

# 1. .. and now, for a walk in the blog forest: blogging, RSS and what it means for teaching and learning

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## 1.1. Big Possibilities - Danger of Hype!

It has been suggested that blogging represents a threat to the institutionalised journalism of large corporations. There have been reports that popular journalists are publishing their writing firstly on their own sites - before the newspapers hit the stands - and that readers are going first to the blog sites before they read the paper itself.

Now here's a leap - can you imagine a future public /community broadcasting system, which enables extraordinary Earth citizens everywhere to broadcast audio/visual/text, direct and collaboratively - and to be seen or heard from anywhere on the planet? Imagine your learners easily setting up a networked text/image/radio station for their class discussion?

In a few years, tiny video cameras may have computer and phone built in or easily connected, for direct, live upload. Web software is already enabling individuals to join community publishing efforts - will the program evolve to empower communities in our battle with destructive, outdated systems of distribution, in knowledge, media, governance and wealth?

Or will the system remain dominated by large corporations with an interest in keeping the issues shallow? Will the communication system be controlled to limit the focus to coffee flavours for the wealthy classes, without addressing workers' rights in coffee-producing nations?

This article examines the background for an interview with [Alan Levine \(cogdogblog\)](#) and Garry Putland ([EdNA](#)). I have tried to [sum up the current situation](#) and explain what blogs and RSS are all about, to make a point by [contrasting the culture and communities](#) which emerge from bulletin boards, email lists and the 'syndicated blog', and also [to describe some practical ideas](#) that have emerged from all the writing.

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## 1.2. Background: It's all about standards and decency!

Lately I've been reading a couple of great new books about the future of web design. Carrie Bickner with *Web Design on a Shoestring* and Jeffrey Zeldman *Designing with Web Standards*. Tremendous reading, from two people whose web designs are examples of crisp, clean, aesthetic layout.

For a while, you had to build a separate site for every browser. Thankfully that's all been changing with the [work of the web standards people](#). Now web designers can build 'forward-compatible' instead of 'backwards-compatible' web sites. (Sites won't need to be redesigned to match the new browsers, and they won't break the old ones either.)

To make sure everyone can access your site, you can keep your information structure separate from your presentation styles. Thanks to a transitional structural markup

language known as XHTML - in combination with a document full of presentation styles (CSS) - the web can be safe for designers - and faster than ever. Behind this stylish new set of standards lies XML - Extensible Markup Language - universally accepted as an open standard.

Now, out of this new XML creature, have also emerged the phenomena of 'syndication' and 'aggregation' - technologies that make it possible to spread your words far and wide, as well as to keep up with your favourite writers.

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### 1.3. There are many forces driving us to work here -

- » the need to make every document easily understood, by many different users around the world
- » the need to ensure that what we build now (learning resources, web sites ..) will still work in a few years - that we can re-use it
- » the human urge to communicate and share, to build community for building knowledge together
- » the hope that one day a teacher will be able to find exactly the resources they're looking for - exactly at the time they need them
- » the teacher urge to offer the best imaginable outcomes to learners
- » the teacher urge to enable learners to do all this stuff for themselves.

Out of these needs, comes the urge to overcome current barriers - access limited to the wealthy, fear of technology, proprietary closed standards, isolated outdated web pages that require high skill levels to update, and learning resources that are all in different formats - and unable to be searched and indexed by computers.

## 2. What is Blogging and RSS all about?

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### 2.1. New technologies - cutting ourselves on the bleeding edge again?

If you're not technically minded, it can take a while to catch up - what are the related technologies here? Learning objects, repositories, syndication, interoperability, mo-blogging, wikis, e-portfolios, stylish satin sheets and more. Another round of new jargon items to deal with, and who's got a handle on the old set anyway?

