


Using RSS Feeds for Distributing Videos

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moodlemoot

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Videos in Education

- Video is the **most powerful** educational media
- Learn to do, or fix things using videos on YouTube and other places on the Internet
- Many **ways to distribute** videos

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Presentation Goals

- Discuss a **different way** of distributing a group of videos using RSS feeds
- **Advantages/disadvantages** of this method
- How to **create and edit** RSS feeds
- How to incorporate RSS video feeds into **Moodle**

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Challenges with Videos

- Getting videos to work!
- Deciding upon format, size, and quality
- Different computers (PC/Mac)
- Different browsers
- Different video players
- **Mobile** (tablets and smartphones)

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My Method: Use a RSS Feed

- Historically – moving lecture videos to **iPods**
- Apple's "**podcast**" method using one **XML** (RSS feed) to define a group of audio or video files into "**episodes**"
- iPod reads the RSS feed and automatically updates and displays episodes on the iPod

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RSS feed can be used by other software and devices!

- By a browser (Firefox)
- By **Moodle** (RSS feed block)
- By the iTunes store
- On my **iPhone**
- On my iPod nano
- On **AppleTV**
- On my **Samsung Tab2**

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1. Create your Media in Proper Format

- Video format
 - H.264 mp4 format
 - Bandwidth considerations: <2Mbps
- Audio format
 - mp3

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2. Put Videos on a Web Server

- Key: must have a URL for each video
- Website
- Video server (when video demand is higher)
- Other services, such as Kaltura, as long as each video has its own URL
- Test by putting the video URL into your browser and see if it plays

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What is a RSS Feed File?

- What does a feed look like?
 - An XML data file
- Apple's podcast specifications
 - <https://www.apple.com/itunes/podcasts/specs.html>

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3. Create and Edit a RSS feed?

- Start with a simple one (from someone else)
- RSS feed files are ASCII text files
- Edit with a text editor
 - I use Dreamweaver
- Edit with a “feed editor” program
 - FeedForAll (Mac)
 - Feed Editor (PC)

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4. Validate the feed

- Feed editor programs often can also validate the feed
- iTunes
- Browser

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5. Publish Your Feed

- Put the RSS feed file on a website
- Let users, publishing companies (such as Apple’s iTunes store) and other applications know its location (URL)
- iTunes software (PC, Mac, iDevices)
 - File|Subscribe to Podcast
- “Podcast Republic” (Android)
 - Copy/Paste into Subscripts

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Using this Feed in Moodle

- Add a **Remote RSS Feeds** block
- Edit the feed information
- CRON will re-reads the RSS feed information from the web server

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Note: Browser Support for RSS Feeds

- Firefox 39.0 (Mac) – shows content
- Internet Explorer 11 – shows content
- Safari 5.1.7 – shows content
- Safari 8 (Mac) – wants to interpret XML code
- Chrome 43 (PC) – shows XML code
- Others (???)

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Moodle's RSS Feed Block Advantage

- Moodle reads the RSS Feed file from the web server
- Displays them **correctly** (in human readable form) as hyperlinks
- Depending upon **browser** and **Internet speed**, users can click on these links to **download**, or to **stream**
(for whatever reason, most mobile devices will stream these videos)

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Rick's Method of Adding a Video Episode

- (Demonstration)
- Simply edit just one file, I am done.
 - iTunes store updates itself
 - Moodle updates itself
 - Feed readers, like iTunes and Podcast Republic update themselves
 - Browser links update themselves
- This is great!!!

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Captioning

- The RSS Feed does not include captions
- Captioning often depends upon player
- I prefer **open-captions** in a **second** RSS feed
- I use a shell-script on my server to manage and update the second feed file

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Flash and RSS Feeds

- My own designed "Flash player"
- Flash can read RSS XML file
- Flash in a programming environment – can do anything you want.
- Student clicks link in Moodle
- Link sends "**query code**" to my Flash player
- My Flash player interprets the URL and query code, picks the correct RSS Feed file, and displays the appropriate videos for streaming

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**Conclusions
Advantages/Disadvantages**

- RSS feed files provide a method of bundling videos
- RSS feed files can simplify the management and distribution of videos
- One RSS feed file can be used in multiple environments
- Moodle provides an easy way to use RSS feeds
 - Moodle does, other LMSs do not
- Disadvantages
 - Probably not the best way to distribute single videos
 - Does not work well with YouTube

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- Additional support for this presentation can be found at:
- http://www.rierz.com/personal/work/Presentations/MoodleMoot2015/Using_RSS_Feeds_Distributing_Videos.html
- Email: rick@rjerz.com
- For Pecha Kucha presentations, questions will be asked collectively at the end of the session.



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