RSS and current awareness: how two projects (ticTOCs and Gold Dust) are hoping to improve the academic information landscape

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TOCs Journal Tables of Contents Service

Gold Dust Project

JISC

Outline

- RSS and its potential for current awareness purposes in the academic sector
- ticTOCs project
- Gold Dust project

RSS - Wikipedia

- RSS is a family of Web feed formats used to publish frequently updated content such as blog entries, news headlines, and podcasts. An RSS document (which is called a "feed" or "web feed" or "channel") contains either a summary of content from an associated web site or the full text. RSS makes it possible for people to keep up with web sites in an automated manner that can be piped into special programs or filtered displays. RSS content can be read using software called an "RSS reader", "feed reader" or an "aggregator".

RSS – more information

- RSS Specifications
  - http://www.rss-specifications.com/
- RSS Compendium
  - http://allrss.com/

Growth of RSS

Selection of feed categories of interest to academics

- Journal Tables of Contents (TOCs), e.g.
  - http://www.nature.com/nature/current_issue/rss/
- Calls for papers, e.g.
  - http://www.elsevierscitech.com/rss/compsci_cfp.xml
- Funding opportunity news, e.g.
  - http://fundingopps.cos.com/news/rss.xml
- New patents, e.g.
  - http://www.freepatentsonline.com/rssfeed.html
- New theses & dissertations, e.g.
  - http://rss.proquest.com/rss/diss/Dissertations_Engineering_Chemical.xml
- Professional society news, e.g.
  - http://royalsociety.org/rss/newsFeed.xml
- Forthcoming conference & events, e.g.
  - http://eventseer.net/feeds/main/
- New Teaching & Learning resources, e.g.
  - http://crs.nsdl.org/rssfeed.php?svc=rrs&flt=c

More feed categories

- New book announcements, e.g. http://www.wildy.com/browse-by-subject
- New items in Repositories, e.g. http://arxiv.org/rss/cs

Example from Eventseer.com

- ***3rd international conference on digital information management (ICDIM 2008)***
- Final Call for Workshop Proposals

Third IEEE International Conference on Digital Information Management (ICDIM 2008)
(IEEE sponsored)
November 13-16, 2008
University of East London, London. UK
(http://www.icdim.org)

ICDIM 2008 (IEEE Sponsored) will host a number of workshops addressing different areas related to digital **information management** that complement the main ICDIM 2008 conference.

We invite workshop organizers to send proposals as instructed below.

Workshops are intended to serve as an intensive collaborative forum for exchanging late breaking ideas and theories in an evolutionary stage. We encourage prospective workshop organizers to submit proposals for highly-interactive workshops focusing on either in-depth analysis or broad-ranging approaches to areas related to digital **information management**.

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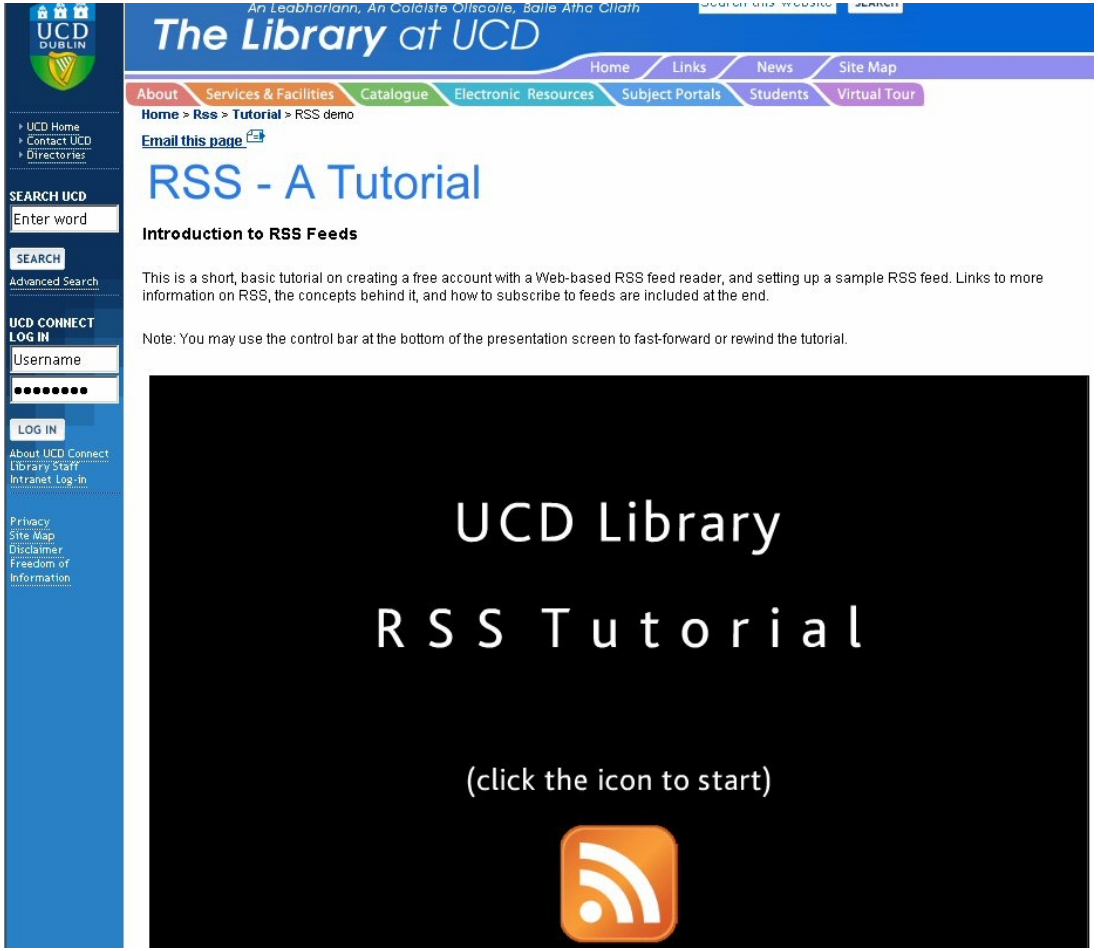
Response from downstream - commercial

