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PodCastReady

Publishing RSS feeds and podcast feeds
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INTRODUCTION

What is an RSS feed?

RSS is a family of web feed formats, specified in XML and used for Web syndication. RSS is used by (among other things) news Web sites, weblogs and podcasting. The abbreviation is variously used to refer to the following standards:

- Really Simple Syndication (RSS 2.0)
- Rich Site Summary (RSS 0.91, RSS 1.0)
- RDF Site Summary (RSS 0.9 and 1.0)

Web feeds provide web content or summaries of web content together with links to the full versions of the content, and other metadata. RSS, in particular, delivers this information as an XML file called an RSS feed, webfeed, RSS stream, or RSS channel. In addition to facilitating syndication, web feeds allow a website's frequent readers to track updates on the site using an aggregator.

A program known as a feed reader or aggregator can check a list of feeds on behalf of a user and display any updated articles that it finds. It is common to find web feeds on major websites and many smaller ones.

What is a Podcast?

"Podcasting" is a compound word coined in 2004, that combined two words: "iPod" and "broadcasting." Even though the name is a misnomer, in that podcasting doesn't require an iPod and no over-the-air broadcasting is required, it has maintained its prominence in the face of numerous alternatives.

Podcasting is the method of distributing multimedia files, such as audio programs or music videos, over the Internet using either the RSS or Atom syndication formats, for playback on mobile devices and personal computers. The term podcast, like 'radio', can mean both the content and the method of delivery. The host or author of a podcast is often called a podcaster. Podcasters' web sites may also offer direct download or streaming of their files; a podcast however is distinguished by its ability to be downloaded automatically using software capable of reading RSS or Atom feeds.

Usually a podcast features one type of 'show', with new episodes released either sporadically or at planned intervals such as daily or weekly. In addition, there are podcast networks that feature multiple shows on the same feed.

Using WebReady to maintain your RSS feed or Podcast feed

It is easy to maintain an RSS feed or a Podcast feed (for iTunes or a similar podcast service) using WebReady in the capacity that you already do to publish content to your existing web site(s). If you are not already using WebReady in some capacity, please call for additional setup help.

Your news team does nothing extra to make their news stories show up in the RSS feed. All it takes to maintain an RSS feed is a little setup work by WireReady or you can do it yourself with the set of instructions below. After that, your news team just pushes news like they always have and the RSS feed is automatically maintained.

The instructions on the following pages outline 3 easy steps to setup your RSS feed(s) using template files provided by WireReady. Please call our support line if you have questions or if you would like WireReady to do the setup work for you.

WebReady can also maintain your own pages of podcasts for direct download from your web site

In addition to having your original audio available for subscription (free download from a podcast service such as iTunes), you may also want your original audio available on your web site. WebReady can maintain your web page of direct podcast downloads just as it does your news, sports, obituaries, ag news, community events, and more.

Please call if you would like this direct-download capability on your web pages. The instructions provided on the following pages are only for setting up the RSS feed or podcast feed, not for setting up your web page of direct-download podcasts.

Setting up your RSS feed to be maintained by WebReady

STEP 1 - Add actual rss files to your server

WireReady will provide template RSS files for either a regular RSS feed or an RSS feed that will be used for iTunes and/or podcasting.

Open the RSS file with Windows Notepad and edit between the tags with the information you desire to be displayed in users RSS reader software and/or iTunes. The places you can safely edit are noted with ALL CAPS text.

Be careful editing this file. Be sure not to accidentally remove an opening or closing tag notation such as a "<" or a ">" or any other text in the template files that is not in ALL CAPS.

Be careful when saving your changes to the RSS file. You need to make sure that the file extension remains ".rss" and that the content of the file is not corrupted. To avoid corruption, please edit this file only with the Windows Notepad.

In the template RSS files provided by WireReady are the commands that allow the RSS file to accept content from the WireReady software. Please make sure that these commands remain intact when you are editing.

```
<!--WireReady Begin Ordered List Fixed Descending 100  
IndexTextTemplate.htm IndexLinkTemplate.htm -->  
<!--WireReady End Ordered List -->
```

You may edit one part of the WireReady commands and that is the number of entries to be maintained in the RSS file. The default is 100 entries. This number may be decreased to any number you desire above 1, but needs to remain at 100 or less. We have tried maintaining up to 500 entries, but have concluded that it is too difficult to narrow down the possible problems with 500 files should anything go wrong with the RSS file. 100 entries is much more manageable and holds plenty of content for your subscribers to view.