'Blogs are now solidly mainstream,' says Stephen Downes, noting that the practice has made its way into the corporate world. There are so many good articles at the moment giving good introductions to the field - including one recent piece by Anne Bartlett-Bragg in [this Knowledge Tree journal](#), and [another in the Australian Flexible Learning Community](#). Blogging is about keeping a public journal, and syndication (RSS) is one way that people are learning to share information, and develop widespread conversations across multiple sites.

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### 2.2. Who is using it, why and how?

So many people around the world, in all areas and fields, including journalism, technology, sport, education and more. **Blogging** has become one of the major new

ways to publish information and build web sites - because you don't need web editing software to adjust individual pages.

Syndicated online journalling is a popular way to share information - for many reasons.

- » All these new flavours of web site contain their own editing softwares.
- » Blog sites tend to be much easier on the eyes than the first wave of web sites, because blogging software often has a good range of templates built in - for example [blogger.com](#) offers a selection of designer templates, and users can contribute their own.
- » You can blather on about whatever you like, yet people will only visit it if they want to - and they know from your headlines whether they want to visit or not;
- » People can leave comments on your page (or comment via their own page, which 'TrackBack' to the original, creating a web of ideas, comments and replies - not necessarily all on the same site).
- » Like content management systems (eg [Mambo](#), [PostNuke](#), [Drupal](#), [Moodle](#)), blogging systems can be set up to enable multiple authorship, without needing to rely on desktop software - or a single technically capable person responsible for editing/uploading etc.

### **People out jogging around the blog...**

Alan Levine is one of those busy bloggers - you wonder how he gets the time to be so investigative, always finding new things online, trying them out and reporting on it to the rest of the world. He's the man behind [CogDogBlog](#), a frequently updated journal, which covers every topic from learning to technology. Alan is also part of the community in Maricopa - where they've been building a new [LearningXchange](#).

Another big name in this area is [Stephen Downes of course](#) - an individual who carries a strong capacity to inform thousands of others and whose website I'm sure would be as popular as the [merlot](#) site itself. In fact I've heard he's one of the [top ten Stephens at google!](#) You can receive his daily or weekly posts via either email or RSS. He's built his own RSS feeder because he wanted a system that would categorise all the links into a database as he went - very sensible.

Last year Stephen ran an RSS feed of all the bloggers from the [merlot](#) conference. In the words of [Darcy Norman](#) from Calgary, 'a metric busload of [educational bloggers](#)' was there.

### **Are they just text, or can you have sound, images and video?**

Anyone familiar with [Michael Coghlan's work](#) will know that if there is any future in online voice blogging - he will find it! The [Learning Times network site](#) provides members with access to a voice blogging system, which many educators are now using to report back from conferences around the world. For example Jonathan Finklestein's report from the New Orleans Museums and Learning conference - lots of images, interviews, text and voice reports.

Not only voice, but also photos and even video. The latest ideas are the photo blog and the 'm-/moblog' - send image, voice or text, direct from your mobile phone to your web site.

### **What is photo blogging all about?**

Here's a new idea that has been sweeping the world lately. Alan Levine recently delivered an [engaging and very thorough presentation at the 2004 Online Conference for 'Teaching in the Community Colleges'](#)

[Photoblogging](#) is a way of sharing your photo galleries with more information and interaction than you might do via just a gallery at [Yahoo!](#) or a simple web gallery. Uploading photos one by one, from your computer, or your mobile phone, you can add - and invite - comments into your individual space within the photoblogging community.

Now here's one activity that could be useful in an adult language or literacy group! Start with the visual - eg. describe your excursion via the shots you took on a digital camera. One blogging area per group, and different groups can add comments to each photograph.

### **Put it all together, and connect with other bloggers**

How do these technologies fit together? Take one web site for example, [glutnix.com](#) - '[chicken soup for the pixellated soul](#)'. A young guy, from NZ, working in information technology, he's obviously very technically capable - uses all the latest technologies, has a sense of humour, and links to all his friends who also blog regularly. He has a photo blog, and has begun to experiment with moblogging too. There's discussion between his site, and his friends' sites.

