

Feature Brief:

Using Really Simple Syndication (RSS) For Group Communication

Introduction

Email has been a primary means of communication for corporations and consortia for many years, yet its effectiveness has eroded under a flood of spam. Consider how much time we spend trying to filter out the noise created by tens or even hundreds of insidious, unsolicited, inane and even dangerous messages looking for the few important messages we receive each day. Worms, phishing, viruses and spyware attachments have turned the process of reading email into a walk through a minefield. Increasingly, important messages get lost or inadvertently diverted into the trash by ineffective filters.

A new messaging medium has emerged to offer shelter from this storm of spam. RSS, (really simple syndication or rich site summary) offers a noise free alternative for retrieving important messages and news that opens a direct and dependable channel of communication with committee members. With a new release of the Kavi® Groups collaborative system for technical committees and working groups, Kavi has integrated RSS for notifying committee members of important events, new documents, calendar items, action item assignments, ballot openings and more. RSS makes committee and working group participation easier and more productive by simplifying communication with group members and making it easy for committee members to stay informed of committee activities.

RSS Defined

From O'Reilly's XML.com

"RSS is a format for syndicating news and the content of news-like sites, including major news sites like Wired, news-oriented community sites like Slashdot, and personal weblogs. But it's not just for news. Pretty much anything that can be broken down into discrete items can be syndicated via RSS: the "recent changes" page of a wiki, a changelog of CVS checkins, even the revision history of a book. Once information about each item is in RSS format, an RSS-aware program can check the feed for changes and react to the changes in an appropriate way."

Thousands of news sites, blogs, and other frequently updated web pages have implemented subscribable RSS feeds as a way of notifying subscribers of news or changes. Kavi uses RSS to inform committee members of recent changes or important events in Kavi groups to which they belong. Group members can subscribe to a separate RSS feed for each group and/or subscribe a summary of feed of their group activity on the "My Groups" page.

Reading RSS Feeds

You have to have an RSS client or reader in order to view information from RSS feeds. Think of an RSS reader as the functional equivalent of Eudora or Outlook for reading email messages or Mozilla or Internet Explorer for viewing web pages. RSS clients are desktop applications that let you subscribe to RSS feeds, i.e. check a specific web page for changes and provide links to view those pages or read those changes. Some readers have an integrated browser for viewing the content. Others open up a window on an existing browser such as IE or Mozilla. You can configure RSS readers to periodically check the feeds to which you subscribe and notify you of any changes.

There are many different RSS readers available for use on any of the primary desktop platforms. Most are stand-alone RSS clients. A few integrate with browsers or with popular email clients such as Outlook. Kavi recommends that you use the stand-alone clients so that the RSS feeds don't get lost in your email in-box (that sort of defeats the purpose). Here are a few from which to choose:

Product	Platform(s)	License/ Price	Kavi Recommended	Download Location
Akregator	Linux	Open/Free	Yes	http://akregator.sourceforge.net/
AmphetaDesk	Windows, Macintosh, Linux	Open/ Free		http://www.disobey.com/amphetaDesk/
BottomFeeder	Windows, Macintosh, Unix	Open/ Free		http://www.cincomsmalltalk.com/BottomFeeder/
EffNews RSS Reader	Windows	Free		http://www.effbot.org/zone/effnews-exe.htm
FeedDemon	Windows	\$29 (free trial)	Yes	http://www.bradsoft.com/feeddemon/
FeedReader	Windows	Open / Free		http://feedreader.com/
NetNewsWire	Macintosh	\$39.95	Yes	http://ranchero.com/netnewswire/
NewsDesk	.NET	Free		http://www.wildgrape.net/
NewsGator	.NET	\$29 (free trial)		http://www.newsgator.com/
NewsMonster	Mozilla on any platform	Free		http://www.newsmonster.org/
NewzCrawler	Windows	\$24.95 (free trial)		http://www.newzcrawler.com/
Shrook	Macintosh	\$25.95 (free trial)	Yes	http://www.fondantfancies.com/shrook/
SlashDock	Macintosh	Free (donations)		http://homepage.mac.com/stas/slashdock.html
Straw	Linux/GNOME	Open/ Free		http://www.nongnu.org/straw/
VOX Lite	Windows	Free		http://www.stevenwood.org/stories/2003/06/08/voxLite.htm
ZOË	Macintosh	Open/ Free		http://guests.evectors.it/zoe/

Subscribing to Kavi© Groups RSS Feeds

My RSS Feed

You'll find a link on the "My Groups" page that will allow you to subscribe to all notifications from all of your groups with a single subscription. This RSS feed is a personalized feed, created specifically for each user and includes items rolled up from all of the user's committees or groups. This feed will give you all of the updates across all of your committees.

