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OUTC18
RSS Archiving
Activity Guide

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Introduction

So, you want to start archiving your RSS feeds in OU Campus? Great! This guide will show you the general steps you can take to start archiving your feeds.

The steps listed here are going to basically be universal, but they will work best if you currently have a single news feed in your site (named something like `/rss/news.xml`) and are using tags to further categorize the items within that feed. If you have separate feeds for separate categories, this process will still work, though it will probably be best to make "archived" feeds for each one of your individual "category" feeds.

For more detailed information about RSS in OU Campus, you can check out documentation on our support site, and you can also watch some of our Training Tuesday webinar recordings on this topic:
- Training Tuesday: Tag Management and RSS
  - Download Practice Files from this webinar
- Training Tuesday: RSS in OU Campus

RSS: A Refresher Course

For those of you still learning the ropes about how RSS works, here's a quick refresher.

RSS contains three distinct parts: The **Feed**, the **Items**, and the **Article** or **Link** that is referenced by the item.

The **Feed** is an empty container that provides basic information about what things are contained inside of it. You can almost think of this as an empty box. By itself, it's pretty useless, but without it, the things inside cannot be grouped together. Your RSS items will reside inside of the feed file (each item is not a separate file).

The **Items** are the main portion of an RSS feed. Each item corresponds to a single news article, press release, etc. and tells the user "at-a-glance" information about the article, such as the headline (called a "Title" in the item), a brief description, the date the article was published, and potentially a small thumbnail image.

A key thing to understand is that the item is not the full article itself! Each **Item** contains a **Link** to a webpage on your site, and that's where the article resides. You can think of the item as the tin packaging surrounding a piece of food. The "good stuff" isn't found in the packaging itself, but inside the packaging. The purpose of the packaging is to let you know what you're about to consume and the basic information about it.

Here's a diagram of how RSS is structured:
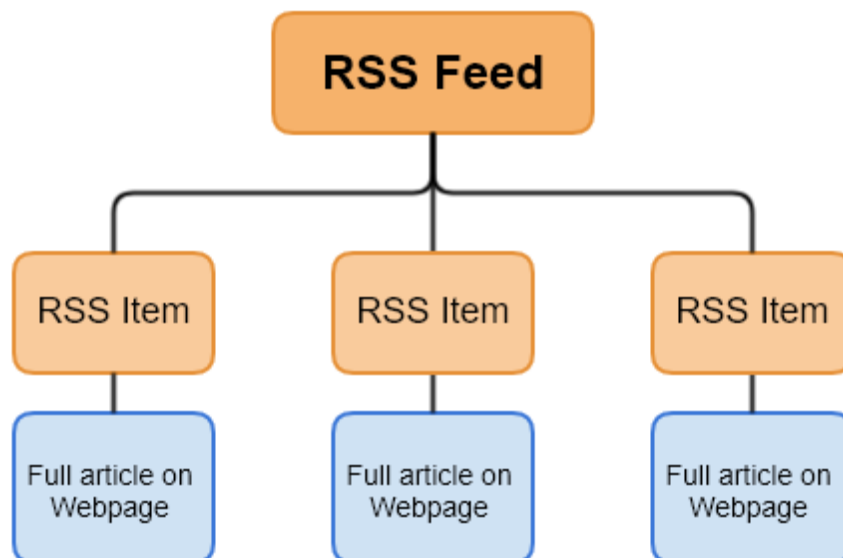
Archiving RSS Feeds, in Abstract

Why Archive?

So, you've got a feed in OU Campus set up and ready. Awesome! One thing to keep in mind is that all RSS Feeds have an upper limit to the number of items that they can contain:

Once you hit that number of 9999 (or whatever number your feed has for the "Item Count" field), the oldest items will be deleted from the feed as new ones are made. While it may take a while to get to that number, you could still get there. Archiving your feeds ensures that your old RSS items will be saved, even if you have tens of thousands of items.
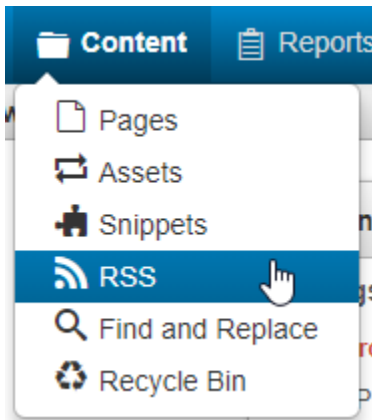
The Basic Idea

When we archive our RSS Feeds, we're going to create separate feeds for each year. Once the year has passed, you'll make a new feed for the next year and your items will start going into that feed, meaning your feed for the previous year will be preserved. No further items will be added to that feed, meaning you'll never hit that upper "Item Count" limit.

