

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

A QUARTERLY SUPPLEMENT EXCLUSIVELY FOR
THE INFORMATION ADVISOR READERS

IN THIS ISSUE LUIGI CANALI DE ROSSI, A MEDIA PROFESSIONAL BASED IN ROME, EXPLAINS THE ROLE OF THE RSS NEWSMASTER IN THE INFORMATION INDUSTRY.

Not Enough New Roles and Titles? How About “RSS NewsMaster?”

The journalist and blogger J.D. Lassica has referred to using RSS as “speed reading the Net.” In fact, we have discussed how RSS can indeed be a very effective tool for dealing with information overload and streamlining news searching. (See *The Information Advisor*, November 2003, Vol. 15, No. 11, p.5.)

We also recently came across a much broader perspective on RSS, proposed by Luigi Canali De Rossi, a new media professional, communications entrepreneur, trainer, and blogger based in Rome who also goes by the name “Robin Good.” He suggests that, by creating and managing specific RSS news channels of value to their organization, information professionals can carve out a new role for themselves that he calls the “RSS NewsMaster.” (The original discussion is available on his site at www.masternewmedia.org/2004/03/02/the_rss_newsmaster.htm.)

We were intrigued enough by this concept, as well as by Canali De Rossi’s other stimulating analyses on the flow of online news, information, and communication, to pursue this idea and ask him to expand his thoughts on this notion. An edited transcript of our discussion appears to the right.

Q. So I can be sure that I understand your definition of RSS NewsMaster, would it be accurate to say that you are suggesting:

the information specialist can create a kind of customized online news site for their firm that focuses specifically on the topic(s) of highest interest to their organization, by using RSS Readers (and other tools) to create narrow, niche news services that pull from online news sites and blogs on topic? For example, one could create an RSS Feed titled “Canadian Drug Import News” or “Non-GMO, Organic Vegetable Marketing Alert,” etc.—whatever topics people in the organization need to track?

Yes, that’s it exactly.

Q. How does the emergence of the RSS NewsMaster role intersect with what is currently considered knowledge management in an organization?

Knowledge management in my view is all about making key, tacit, and often unorganized information a usable asset for the modern-day organization. The missing point in this effort is the realization that the fulcrum around which this tacit knowledge circulates is the *individual* and the process through which he or she can gather, edit, and share/publish this information inside the organization and *not* around the technologies that allow for the organization and management of the actual content.

Continued on page 2...

The Information Advisor™

Best Friend of the Information Professional

For anyone who uses data on industries, markets, companies, new products, and high technologies, *The Information Advisor* provides:

- Comprehensive evaluation of research tools;
- Timely and specific information you will use;
- New sources valuable to researchers;
- Head-to-head analysis of the most popular information services.



The Information Advisor™

...continued from page 1

The more the individual can share, organize, republish, and make available the information he uses and creates, the easier it will be with information vehicles like RSS to later tap, search, filter, and reorganize in multiple ways the actual relevant information bits. It is only then, once this individual-centered process has been kick-started, that sophisticated and behind-the-stage KM technologies can start doing an effective job at extracting more usable information from what is out there.

Q. Why is RSS so important and powerful vis-à-vis other news alerting tools?

Through the collective syndication and filtering process that we are starting to adopt, all of us participate in a meta-process of filtering and aggregating the information and news that we believe to be relevant to specific topics.

Though we act often on serendipitous self-interests, our collective result is a new layer of published information that is filtered, selected, and picked with great precision and relevance.

Creating very focused news channels may indeed be for many of us a very “selfish” interest, one that serves exclusively our personal business interests, with no attention to the well-being and benefit of society at large. But, if NewsMasters understand the economics of this and let most of their RSS-based news channels become available for the public at large to tap in, they naturally provide an enormous social service to all others by making available relevant, already filtered, and well-organized information on many specific topics.

Bloggers and independent news publishers are the effective real-time filters for the increasingly vast ocean of information available out there. Without them we would be submerged by irrelevant news and information. The organizing and filtering layer they unconsciously create is the only method for effectively organizing our knowledge and making it accessible in real time in meaningful ways.

Q. Is “RSS NewsMaster” your own term?

Yes, it is. I coined this term based on the word “Webmaster.” I specifically wanted to have a word that easily conveyed the idea of someone managing and directing the tremendous information/news flow that is all around us.

The NewsMaster is an individual capable of personally crafting RSS-based specialized information channels by utilizing technologies that allow him or her to select, aggregate, filter, exclude, and identify quality news, information, content, tools, and resources from the

whole universe of content, news, and information available on the Internet.

With this new search and filtering approach, we can all start generating better and more refined information channels, as we become able to aggregate, select, and filter the most relevant content according to extremely sophisticated criteria and long-nurtured, selected source lists.

