



News on Demand

Three paths can be followed to find current news reports. The previous Internet Browser column (ARIZ. ATTORNEY, July/August 2005) mapped out one approach: Find a single news source, such as the online edition of a newspaper. The single-source method provides a Web page with a menu of news stories and other features. This is a fine way to browse the news of the day.

When you want more about a particular news story or information on a broader topic, however, you need more than one source. Other paths to news information collect multiple sources on a single subject.

One technique is the specialized search. This is far more efficient than checking a succession of Web sites for the story on each one. One flaw is that a search can result in multiple versions of an identical wire service story as published by different sources.

Specialized search engines look only at news sources, not the entire Web. Increasingly, though, these sources include blogs as well as traditional news outlets.

Search engine giant Google is a major player in news searches with its site, <http://news.google.com>. Google updates 4,500 news sources every 15 minutes and

allows searches and browsing by category (such as sports). Google offers news alerts via e-mail. The archive is limited to the previous 30 days.

Another news specialist is Feedster, at feedster.com. Feedster looks at "RSS news feeds"—more about that in a moment—rather than Web pages. But it works like a conventional search engine. Its site indexes more than 7 million news feeds (including blogs) several times per hour.

A search engine with a transatlantic flavor, with news stories from both sides of the big pond, is Britain's News Now (<http://newsnow.co.uk>). It is distinctive in offering drop-down menus to show stories within topics and in providing links to press releases. Another site with an international emphasis is www.worldnews.com. It offers regional news "channels" across the globe, plus news searches in 24 languages and news updates via e-mail.

When your interest is a topic, whether it is sports or international relations, there are better options yet. A customized Web page can produce headlines in your areas of interest. Yahoo offers pages customizable for both content and layout at <http://my.yahoo.com> (you must register to customize). Google News also allows registered users to customize for layout and content.

Topix.net tackles the topic challenge by creating more than 300,000 topic-specific Web pages. Some pages, such as a "front page" and world news page, are accessible by clicking; tap into others via a search query. Among its advantages are news pages


devoted to U.S. cities and ZIP codes, individual sports teams and corporations. Topix also offers news alerts via e-mail.

But there is something arguably even better: RSS news feeds direct to your desktop. (By the way, no one is certain what "RSS" stands for, but the leading candidates are "Really Simple Syndication" or "Rich Site Summary.") Although RSS is relatively new, its users number in the millions, and its popularity is soaring.

The short explanation of RSS is that it uses dynamic Web sites to provide a frequently updated feed of headlines—no graphics, no ads, no extra content. RSS software periodically checks specific feeds among the millions available.

Many news search engines and topic sites rely on RSS feeds for their content. But you don't need a Web site as an intermediary: You can install software that grabs the news feeds and places them on your desktop. That means that news headlines on subjects you specify can be delivered to you, and you can then click on the headline to read the article from its source via the Web. You get an up-to-the-minute, automatically updated, personally tailored executive news summary, with the news itself just a click away (see the sidebar on finding and using RSS feeds).

Traditional news media are already on the RSS bandwagon. Everyone from the *New York Times* to the BBC has RSS feeds, and most have not just one, but many feeds categorized by topic. RSS feeds also are used by bloggers and are making inroads into online shopping, too, with e-tailers such as Amazon and eBay using them to notify customers of updated offerings.

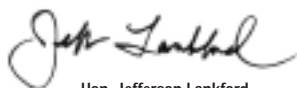
Installing and configuring the RSS software, known variously as a reader or an aggregator, is not difficult. Many readers are available free. Many of the sites listed in this article contain links to RSS reader download sites. 

News to You Via RSS Feeds

How do you find an RSS feed? When at news sites, look for a link that says "RSS" or a small orange button that says "XML." Those signify that an RSS feed is offered and contain the URL you need to subscribe to the feed. RSS feeds also can be found in listings by third parties, such as the Syndic8 Project (syndic8.com). This site also contains helpful information on RSS feeds, such as tutorials.

Questions or tips about the Internet? E-mail them to sidebar@cox.net.





Hon. Jefferson Lankford is a judge on the Arizona Court of Appeals, Division 1.