Your rss file or files will need to be uploaded to your FTP site or saved on your in-house web computer in the desired location. Typically, stories published by WireReady to your FTP site or in-house web computer are already being published to a folder named "wire," "wireready," "stories" or some similar notation. This folder is also the location where you'll want to save your RSS file.

STEP 2 - Add template files to WebReady to format RSS file

You will need to create a new folder

(w:\wire\dbcapture\templates\rss) and name it "rss" to make the space to hold the template files that instruct WireReady how to format the information for your RSS file.

See the situations below to decide which template files you need to save in your new "rss" folder.

a. Situation 1 - You already publish to unique stories

If your dbfolder.dat file is already publishing "unique" stories - or in other words, it is already creating an html page for each story and linking that story to another location on your web site - then WebReady only needs 2 template files to create the RSS entry in your RSS file.

Please save these 2 files to your "rss" folder:

IndexTextTemplate.htm and IndexTextLinkTemplate.htm

You will not need the remaining files, although it won't hurt anything to put them in your rss folder.

You'll need to edit the IndexTextTemplate.htm file in Windows Notepad. The part in ALL CAPS can be safely edited to reflect the correct path to your unique files. There is no need to edit the IndexTextLinkTemplate.

NOTE: The first WireReady tag - <!--WireReady Slug --> - may need to be changed to an alternate WireReady tag so that it matches the way the rest of your site works. Some alternate options for the title tag are:

```
<!--WireReady NextBroadcastFile -->  
<!--WireReady User1 -->
```

b. Situation 2 - You only publish to a list

If your dbfolder.dat file does not publish "unique" stories - or in other words, does not create an html page for only the story, but instead, adds the text of the story to a large list of short stories - then WebReady needs 4 template files to create the RSS entry in your RSS file.

Please save all 4 files (IndexTextLinkTemplate.htm, IndexTextTemplate.htm, TextLinkTemplate.htm and TextTemplate.htm) to your "rss" folder:

Please see the note above (for situation 1) for instructions on editing the IndexTextTemplate.htm file.

NOTE: The TextTemplate.htm file will need to be edited to match the look and feel of your current web site pages. The template, as it is, will only create a plain-text page that looks nothing like the rest of your site. Please call for assistance in editing the TextTemplate.htm.

STEP 3 - Add commands to dbcapture to publish to RSS file

The last step in setting up WebReady to web publish an RSS feed is telling WebReady to publish to your new RSS file. This involves editing your "dbfolder.dat" file.

w:\wire\dbcapture\dbfolder.dat needs to be opened only with Windows Notepad to avoid corrupting the file. It is always a good practice to work in a copy of this file, so that the original can be restored if anything goes wrong.

Telling WebReady how to publish can vary, depending on how you currently web publish. See the situations outlined below to determine which way you should configure your dbfolder.dat.

a. Situation 1 - you already publish to unique stories

If your dbfolder.dat file is already publishing "unique" stories - or in other words, it is already creating an html page for each story and linking that story to another location on your web site - then you only need to add 1 line of code to your dbfolder.dat file.

Here is an example of the main line of code in the dbfolder.dat that tells WebReady to publish a unique story.

```
News;Output_Filename=YOUR_PATH_TO_YOUR_SERVER/wire/news.htm
;Modify_File;Convert_Text;template_directory=w:\wire\dbcapture\templates\;Aliases=zEXAMPLE1,zEXAMPLE2;NextBroadcastFileLabel=Headline;ShowLabel=Photo
Caption;UserID=USER_NAME;Password=PASSWORD;Audio_Format=85
```

Add 1 command to the above line of code:

```
News;Output_Filename=YOUR_PATH_TO_YOUR_SERVER/wire/news.htm
;Modify_File;Convert_Text;template_directory=w:\wire\dbcapture\templates\;Aliases=zEXAMPLE1,zEXAMPLE2,zRSSNewsIndex;NextBroadcastFileLabel=Headline;ShowLabel=Photo
Caption;UserID=USER_NAME;Password=PASSWORD;Audio_Format=85
```

And then copy the code below to the **BOTTOM** of the dbfolder.dat, making sure it's on its own line. Change the words in **ALL CAPS** to match the rest of your dbfolder.dat lines.

```
zRSSNewsIndex;Output_Filename= YOUR_PATH_TO_YOUR_SERVER
/wire/news.rss;Modify_File;Convert_Text;template_directory=
w:\wire\dbcapture\templates\rss\;UserID=
USER_NAME;Password=PASSWORD;Audio_Format=85
```

See the next page for situation 2 and more notes on configuring dbfolder.dat to web publish to your RSS files.

b. **Situation 2 - you only publish to a list**

If your dbfolder.dat file does not publish "unique" stories - or in other words, does not create an html page for only the story, but instead, adds the text of the story to a large list of short stories - then you need to add several lines of code to your dbfolder.dat file.