Then there's [Chaising Daisy](#) - a woman who's reading [the same book I mentioned in the first paragraph](#), also works in IT, lives in London, rarely uses her own name on the internet, and whose site is filled with links to other bloggers. She's also funny, and her site is beautifully designed. You can see how her writing interweaves with that of her blogging colleagues on other sites.

We could contrast these with '[The Spin Starts Here](#)', a Melbourne group using blog software to build a (sometimes offensive) commentary on pop culture. 'The Spin' have no RSS, no mo-blogging, and they write as a collaborative group on the one site. The site comes across more like a collection of essays than the usual short, reflective postings from an individual.

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## **2.3. What on earth is syndication?**

Is syndication like joining a group to buy a Tatts ticket? No. And aggregation is not the feeling you get when you lose, either.

According to Stephen Downes, RSS is now 'the transport mechanism of choice'. The best way to shift information about, in highly targeted ways. RSS comes in two parts - Syndication (sending your stuff out), and Aggregation (gathering other people's feeds).

Because RSS is based in the open standard of XML, it can also be more easily read by many different 'user agents' - including your web browser, news feeder, and the current crop of hand-held devices (mobile phone, personal assistant, electric mixer, etc). (One guy reckons we need to stop calling it syndication, because it's 'about to hit the big time'.)

### **Too many acronyms - XML? RSS?**

Okay, RSS - news feeding - is a sub-set of XML, which is a computer language. Many people say XML is the best way to describe, harvest, store and search 'metadata'. Metadata is information about information. Yes, I know, it's not that clear - but you'll be hearing a lot more about it in the future.

As Stephen points out in his [introduction to RSS for Educators](#), RSS is part of a bigger picture - Metadata Harvesting. Fields of metadata rippling in the sun waiting for the onset of a virtual combine harvester. Don't search the web, search the harvester.

Our online Dame [EdNA](#) represents one of the world's finest examples of metadata at work. The EdNA people have combed the web searching for interesting and useful educational information - and they have carefully sorted that information according to the 'metadata' - the information about the information. They've done this with their harvesting software.

Again, I must admit the technical details are beyond me here. It's like getting on an aeroplane isn't it? I don't need to know how it works, as long as I survive and learn something from the experience.

Really if you're looking for metadata, it's behind the scenes. It's what will make search work better in the future. It's a way of categorising everything in fine structural detail, so that ideally even a dumb computer knows what the social, linguistic and educational implications are - and can report back to you more easily.

### **Act like a journalist - syndicate your writings**

When you write something - and most bloggers write a lot - you can allow many people to re-publish your work instantly. You get your computer program to use XML code to 'mark up' (or, describe) every bit of your online text (diary / e-zine / class project / excursion report) in a meaningful way - so that other computers will 'understand' the social and linguistic implications of each component on the page.

RSS software can inform other computers about your text, relating, 'Here is the author's name, the date of writing, the headings, sub-headings, titles and descriptions'. These other computers send a quick summary to interested people, who don't have to visit your web page, unless your headlines are sufficiently juicy.

### Aggregation made easy?

Put it another way: when you visit [EdNA.edu.au](http://EdNA.edu.au), as I'm sure many of you do regularly, you can request a combined list of the latest headlines from BBC Education, or Wired, or the ACE sector, or a custom-built search. You can even set up an account, so that whenever you log in, you find all the lists you asked for, laid out on the page with an up-to-date aesthetic.

You don't have to rely on [EdNA](#) or [Stephen](#), you can build your own set of 'feeds' with a news reader / aggregator that lives on your desktop or web server. (Feeds are the lists of headlines that people send out when they Syndicate.)

Now who has the time to go and read articles from the BBC and Wired all day? Isn't all the information from mailing lists enough! The point is, when you have your carefully selected list of headlines from all these different sites, you only have to look at the one page. If none of the headlines are compelling or relevant - close your browser or news aggregator, and go back to more pressing priorities.

