

## Organizing Your Web Resources for Learning: RSS Feeds & Online Bookmarking (Session Overview)

By the end of this session you should:

- Have an understanding of the evolution of the Read-Write web that now allows subscription to many dynamically changing websites
- Understand the process to subscribe to a RSS feed
- Have an understanding of the practices of social bookmarking and tagging.
- Be able to describe potential instructional uses of social bookmarking in your courses.
- Be able to employ the practices of social bookmarking and tagging to support teaching, learning and research.

### Key Questions

- How can one use RSS to streamline information gathering while saving time?
- Are there compelling uses of RSS feeds that can support new opportunities for teaching and learning?
- What are the instructional advantages / disadvantages of social bookmarking?
- What can social bookmarking teach us about group knowledge formation?
- Should we / how can we create open opportunities and spaces where students become active contributors to a collective stream of content that supports learning in our courses?
- Are there compelling uses of social bookmarking that can support new opportunities for teaching and learning?

### Using RSS Feed and Aggregation

You have seen the orange icon on many websites. This icon indicates that you are at a website to which one can subscribe. Subscribing means that updates to this website will automatically be forwarded to you in a RSS feed reader (or aggregator as it is more commonly called).



RSS is one answer to the question of how to filter and organize the vast amount of information on the Web. Internet users tend to settle on preferred sources of information, whether news sites, blogs, wikis, or other online resources that regularly update content. RSS allows faculty and students to create a list of those sources in an application that automatically retrieves updates, saving considerable time and effort. RSS feeds can be offered at varying levels of granularity, further enhancing users' ability to specify exactly what information they want to receive. For example, a college or university might offer one RSS feed for the institution's main news page, sharing information that concerns the institution broadly, and other feeds focused on the college of arts and sciences, the history department, or research being conducted by a professor of European history. Users can subscribe to feeds independently, tailoring the content they receive to their unique interests and needs.

Growing numbers of online resources offer RSS functionality. Because applications such as browsers and operating systems increasingly support RSS, the technology has the potential to become the primary vehicle through which users interact with the Internet.

There are many types of information in RSS feeds:

- Journal table of contents
- News
- Weather
- Blogs, Podcasts
- Shared bookmarks
- Newsletters
- Professional and Commercial websites
- Cartoons, Photographs, and more

Blackboard currently does not allow for RSS feed, but it is relatively easy to set up an aggregator that does allow for customized RSS feeds for your online class.



[Netvibes](#)

Netvibes gives you the ability to not only gather multiple feeds for your class, but to also place student blogs at one website.



[Google Reader](#)

Google Reader makes an excellent personal tool for feed aggregation. This link has some excellent tips on getting started with RSS feed.



[Pageflakes](#)

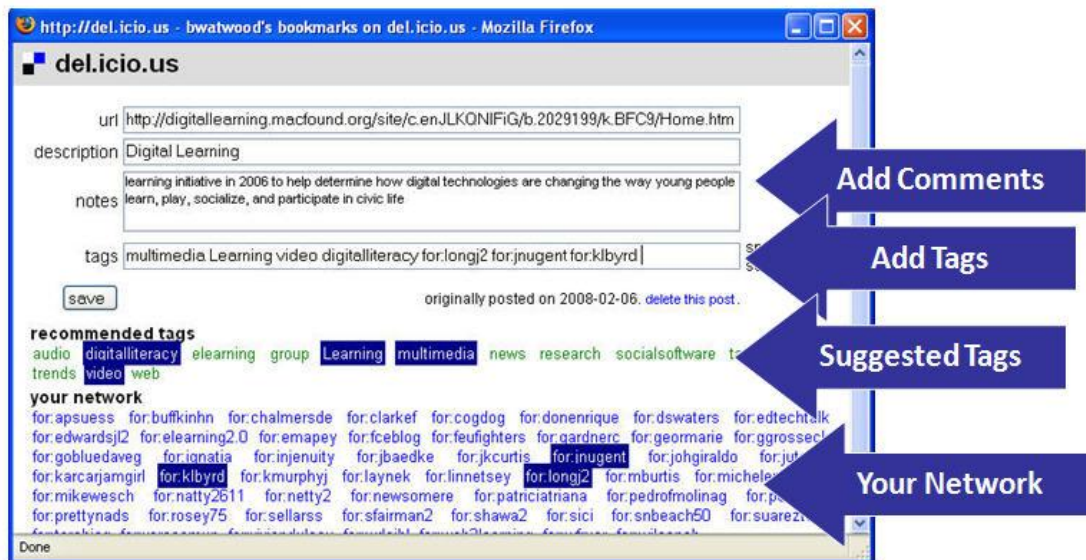
Another good aggregator

### Using Social Bookmarking

Social bookmarking, using websites like [Delicious](#) or [Diigo](#), is a free web service that allows faculty and students to tag, save, manage and share web pages from a centralized web source. With emphasis on the power of the community, social

bookmarking greatly improves how people discover, remember and share on the Internet.

