

Keeping Up With Content From Blogs

• TECHNOLOGY LAW •



BY KELLY D. TALCOTT

My last column listed a number of helpful blogs that focus on one aspect or another of technology law. Perhaps you visited one, and maybe even bookmarked it so that you can return to it to check for updated content. Or possibly you have accumulated a growing list of blogs and sites that provide valuable information. If so, you know that checking in with each of these sites for updated content can be time-consuming and, where the site has no new content, unrewarding.

This column addresses two ways to have new content from favorites blogs delivered directly to you: Feedblitz sends notices of new blog posts to your e-mail inbox and newsreaders collect blog content to display it in one place for review.

Feedblitz

The concept behind Feedblitz (www.feedblitz.com) is fairly simple: It daily checks Web sites for updated content. If it detects new content, Feedblitz sends an e-mail with a usually truncated version of the new post, as well as a hyperlink to the site to read the rest.

The service is free, though there are several paid subscription plans with added features. For example, while Feedblitz checks blogs once a day for free, it will do so up to once an hour for paid subscribers. There are two main ways to

get going on Feedblitz. Sign up directly at the Feedblitz site and tell it which blogs you want checked. Alternatively, many blogs have built-in Feedblitz subscription links that allow automatic sign up.

The advantage of Feedblitz is its relative simplicity. But perhaps you are looking for an alternative to the increased e-mail traffic Feedblitz will create. Each Feedblitz e-mail needs to be opened and reviewed, and because the full content of the post is usually not included in the e-mail, you must click through to the originating site before to read an entire post. Given the volume of e-mail that many of us receive each day, even Feedblitz-delivered content can be a chore to sort through.

Enter the Newsreader

Think of your newsreader as a personal information-gathering Web site, one that will only gather and display information from sources you tell it to. That information typically is configured by the blog in the form of RSS or Atom feeds—similar programming formats that allow software such as newsreaders to distinguish the newly added stuff from the existing content, and to download only the new stuff.

There are dozens of tools that have been developed to take advantage of this distributed content by gathering the RSS or Atom content from more than one source and presenting it in a single place where it can be easily read.

Several Web-based newsreaders are relatively easy to use. This discussion is limited to Web-based readers for two reasons. First, they do not require downloaded software, so your IT people

will be happy. Second, the readers can be accessed from any Internet connection, which makes them convenient. (See <http://allrss.com/rssreaderswebbased.html> for a list of Web-based newsreaders.)

Because newsreaders deliver personalized content, a little time must be spent in telling it what to send. But once configured, newsreaders are a one-stop source for new information, and they eliminates the need to check your favorite blogs each day.

Still, while some blogs permit newsreaders to reproduce entire posts, most are configured to allow reproduction of part of the post, usually enough to give a good idea of whether to investigate further by reviewing the entire post at the source.

Esprso

Esprso (www.esprso.net) combines an easy-to-use newsreader with a social networking feature allowing users to build and share "channels" of feeds. Each channel can be made up of any number of blog feeds, so that you could, for example, take each of the blogs listed in my last column (NYLJ, Feb. 20, 2007) and build a single channel to include them all. Existing channels cover such disparate topics as Tennis News, Brooklyn! and IP/Tech Law Stuff. Users are free to subscribe to channels built by others, as well as to take those channels and modify them to suit their tastes.

Simplicity of use is Esprso's hallmark. Drop-down menus make it simple to find a particular channel and read just the posts that emanate from it. I particularly like the choices Esprso gives me:

I can view a mix of content from all of my channels; more targeted content from the blogs that make up one single channel; or only the content from a single blog.

Another feature of Esprso is the social nature of the experience. Too lazy to build your own channel? Look round at some of the channels built by others. Maybe you'll find something to use as is, or you can modify it by deleting or adding sources to build something uniquely your own.

Esprso is an early-development site, not an unusual situation in the evolving world of competing newsreaders. This means its features may change somewhat from day to day, and the site may not load as quickly as you would like. It shows tremendous promise, however, and has become my favorite newsreader.

Google Reader

Google Reader (reader.google.com) is part of the ever-growing suite of Google-based Web applications. This reader is easy to use, and readily accepts new blog feeds. The interface differs somewhat from Esprso's and uses the familiar tree-and-branch folder outline style that Outlook users see on the left-hand side of the e-mail screen.

Instead of channels, Google Reader offers "bundles," pre-packaged combinations of blog feeds that Google has put together. Once selected, they take their place in folder form on the left-hand side of the viewing screen, where they can be customized by adding or deleting feeds. The blog text appears in the right-hand viewing window, either in

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