### What's the idea of a repository?

.. and why did they call it a repository, instead of a Storage Place, or a Collection?! People are talking about sending news feeds directly out of the new Storage Places - so that educators get up to the minute information about new resources.

There are some brilliant Storage Places around - places where people join forces to Collect Things. [Merlot.org](http://Merlot.org) - a place where many teachers from around the world let others know about the 'LearningObjects' they've created (Learning Materials, or Resources). Also, the new [Maricopa Learning Xchange](#).

Currently the big web wigs are dreaming of a 'Semantic Web', where every piece of data has enough information about its cultural and linguistic meaning, to enable computers to be able to manage data more easily without humans. So they can run the office and we can play beach volleyball.

*The Web can reach its full potential only if it becomes a place where data can be shared and processed by automated tools as well as by people. (from the W3C Semantic Web Introduction.)*

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## 2.4. Implications: why (we)blog, syndicate and aggregate?

Blogging cultures have easier access to socially enabling software (thanks to inbuilt comments and 'trackbacks'), than earlier waves of technology permitted to the first mountains of 'personal home pages'.

When people started putting home pages on the web, everyone was concerned that there would just be too much information, and that most of it would be useless rubbish. Well the blogging phenomenon hasn't done anything to counter that - if anything we're seeing that extreme glut of words continue its exponential rise!

However, because the ways of organising information are improving, thanks to the XML we've been raving about, it should become easier to find what you need. So, it becomes easier for writers to find their audience and writers can cross-fertilise ideas more fluently too.

#### **Danger of implosion?**

**Bill Burnham** recently suggested that there are too many blogs and too many news feeds. It's overwhelming. Also, because blogs tend to be archived by date rather than category, it's difficult to search via the news feed channels. In the end, you'll end up going back to the search engines and searching the web.

**Stephen** countered with his view that the world of syndication benefits from expert filtering. Rather than subscribing directly to 300 channels on your topic, you subscribe to the one expert who picks out the best of those 300, and forwards with an insightful comment. Stephen also points out that such an expert is likely to develop a **category system which will enable deeper searching**.

I'm not sure that you'd ever use RSS as a way to search - rather to keep track as new information comes in. **Some have suggested** that RSS is no different from email lists. This **got the goat of some other writers**, who find it free from junk, clean in its structure, and more efficient for a sender to organise.

#### **Dangers of syndicated spam and standards clashing?**

A big issue at the moment is the movement of spammers from email onto weblogs and news feed networks - the spammers are using 'referrer scripts' to indulge in **spamdexing**. **Alan Levine** is having huge problems with people leaving inappropriate comments on his site. **Wil Wheaton** has posted a bounty, for information leading to arrest, because spammers left links to child porn sites.

There seems to be some clash over standards in RSS at the moment - some people want to use an Atomic standard, while others prefer the classic version. I'm sure they'll work it out.

### **3. What sort of communities and cultures are emerging?**

This new set of social and cultural practices represents a shift in language and understanding. What new literacies are forming? Is this kind of writing more social and collaborative than other kinds? How can web readers manage the huge glut of information? Are there too many writers - will anyone ever read your blog?

I find it interesting to compare the blogging communities with other kinds of communities that are based around bulletin boards and mailing lists. A recent article analysed the 'Dynamics of a Blogosphere Story'. (The original story has disappeared already. You can follow the **buzz around it at Popdex**.)

They found that the 'highly interlinked' nature of the information depended on four kinds of posting:

1. lengthy opinion and moulding of a topic
2. 'vote post' (an opinion reflecting on another blogger's opinion)
3. reaction post (responding to a single post on another site), and
4. 'summation post' (updating the progress of the overall story across the community).