All Groups > My Groups

My Groups RSS Feeds Calendars Documents Ballots Action Items Email

My Groups

HELP

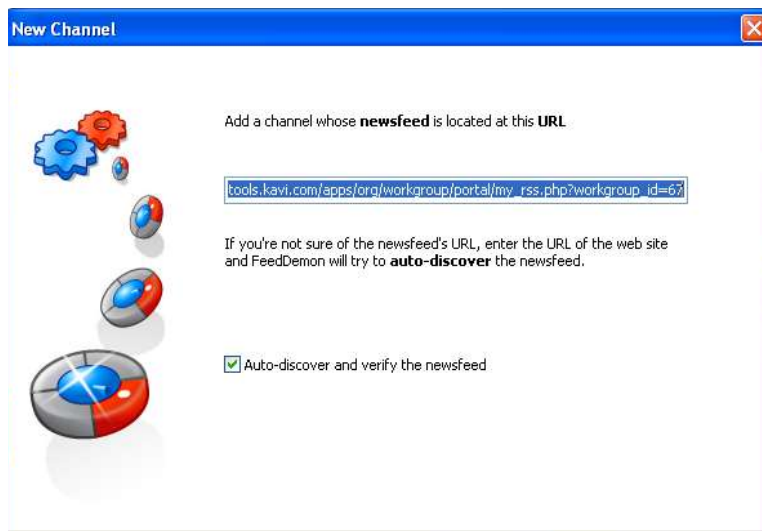
Welcome to the Kavi© Groups 3.4 experimental code - good luck! (See [Change Log](#) and [Release checklist](#)).

The current 3.3 stable release is 3.3r5, which was released on Wednesday, Dec. 1, 2004.
The current 3.2 stable release is 3.2r4, which was released on Wednesday, Dec. 31, 2003.

Personalize | [My RSS](#) | [My Calendar](#) Hide Shared Info | Max Items: 5 10

My Groups	Recent Documents
Click to see all 23 groups	View All

Depending on the RSS reader you use, subscribing to the "My RSS" feed may be as simple as right-clicking on the "My RSS" link, selecting "Copy Link Location" and pasting the link location into a "New Feed" field on the RSS reader. The example below shows how to set up a new feed or "channel" using FeedDemon. If you've selected "copy link location" while "right clicking" on the Kavi© Groups RSS link, adding the feed is pretty simple. Select File/New Channel. Select "I will enter the URL for the newsfeed". Select continue and you're done.



Individual Group RSS Feeds

If you prefer, you can subscribe to discrete RSS feeds from the various committees. You can very narrowly subscribe to a documents RSS feed from a specific group or create separate feeds for each of the groups to which you belong. This will allow you to check each group individually. The process for subscribing is identical to the process described above for the My RSS feed. Simply right click on the feed you'd like to add to your subscription list, select "copy link location" and paste the URL into your RSS reader's subscription dialog box.

All Groups Page

All Groups > My Groups > My Feeds

[My Groups](#) | [RSS Feeds](#) | [Calendars](#) | [Documents](#) | [Ballots](#) | [Action Items](#) | [Email](#)

My Feeds

In Kavi Groups, RSS feeds are used to publish the data items managed by the groups: calendar events, documents, ballots, action items, and email messages. Using your favorite RSS reader, you may subscribe to individual feeds for any group to which you belong and for given item type published by the group. You may also choose to subscribe to a combined item feed for a group or, via the My Groups feed, for all your groups. To subscribe to a feed, copy the link location for any of the available feeds and enter it into your RSS reader.

