What is RSS and How Do I Use It in Chrome?

What is RSS?

RSS stands for “Really Simple Syndication” and it is an easy method to get information out to users. It is denoted by an orange RSS symbol.

As a familiar example, the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service uses RSS to display news articles on home page http://www.uaex.edu. The UAEX Calendar of Events also provides an RSS feed to display event information. Instructions for subscribing to each of these feeds will be shown below.

With the amount of information being dispensed by our county agents and state specialists each week, we have developed specific RSS feeds for each county so that our clientele can have information delivered directly to their browser without having to go to individual county web sites to see what is new. With RSS feeds and RSS subscriptions, the information is delivered automatically to the subscribed users’ web browsers when it is posted.

What is a News Feed Reader?

When information comes across in an RSS feed, it is not always in a format easily displayed by certain browsers. A feed reader is a piece of software that acts a transition between the RSS feed code and the browser to display and manage the feed correctly. Some browsers have Feed Readers built in; some have to be added to the browser.

How do I subscribe?

Each browser (Internet Explorer, Safari, Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox) has a different method of subscribing to an RSS fee. To begin, each RSS feed has a unique web address, also known as a URL. Here are three examples of RSS feeds that are currently used by Extension:


Miller County News Articles: http://uaex.edu/counties/miller/news/miller-news-all.xml

Extension Calendar of Events (all events):
http://calendar.uaex.edu/feed/main/eventsFeed.gdo?f=y&sort=dtstart.utc:asc&fexpr=(categories.href=%22/public/bedework/categories/sys/Ongoing%22)%20and%20(entity_type=%22event%22%7Centity_type=%22todo%22)&format=text/calendar&count=200

Each type of browser has a unique method of subscription. Some browsers, such as Chrome, require that the user install an “add-on” to see the RSS feed correctly. Other browsers, such as IE, have the feed reader built in. Instructions for particular browsers are outlined below.

What does an RSS Feed look like using Google Chrome?

1. Open Chrome and add the RSS feed for Miller County News Articles in the address bar.
2. The Google Chrome browser does not come with a built in feed reader; it will require an “add-on”. If the browser displays text that looks like “code” (as seen below), then the browser is not configured to display the RSS feed properly and needs the add-on.

3. To find the correct add-on for Chrome, Google “chrome RSS”.
The two links displayed are to a free “add-on” available to add to the Chrome browser to make the RSS feeds display properly. Selecting the first link (https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/rss-feed-reader/pnjaodmkngahkiohejehlcdnohmp?hl=en) will take the user to the “store” to download the “add-on”. Select the blue button to “Add to Chrome” (highlighted by red box below).
The user will be asked to confirm the new extension. Select “Add”.
The extension is now added, and the orange RSS symbol is now at the end of the address line on Chrome.

Go back to the Chrome page with the Miller County News feed.
Select the orange RSS symbol (shown in red block above).
Select the + sign to add feeds.

Since the browser is currently on a page with a news feed, it will automatically add this URL to the box.
Click on the green “FOLLOW” button.
Selecting the “Miller County News Articles” link above shows the titles of all the articles:
Selecting the first title displays the article on the web:

Once the feed reader is installed and a web site is visited which has an active RSS feed, a green plus symbol will appear in the orange RSS symbol. In this example, http://www.arkansasonline.com was visited.

Selecting the RSS icon will start the process to subscribe to the feed.

When new, unread items are detected on a feed, the orange RSS icon will show the number of unread items in red:

This lets the user know there are items waiting to be read by selecting the RSS symbol, selecting the title of the feed to be read, and then selecting the title of the article.

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