Plastic Bag followed this up by comparing the distributed power of the syndicated network, to the academic tradition of developing theory via distributed journal writing. Only now, the same pattern emerges over hours rather than months.

One writer has claimed that the blogosphere has become the 'sixth estate', an 'emerging world power that takes its place alongside other political powers'. Could a network develop such global influence? What a claim! Or would that be hype?

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### 3.1. Building communities - blog vs. bulletin board?

The bulletin board provides a focus for a group with something in common - a place where people can share ideas and information, in threaded discussion. A mailing list is also a kind of place - it has an address, and the same people are usually there. Somebody posts a query, and other people respond.

When people join in the discussion, they find out the social conventions of the group, and often tailor their comments to the expected subject matter, length, manner and tone of voice. Often there will be an established 'protocol'.

Sometimes, as in physical community life, people don't bother to find out the conventions first. It's like learning a language, some find it harder than others. Some feel constrained by protocol, and want to break free.

You might find a stridently individual person dominating the conversation, claiming they just want people to be 'up front' about everything, and finding social conventions a restricting factor on their expression. This person might be the sort who believes that free speech means speaking your mind at every opportunity in the most inflammatory way.

This individual can end up in conflict with the group - there may be flaming wars. The individual may either drive others away, or be removed by a moderator.

Here's an idea, maybe this conflict is aggravated by a lack of self-presence in text-based spaces. Can you really remember exactly who made which comment, in that last discussion-board interaction? We have a tendency to lose ourselves in such voiceless, body-free zones.

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### 3.2. Blogging communities emerge from individual sites

Blogging communities on the other hand, are developed around strong individual contributions. Individuals create a strong impression of themselves, which is public, open and archived. Blog sites are constructed in heavily individualised ways - focussing on the individual perspective of the web world out there, using templates with personal

aesthetic. Certainly there will be a strong sense of an individual personality in the writing itself.

Discussion may seem to be primarily one-way, with added visitor feedback. However, rather than emerging on a single site, discussion in a blogging community emerges from interaction between multiple sites. Each individual can use syndication methods to link to each others' sites and headlines, making it easy to visit each other, comment on each others' comments, and create a 'multiple-pathway' type of group conversation.

If you're not a blogger, though, are you left on the outer?

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### 3.3. Reality - merging individuals with community

At the moment you have millions of people accessing thousands of communal sites - such as [slashdot.org](http://slashdot.org), [Australian Flexible Learning Community \(AFLC\)](http://australianflexiblelearningcommunity.org), [mozilla.org](http://mozilla.org), [merlot.org](http://merlot.org), [LearningTimes](http://learningtimes.org) and so forth. More and more, anyone who participates in an online community will have constructed their own public profile somewhere - either within a corporate system such as Janisons (eg [AFLC](http://AFLC)), [LearningTimes](http://LearningTimes), or [mc2\[at\]vicnet](mailto:mc2[at]vicnet) - or within his/her own web space.

Because people are building strong, dynamic and evolving public profiles, their 'weight' in the communities also becomes much stronger. They have their own public soapbox to fall back on, where individual rantings are expected, and maybe can tone down the invective in shared areas.

Many bloggers also publish their contact details via several communities, via instant messenger system and relay chat channels. The channels of communication keep on expanding. No wonder there's big money in telecommunications!

So now, discussion takes place not only in the public venues, and the individual sites, but also in the corridors and linkages between them.

## 4. How could this impact on teaching and learning?

So, are there really any practical educational uses? It's not all hype again is it?

[Eva Kaplan-Leiserson](#) examines the range of options for using RSS in learning environments - for example, keeping in touch with learners' writing by subscribing to their feeds, keeping the learners informed via your own course-related feed, and using the system to manage storage of, and access to learning objects. This taps into Alan's idea that maybe in the future, you'll be able to 'assemble dynamic collections of Learning Objects' all on your own! Or, you might one day use the technology to collaborate in a project workspace.