Here is an example of the main line of code in the dbfolder.dat that tells WebReady to modify your list of short stories.

```
zNewscastIndex;Output_Filename=YOUR_PATH_TO_YOUR_SERVER
/Newscast.html;Modify_File;Convert_Text;template_directory=
W:\Wire\dbcapture\templates\;userID=USER_NAME;password=PASS
WORD;Audio_Format=85
```

Add 1 command to the above line of code:

```
zNewscastIndex;Output_Filename=YOUR_PATH_TO_YOUR_SERVER
/Newscast.html;Modify_File;Convert_Text;template_directory=
W:\Wire\dbcapture\templates\;Aliases=zRSSNews;userID=USER_N
AME;password=PASSWORD
```

And then copy and paste the following code to the BOTTOM of the dbfolder.dat, making sure to start it on its own line. Change the words in ALL CAPS to match the rest of your dbfolder.dat lines.

```
zRSSNews;Output_Filename= YOUR_PATH_TO_YOUR_SERVER
/wire/unique.htm;Unique_File;Convert_Text;template_director
y=w:\wire\dbcapture\templates\rss\;Aliases=zRSSNewsIndex;Us
erID=USER_NAME;Password=PASSWORD;Audio_Format=85
```

```
zRSSNewsIndex;Output_Filename=YOUR_PATH_TO_YOUR_SERVER
/wire/news.rss;Modify_File;Convert_Text;template_directory=
w:\wire\dbcapture\templates\rss\;UserID=
USER_NAME;Password=PASSWORD;Audio_Format=85
```

NOTE: In both situations 1 and 2, the copy and paste lines of code are bare-bones examples of code. If the rest of the code in your dbfolder.dat includes more commands such as, "NextBroadcastFileLabel=Headline; or User2Label=Web Headline;" those commands will also need to be added to the RSS coding, making sure that there are semi-colons separating each command.

NOTE: In the situation where you are only publishing to a list of files and not creating unique files, WebReady will create a "unique" story page for each RSS entry and this will generate a lot of new files on your server. Rest assured, these files will delete off your server automatically when they drop off the bottom of the list of files (i.e. 100 is the default mentioned previously). Please call if your server is holding more than 100 unique stories for your RSS file.

Suggestions for web publishing when maintaining an RSS file

RSS is a language that has specific ways in which it understands the content of an RSS file. Here are some suggestions on what to avoid to keep your RSS files running smoothly.

Don't use extra dashes or punctuation in your titles

RSS is picky about the naming conventions for your files and attached audio. For example, RSS will not accept an audio file that has 2 or more dashes together in its name (i.e. "Israel---web.mp3"). A better way to name the file would be "Israel-web.mp3".

Please try to stay away from quotation marks, exclamation points, question marks, multiple dashes or alternate characters like those found by using the "shift" key on your keyboard (i.e. #, \$, %, &, *, etc) when naming your stories and attached files. Commas are also not acceptable when naming your files.

Don't change the way WebReady displays the date and time in RSS

WireReady has recently updated the way it pushes the date and time of the file to the RSS entry; it is formatted in RFC-2822. This is the only way it can be displayed.

Don't be surprised if sometimes the RSS file goes bad

(i.e. not readable in a feed aggregator/reader and/or does not validate on <http://feedvalidator.org>)

RSS expects certain characters to be represented with their alpha-numeric codes. A good example is the code "©" for the copyright symbol in the RSS file. Occasionally, WireReady will not handle punctuation correctly and your RSS file will not validate. This can be corrected by hand-editing the RSS file. If this happens and you are unsure of how to fix it, please call WireReady for assistance.

Configuration Notes

The length of the RSS item description

The `<!--WireReady StorySummary -->` tag could cause your RSS entry descriptions to be too long or too short. The length (in total characters) can be changed in the `w:\wire\dbcapture\dbcapture.ini` file.

When files don't delete automatically

In the `IndexTextTemplate.htm` file, there is a command that tells WireReady to delete the file from the web server when it drops off the bottom of the list (i.e. 100 items is the default number of items to maintain).

If the delete command is not working and your web server is cluttered with too many stories, try editing the path to the file to delete.

For example:

```
<!--[<!--WireReady UniqueFilename -->]-->
```

could be changed to:

```
<!--[wire/<!--WireReady UniqueFilename -->]-->
```