Group	Available RSS Feeds
My Groups	Calendar Documents Ballots Action Items Email All Combined
ABPRP (alaska.kavi.com)	Calendar Documents Ballots Action Items Email All Combined
Anti-Spam Research Group	Calendar Documents Ballots Action Items Email All Combined
Boardrooms	Calendar Documents Ballots Action Items Email All Combined

Security

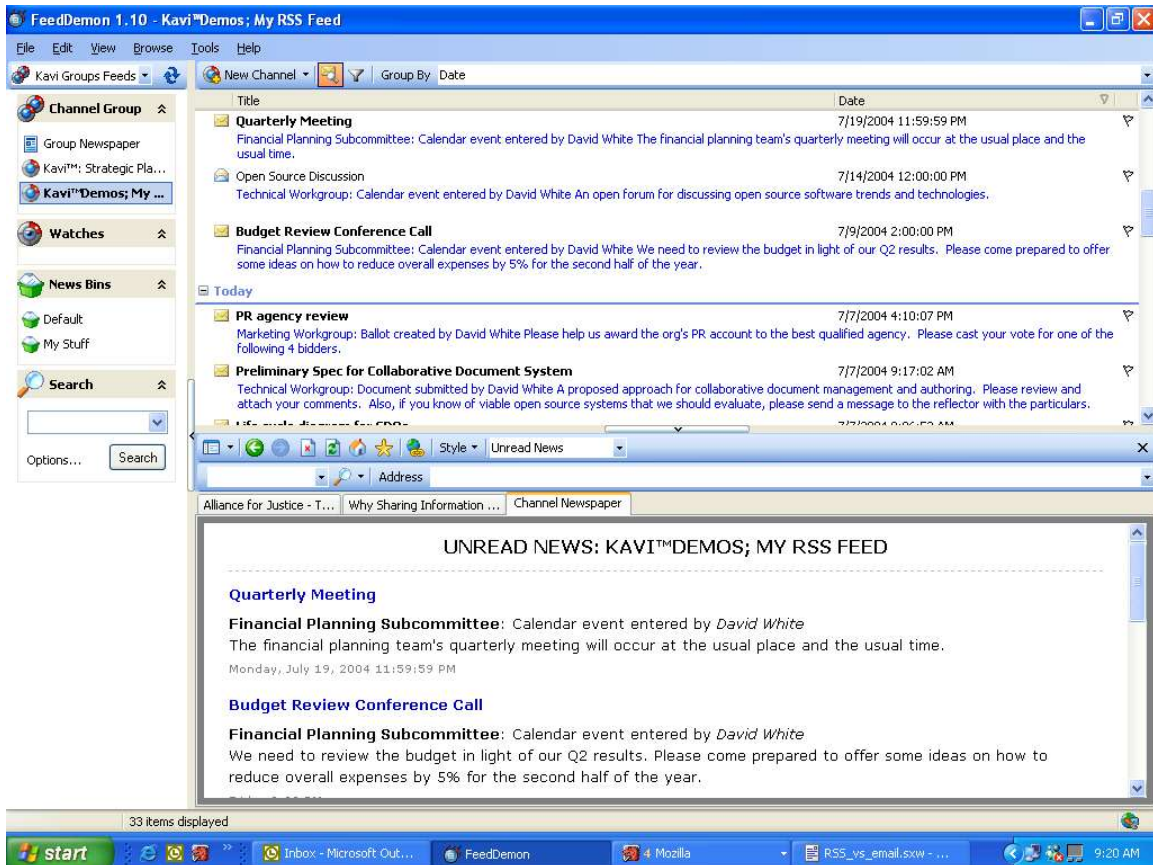
Since the content Kavi Groups RSS feeds supply is secure, the RSS reader will need to be able to deal with the Group's authentication process. The feed and its linked content require you to enter a valid username and password. Most RSS readers support this capability in one manner or another. FeedException will remember your user name and password if you want it to. For better security, you should avoid saving your login information and enter it each time you want an update. For some RSS readers, you may need to add your username and password to the feed subscription URL, for example:

`http://username:password@www.yourdomain.org/apps/org/workgroup/portal/my_rss.php`

Watching for New Content

Most RSS readers let you set up a refresh schedule – one each hour, each day, every few minutes if you wish. The reader will then go look for changes to the feeds since its last refresh. Feeds that have updated content will be highlighted or flagged so you can quickly see that there is something new to view.

Here's an example of what you'll see as when you select a Kavi "My RSS" feed and view it in FeedDemon, a typical RSS reader:



In Summary

Kavi sees great potential for RSS as a communications and community-building tool for standards organizations and other technical communities. We encourage you to subscribe to the RSS feeds from your organization's Kavi groups and committees and see how well it works. Look for other Kavi applications to become RSS enabled over the coming months.