Alan Levine has shown that photo blogging can be very useful for art classes, and conference communication. Many educators are using the audio blogging features in [LearningTimes](http://LearningTimes) to report back on conference experiences. The latest [merlot.org](http://merlot.org) conference had dozens of news feeds from individual bloggers, all poured from

Stephen's bottle! A professor in New York State has been delivering her courses via MovableType.

Mary Harrsch also outlines some 'Killer App' RSS educational possibilities: a teacher could share his or her ideas for lesson plans, or keep in touch with the latest subject area news, a school superintendent could stay up to date with news updates from schools in the local area, or a researcher could keep the world informed of daily progress.

I mentioned earlier the post-excursion idea, for an adult literacy group. Will this classroom practice evolve one day into online radio or video channels, via multiple authorship blogging?

Because RSS can be written and read from many devices, not just your desktop computer, perhaps such collaborative communication methods would be useful for people working in industries, who need to use mobile devices for their learning.

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#### 4.1. Blog to learn?

Anne Bartlett-Bragg in the fourth edition of Knowledge Tree, put together a very thorough description of a range of approaches to using blogs in education. In Anne's opinion, blogs in education generally represent a wide intention to 'enrich the learning experience, and provide an opportunity for learners to shift from surface to deeper levels of learning'.

Anne sums up the range of educational blogging in the categories of: group blogs, published writings, personal opinion publishing, academic blogs, research journals, and learning journals.

Anne's own teaching/learning experience has been mainly with the learning journal. Her understanding, that reflection is a vital part of the learning process, led her to encourage deepening reflection through online journaling.

She noted a strong comparison between her five stage model of deepening awareness through individual blogging, and the five stage model of community development that Gilly Salmon reports in her 'e-moderation' work. There's also a similarity here with the currently popular social constructivist perspective - that collaborative reflection leads to new knowledge buildings.

Virtual skyscrapers, full of knowledge, shared, constructed and easily accessed by your community of learners. Now there's a cyber skyline view!

### 5. Footnotes: technical stuff and links

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#### How can people get involved?

Grab your web browser and search for bloggers - there are far too many to choose from. (Between half and two million). When you find one, they'll invariably have dozens of links to other bloggers too. Start with a collection, eg eLearn Space has a good list.

### What tools are available?

You can try a hosted free service such as [blogger.com](#) - recently acquired by google - [LiveJournal](#), or [xanga.com](#). You could upgrade one of these from free to pay.

[Blogger.com](#) has recently upgraded its interface, aiming for a 'dashboard' style approach - and incidentally upgrading its approach to web standards too. Their site is now build in XHTML (the smooth new version of hypertext markup language), and they offer templates built by, for example, Jeffrey Zeldman.

Or you could get your own blogging software and host on your own server. [WordPress](#) and [MovableType](#) are two favourites. If you're looking for the photo blogging experience, there's [buzznet.com](#), [fotolog.net](#), or [flickr.com](#). So much to choose from.

Field Code Changed

To take part in the RSS happening, you'll need some kind of news reader - these can be standalone desktop software like an email client, web-based services, or some code that you plug into your own web page/server. Then you'll need some 'feeds'. You could start with the easy sign-in version at [bloglines](#). One blogger describes how you can now [get RSS feeds via your 'MyYahoo!' account](#).

### What's next?

Remember [google's Zeitgeist](#) - the end-of-year report on which themes were most popular in which countries? Well people are now trying to predict themes as they happen. Because blog communities tend to recycle themes, ideas - and 'memes' - sites such as [feedster.com](#), and [technorati.com](#) aim to give an overview of the thematic currents running through the blogging world. [Blogroots.com](#) provides a [newsfeed](#) letting you know when anyone blogs on the topic of blogging. Now that's getting too self-referential isn't it!?

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## References

[www.webstandards.org/](#)

- » Carrie Bickner is [the Rogue Librarian](#),
- » Jeffrey Zeldman is responsible for [Designing with WebStandards](#).