Let's Start Archiving

Part 1: Make your Yearly RSS Feeds

1. Log into OU Campus as a level 10 administrator.
2. Navigate to **Content > RSS**.

3. Click **+New** to make a new feed.
4. Define the basic information for your feed. I like to make sure the feed includes the year in its **Path** so it's easy to figure out which feed is for which year.
   a. The **Path** is a root-relative file path. Remember to end it with `.xml`!
   b. Make a **Title, Description,** and **Link** that makes sense for you.
   c. Leave **Publish Date** and **Publish Time** to `[auto]`.
   d. Max out the **Item Count!**

Part 2: Assign Your New Feeds to Folder(s)

1. Navigate to wherever your news articles are stored in your site (a common place is the /news directory) and enter it.
2. Optionally, make sub-sections inside your news directory for each year (so you could have a /news/2018 folder, a /news/2019 folder, and so on)
3. hover over the folder (either the year-specific ones or your general /news folder). Select **Edit > Access** from the hover menu.
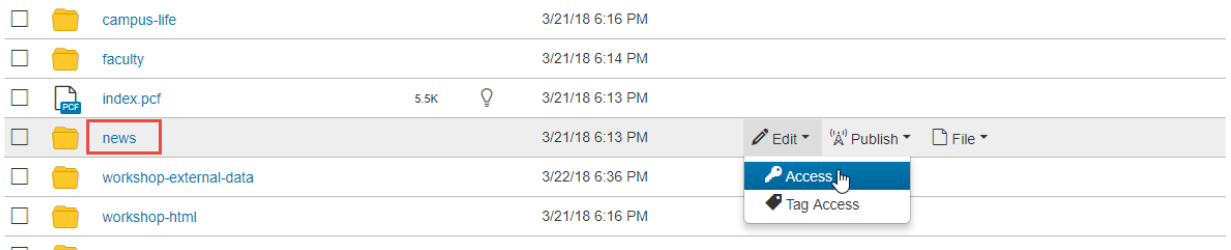
4. In the Access Settings dialog box, go to **RSS Feed** drop-down and select your new feed. This will ensure that all items from here on out will go into that year's feed.
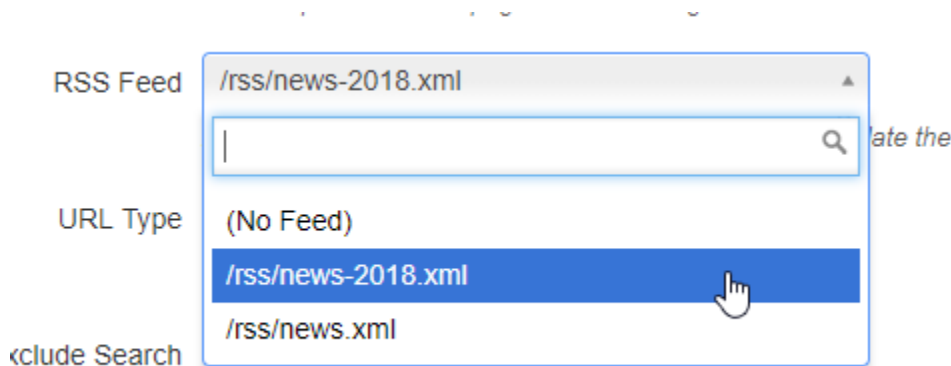
5. Click **Save**

Part 3: Make Items and Check your Work

You are now free to make new RSS items in that folder. To check and make sure your new items are going in the right place, go back to **Content > RSS**, hover over your feed, and click **Items** to get a list of items in the feed.

Part 4: Switching Years

When a new year rolls around, you'll want to repeat steps 1 and 2 for the next year.

For example, if it's about to become 2019, you'll want to make a new `news-2019.xml` feed and assign it to the appropriate folders in preparation of the switch.

However, when you make the switch to the new year, there will be a time at the beginning where you'll have a bunch of items in the old year's feed, and basically nothing in the new feed. **How can we ensure a smooth transition between feeds, where our homepage can display news from January and December?**

We can create a **Feed Group** in OU Campus to combat this "transition period." Feed Groups are just another RSS feed, but instead of items being placed in them directly, they aggregate items that reside in other feeds and display them together, chronologically.

1. To make a feed group, go to **Content > RSS** and click **Groups** on the left sidebar.
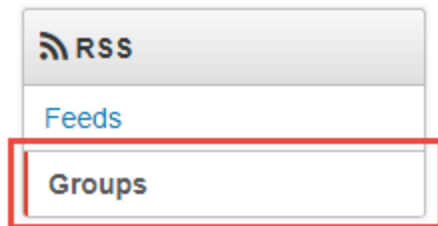
2. Click **+New** and make a new feed group, which is almost the same process as making a standard feed. The only difference is that you get to determine where the feed group pulls its items from.
   a. Define the **Path** as usual.
   b. **Title, Description**, and **Link** all as normal.
   c. We can make the **Item Count** a smaller number because the feed group doesn't contain items by itself, it just references items in other feeds.
   d. Finally, choose the feeds that we want to aggregate. At the very least, we will want the current year's feed and next year's feed. You can add more feeds to this feed group as the years go on.

File Properties

Path /rss/all-news.xml

Template /generic-2_0.xml

Feed Properties

Title All News

Description News feed for Gallena University

Link http://gallena.edu

Publish Date [auto]

Publish Time [auto]

Note: RSS publish times are in the site's time zone, which is GMT-08:00.