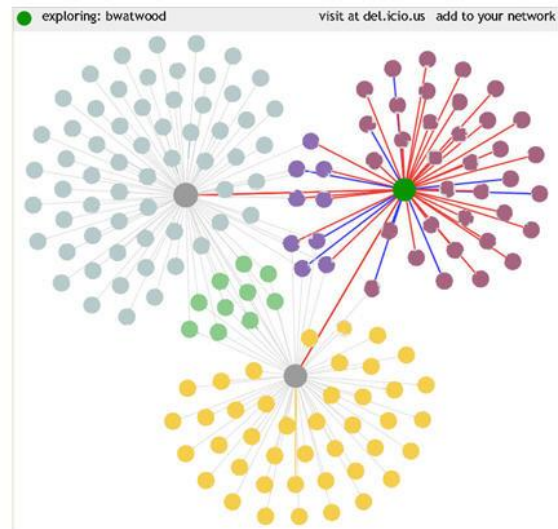
Delicious lets you and your students bookmark any site on the Internet, and get to it from anywhere. Instead of having different bookmarks on every computer, Delicious makes it easy to have a single set of bookmarks kept in sync between all of your computers – office, classroom, laptop or iPhone, and home. Even if you're not on a computer you own, you can still get to your bookmarks on the Delicious website.

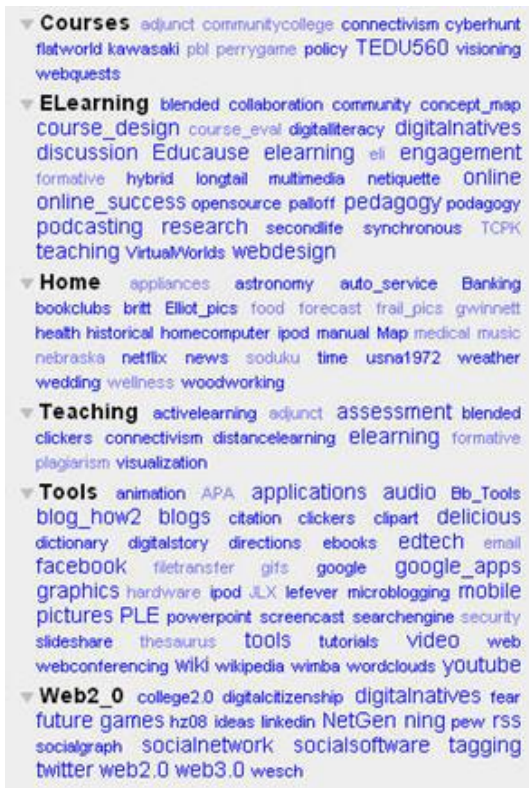


You and your students can share your bookmarks and get bookmarks in return. If your colleagues use Delicious, you can send them interesting bookmarks that they can check out the next time they log in. Of course, they can do the same for you.

Tags give you much more flexibility over saving bookmarks or favorites on your computer. Instead of a single keyword, you can now assign multiple keywords (or "tags") to any site, making recall and subsequent finding much easier. It also allows a site like Delicious to be used as a search engine. Others who use the same keywords you do will have already found and filed relevant websites that you can use for instruction or research.

As you explore the site and find interesting users, you can use the Subscriptions and Network features to keep track of the Delicious tags and users you find most interesting. Through your network and your students' networks, you connect with hundreds of people sharing websites and filtering information on topics of interest to you.





Delicious also allows you to organize your bookmarks into folders.

The web is awash in disorganized information. Delicious brings order to this mess. {<http://delicious.com/about>}

## Resources:

7 Things You Should Know About RSS

<http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ELI7024.pdf>

7 Things You Should Know About Social Bookmarking

<http://www.educause.edu/ELI/7ThingsYouShouldKnowAboutSocial/156804>

Delicious - <http://delicious.com>

## Contact Information

Britt Watwood ([bwatwood@vcu.edu](mailto:bwatwood@vcu.edu))

Jeff Nugent ([jsnugent@vcu.edu](mailto:jsnugent@vcu.edu))