring site

You can create a media monitoring tool for internal use only. Something as simple as a Bloglines account can become a clearinghouse for information that helps with your work. That can include RSS feeds for Google or Yahoo news searches on particular search terms; del.icio.us feeds for resources related to your work; or news feeds for major publications in your field.

Most nonprofits would benefit from setting up a media monitoring site with RSS feeds that cover the following:

- Search of major news feeds (try Google News or Yahoo News) for the name of your organization, acronym (if any), major sub-brands/projects, and/or name of your organization's President/E.D.
- Search of major news feeds for keywords on the issues you need to track. Play with the search terms until you get the right volume of news.
- Search of blogs (using Technorati or Feedster) for your organization and name of your organization's President/E.D.
- Search of blogs for your issue keywords.
- del.icio.us, Furl & Flickr tag pages for your organization's name and key issue areas. Don't forget that del.icio.us lets you set up feeds that are narrowed down by using multiple tags (e.g. <http://del.icio.us/rss/tag/healthcare+policy>)
- del.icio.us, Furl & blog (Technorati/Feedster) search on your chosen team tag (see below)
- For a local organization, search feeds that search your issue keywords within the news feeds for all your major local papers and broadcast outlets (you can set up a Bloglines account that includes all your local media, then set up a keyword search that searches all the feeds in your account; then set up a second Bloglines account as your main media monitoring site, and subscribe to the keyword search from the first account).

For the original full version of this article see <http://www.socialsignal.com/nonprofit-RSS>



Online community.
Real-world impact.

Engage audiences

*with an online presence
where your users generate the content.*

At Social Signal, we're experts at turning site visitors into site contributors. Our practice is based on a decade of research into online participation, a decade of experience in online campaigning, and more than twenty-five years of collective wisdom on social marketing, strategy and communications.

Build trust

*with a public whose interests and values
are reflected on your site.*

Social Signal has a proven ability to create online communities that foster a trusted relationship between your organization and your site's users. Through user-created content, a successful online community brings you closer to your audience – because it ties your identity directly to an online presence that intimately reflects your audience's interests and values.

Deepen relationships

*with a community that cares
about your mission as much as you do.*

At Social Signal we recognize that your online community efforts are tied to real-world goals, and keep all our online efforts focused on your real-world success. An online community isn't an end in itself. Online community matters because it connects real-world people and organizations... helps us to be more effective and satisfied in our real-world work and lives... and, at its most powerful, triggers positive change in the real world.

Our team

Alexandra Samuel, CEO

Alexandra is an online strategist whose recent projects include launching telecentre.org's web network and developing the online community for NetSquared. Alexandra holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from Harvard University, where she researched new frontiers in online political engagement.

Rob Cottingham, President

Rob is a seasoned communications strategist and veteran speechwriter whose recent projects include creating the Confederation web site, a window on election blogging, and launching Vancity's ChangeEverything.ca. Rob maintains a long-running blog at robcottingham.ca and writes SpeechList, a free e-mail newsletter on speechwriting.

Catherine Winters Manager, Virtual Worlds

Catherine is one of Second Life's oldest and most respected continuous users. Better known by her Second Life name, Catherine Omega, she recently co-authored *The Official Guide to Second Life*. She is a leading expert on Second Life's LSL scripting language, and the administrator of the LSL Wiki, Second Life's primary scripting reference.

Pravin Pillay, COO

Pravin's extensive leadership experience speaks to his talent for bringing together governments, business and non-profits. His varied career has ranged from working with Doctors Without Borders to launch their Canadian chapter, to directing special projects for the federal agency Youth Service Canada. He holds an MBA from McGill University.

Aaron Pettigrew, Web Services

Aaron is a principled technology enthusiast whose recent work includes configuring and supporting NetSquared.org and ChangeEverything.ca. A former member of IndyMedia, Aaron's film and web work includes the online stop-animation project vitaminbike.org.