Item Count 15

Enter a number between 1-9999. This is the maximum number of items to be included in the publish feed.

Feed Group Members

Select Members **Available Feeds**

Filter

Hide 2 selected   All | None

2018 News ✓

2019 News ✓

3. Click **Create** and you're done! With feed groups, we don't need to assign the feed group anywhere – the aggregation will happen automatically.

Part 5: Displaying Your Feed Group

Once we have the feed group set up, we can use the feed group for display on our pages. Using the feed group for display has a few advantages:

- The Item Count on a feed group could be smaller, meaning that any server-side scripts will need to run through fewer items, making page loads faster.
- Using the feed group, we ensure a smooth transition year-over-year with no need to change the feed at any point.
- Finally, your users can also subscribe to the feed group manually if they'd like, which will consistently deliver the most recent news, with no need to re-subscribe to a different feed each year.

Every implementation can display RSS feeds on their pages differently. In the workshop environments, we use Source Code Assets. If you want to have your workshop environment display items from your feed group, do the following:

1. Go into **Content > Assets**.
2. Click on the **News – RSS Listing** asset (this is what we use to display RSS Items).
3. Check the asset out by clicking the lightbulb first, then click **Edit** in the toolbar.
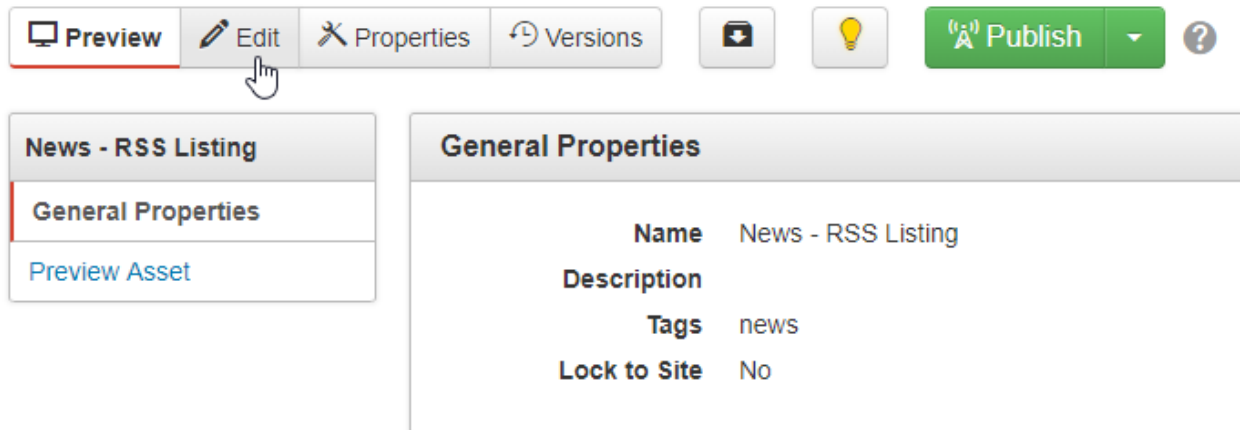
4. Replace `/rss/news.xml` on line 4 with the location of your feed group (in our example, we'd replace it with `/rss/all-news.xml`).
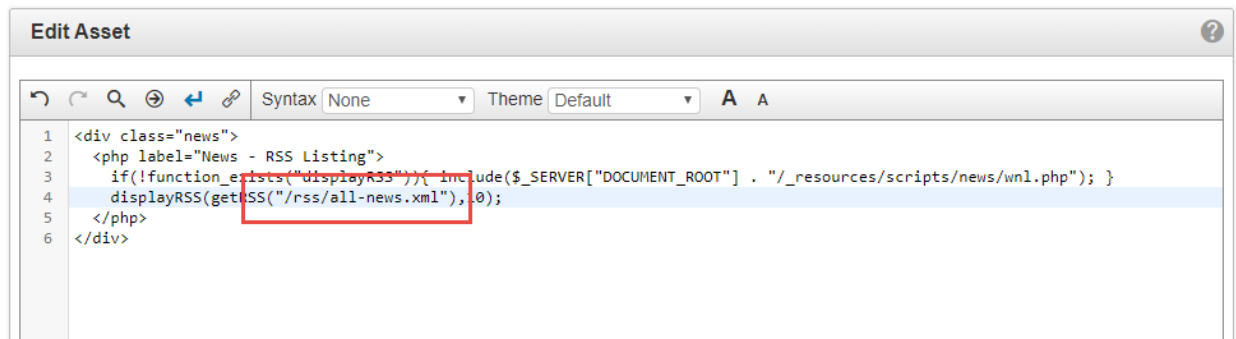
5. **Save** and **Publish** the asset.
6. Travel to a page and enter an editable region.
7. From the JustEdit toolbar, place the **News – RSS Listing** asset into the region.
8. **Save** and **Publish** the page.

Your page is now displaying RSS items from your feed group on the page, instead of items from a yearly feed, or anything else!