### Bloggers - educational and otherwise ..

- » [Education Bloggers Network](#)
- » [And more educational blogs](#)
- » [More at E-LearnSpace](#)
  
- » [Stephen Downes](#)
- » [Alan Levine at cogdogblog](#)
- » [Michael Coghlan reported from NetworkingNow03](#)
- » [Darcy Norman's Learning commons](#)
- » [Scott Leslie - Technologies for Learning, Thinking & Collaborating](#)
  
- » [Wil Wheaton has an audio blog, a photo blog and more](#)
- » [A journalist in Iraq - steelbars.blogspot.com/](#)

- » A designer in London [chasingdaisy.typepad.com/](http://chasingdaisy.typepad.com/)
- » A programmer in NZ - [glutnix.com](http://glutnix.com)

### Writing about Ed-Blogging and RSS

- » Anne Bartlett-Bragg, 'Blogging to Learn'. Knowledge Tree Journal December 03.
- » Mary Harrsch on 'RSS - the next killer app?'
- » Downes - Introduction to RSS for Educational Designers
- » Recent intro to blogging from AFLC site

### Information about RSS

- » Alan Levine - 'What's all the fuss about RSS?' (+ his regular blogging on RSS)
- » And his presentation from merlot 03
- » Search postings from Stephen Downes' Daily updates, eg topic of RSS (!) - and sup from his Edu\_RSS service - full of feeds for the knowledge hungry
- » Trevor Ettenborough provides a webquest teaching us all about Blogs & RSS
- » Mark Nottingham's basic overview
- » Good overview from [geckotribe.com/..](http://geckotribe.com/)

### Software and sites

- » Hosted sites - [blogger.com](http://blogger.com), [LiveJournal](http://LiveJournal), [xanga.com](http://xanga.com)
- » Server software - [WordPress](http://WordPress) or [MovableType](http://MovableType)
- » Photo Blogging - [buzznet.com](http://buzznet.com), [fotolog.net](http://fotolog.net), or [flickr.com](http://flickr.com)
- » A good overview at - [www.blogscanada.ca/..](http://www.blogscanada.ca/)
- » [audblog.com/](http://audblog.com/) offers an audio blog - free trial.
- » [Typepad.com](http://Typepad.com) on moblogging
- » [GeckoTribe](http://GeckoTribe) has some interesting softwares, and a free service for newsfeeds
- » [Bloglines](http://Bloglines) promises to keep you up to date with your chosen news feeds.
- » [Magpie](http://Magpie) is an Open Source newsfeeder for your web server (Alan is trialling this.)
- » [FeedReader](http://FeedReader) is a new (alpha) Open Source newsfeeder for your desktop

### Communities

- » [LearningTimes](http://LearningTimes) / Australian flexible learning community (AFLC),
- » [Maricopa Learning Xchange](http://Maricopa Learning Xchange) / [Merlot.org](http://Merlot.org) / [EdNa](http://EdNa) (education network Australia)
- » Open Source Communities - [Mozilla.org](http://Mozilla.org), [slashdot.org](http://slashdot.org), [moodle.org](http://moodle.org)
- » Free tools / space for Victorian online community building - [mc2\[at\]vicnet](mailto:mc2[at]vicnet)

### Submitted by Michael Chalk

Michael Chalk has been working as an adult language literacy teacher for over eight years. He is now working as Flexible Learning Co-ordinator at [Preston Reservoir Adult Community Education \(PRACE\)](http://Preston Reservoir Adult Community Education (PRACE)), and has participated in and led a number of projects such as the [Flexible Learning Leaders program](http://Flexible Learning Leaders program) in 2003 when he researched [open source software](http://open source software). Perhaps the most well known of Michael's projects is 'At the Beach' a fun and informative site for adult language and literacy students, built in collaboration with other teachers at PRACE.