Q. How is all this carried out?

The key technology to this is a combination RSS aggregator, news and Web search engine—a filtering and cross-media publishing tool combined into one. Some NewsMasters carry this out by utilizing multiple tools, while others prefer to rely on one unique solution.

Q. Can you provide any examples of RSS NewsMastering efforts?

Yes, there are indeed several individuals, both inside and outside organizations, who have already caught onto this.

Here are a few examples of NewsMastering work:

1. Stephen Downes—Edu_RSS
www.downes.ca/cgi-bin/xml/edu_rss.cgi
2. MasterViews
www.masterviews.com
This is my own initial approach to NewsMastering with the automatic generation of a news page focusing on presentation, information design, and PowerPoint resources and skills.
3. Infosec Daily
infosecdaily.net
More than 11 dozen news feeds and more than 100 blogs aggregated to give a picture of the information security space.

Q. If librarians were to do this for their organizations, what would you see as the primary benefit and value to their staff and to the organization as a whole?

There are several major benefits in leveraging this approach to researching and gathering information. Let me mention the most important ones:

- a. the ability to create specialized news channels specifically targeted at topics and issues the organization is interested in
- b. the ability to let other knowledge workers in the organization syndicate, edit, filter, and reuse such news channels to create further and more refined content and information sources for their departments
- c. the flexibility to add and extend the number of selected news sources to any content-generating information source online or offline through RSS output conversion

www.masternewmedia.org/2003/11/28/personal_knowledge_mapping_and_the.htm.

Q. Is there anything to prevent individual staffers from becoming their own RSS NewsMasters? Why is an intermediary needed to make this happen?

If you are asking me if anyone could do this, my answer is yes. However, to do this effectively you must have all of the skills of a classic information librarian. Therefore, while the technology potentially allows anyone to do this, only a self-selecting group of professionals, both inside institutions and libraries and outside as individual experts, will be able to do this in ways that are effective and useful for others.

This is no Instamatic camera. A lot of effort, expertise, skill, personal experience, culture, and patience goes into creating value-added specialized news feeds.

Q. How can one get started?

The recommended tools are too many to list here, but here you can find a great sampler of some of the most promising ones:

Great RSS Tools
www.socialtext.net/rss-winterfest/index.cgi?great_rss_tools

My own NewsMasters Toolkit is just a starting point for those who have some technical skills or who have a Webmaster who can help them set up some of the services that I have researched and tested. The Toolkit contains a commented list of unique services and tools with which you immediately can start doing what I have described in this article (www.masternewmedia.org/reports/newsmasterstoolkit/).

Q. Finally, with this seemingly never-ending explosion of news and news about news, how do you keep up?

To keep up, here is my personal recipe:

- a. On a systematic basis, start selecting and collecting highly focused news sources that cover your areas of interest.
- b. Utilize an online, Web-based RSS aggregator such as Bloglines (www.bloglines.com) and add the RSS feeds of your preferred news sources.
- c. Use the Search function within Bloglines and save your key "Searches" so that they become ongoing news sources.
- d. Do the same by tapping Google Web and News repositories by subscribing to their free News Alert and Web Alert services.

- e. Move up to full NewsMastering by aggregating together news feeds created in Google Alert with other ones generated by PubSub, Feedster, News2 Web, and Mediascooper.

Note that Luigi Canali De Rossi operates several Web sites related to communication, real-time collaboration, conferencing, and new media:

Master New Media: www.masternewmedia.org

Kolabora: www.Kolabora.com

MasterViews: www.MasterViews.com

So, bottom line—what to make of all this? To get a broader perspective on the importance of managing RSS and blogs for the information professional community, we spoke with John Blossom, who previously was an industry analyst for Outsell, Inc. (Burlingame, Calif.) and is now president of his own industry analysis firm, Shore Communications Inc. (www.shore.com). Shore Communications analyzes content, technology, business, and the information industries.

Blossom, who had read Canali De Rossi's RSS article, told us, "I appreciate what he's coming from." But, he added, "The technology takes care of itself effortlessly ... so RSS NewsMaster may be a rickety rack to hang one's hat onto." He added, though, "I think he has a point in that one of the inherent weaknesses in blogging is editorial control—there is a need for an editorial presence behind the firewall—and the "master" can provide a sense of community."

In other words, Shore is saying that you wouldn't want to be *merely* the person who creates and manages RSS channels for your organization and nothing else. And this makes sense. However, if you can help your organization identify those topics viewed as urgent to track and then provide the necessary editorial oversight to create those RSS feeds that will collect the news on those topics *and* just from sources identified as valuable and credible, you will be providing an important knowledge managementlike activity. You will be adding value to your position and improving the knowledge capabilities of your organization—whether you choose to call yourself an RSS NewsMaster or not.

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT QUARTERLY SUPPLEMENT
IS PUBLISHED BY
INFORMATION TODAY, INC.
143 OLD MARLTON PIKE
MEDFORD, NJ 08055
(609) 654-6266