

Website Guide 01 Getting content for your website automatically

Introduction

It's possible to insert a code into your website or blog template that will automatically grab content from my website. You could do this through the use of RSS feeds, no doubt, but you would need a certain degree of expertise. And a lot more fiddling.

How does it work?

In order to publish articles on my website I use a content management system called "Article Manager". This has a built-in syndication tool which I have configured and made available.

As you know, the Educational Technology: ICT in Education website is organised into a number of categories. The syndication tool enables you to select a category from which you would like content. You can choose to have either the titles only, or the titles and article summaries. You can also configure how it looks, in terms of characteristics like font, font size and colour.

Once the code is in place, the content on your website or blog will change automatically to reflect the changed content on my website. You don't have to do anything more to make it happen!

Why bother?

Good question! It's a way of adding value to your website. I know of some website owners who use only syndication tools like this to provide content. However, a more creative approach is to use the syndicated content to supplement your own.

In fact, I use the syndicated content on two of my other blogs. One of these is called My Writes, at <http://terryfreedman.blogspot.com>. I use that blog for writing about anything and everything, not necessarily to do with educational technology. However, as a way of introducing readers to my main work, I have set the sidebar up to show the latest headlines and article summaries from the News & Views section of my main website.

I also have a private blog for my work teaching teacher trainees. I have set its sidebar up in the same way in order to make it easy for the students to see and access the latest content from my main website.

How to do it

Now that I've convinced you that this would be a great thing to do, here's what you need to do.

1. Go to <http://www.ictineducation.org> and from the menu select Our services→Syndication. (If you prefer, open the alternative menu at



http://terry-freedman.org.uk/artman/publish/website_menu.php.)

2. You will see this message:



Click on "click here to begin".

3. You will see a screen like this the one shown below. As you can see, it is divided into two panes. Any changes you make in the settings on the left will immediately be reflected in the preview pane on the right. So you can

experiment with impunity.

Article Manager - Webfeed Generator

<p>Webfeed Content</p> <p>Category <input style="width: 150px;" type="text" value="My best blogs"/> ▼</p> <p>Headlines <input type="text" value="10"/> (max 10)</p> <p>Look and Feel</p> <p>Style <input style="width: 100px;" type="text" value="Professional"/> ▼</p> <p>Width <input type="text" value="200"/></p> <p>Dates <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Show Dates</p> <p>Summaries <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Show Summaries</p> <p>Advanced Menu >></p> <p style="text-align: center;"> <input type="button" value="Preview"/> <input type="button" value="View Code"/> </p>	<p>Home Page</p> <p><u>The worst presentation ever: poll results</u></p> <p><small>Tue, 26 Sep 2006</small></p> <p>I recently posted an online poll to go with my article about the worst presentation ever. Here are the results. Incidentally, it's not too late for you to contribute: it takes just a few moments.</p>
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4. Use the menu on the left hand side to select the category of articles to use, the style, the width (you may wish to have a narrower table if you are using it in a sidebar), whether or not to show the dates of the articles and whether or not to show the summaries as well as the titles. If you don't like any of the pre-configured options, click on the Advanced menu link and you will be able to make many more choices.
5. Once you have found a look that you like, click on View Code.
6. Click inside the box displaying the code, and select all the text inside it, and then copy that to the clipboard.
7. Open up your website or blog template. (Either save it first or, if you are using Blogger, remember to use the Preview option before saving any changes t the template.)
8. Scroll down the template and find a suitable place in which to put the code. In this example, I decided to use it to replace the placeholder text for links.

```
<h6>Links and news</h6>
<ul>
  <li><a href="http://www.ictineducation.org/">ICT in Education</a></li>
  <li><a href="http://EDITME!">Edit-Me</a></li>
  <li><a href="http://EDITME!">Edit-Me</a></li>
</ul>
```

9. Paste the code, then click on Preview. If you don't like the effect, click on Clear Edits. If you do, click on Save Template Changes. You will then have to republish your blog in order for the changes to take effect.
10. If you wish to change the look and feel of the syndicated content, simply repeat these steps.