Response from downstream – LIS community

- TOCRoSS - to place journal tables of content (TOC) data into a library catalogue without human intervention
- FeedNavigator Health articles and RSS feeds - downloads medical feeds published by web sites and aggregates their content into a single feed, latest news first.
- University of Saskatchewan Library - Electronic Journals with RSS Feeds

Guides to RSS



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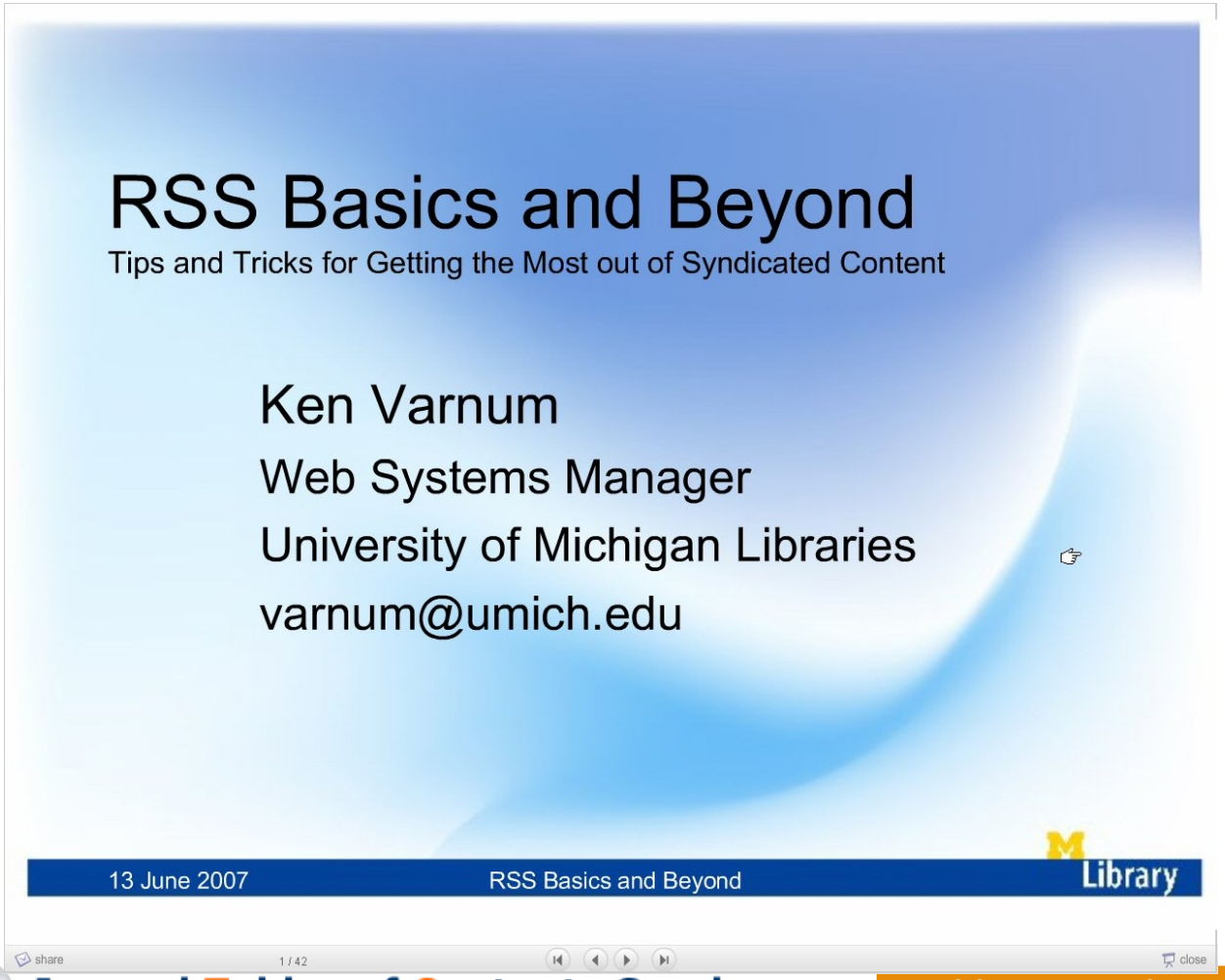
Guides to RSS



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Guides to RSS

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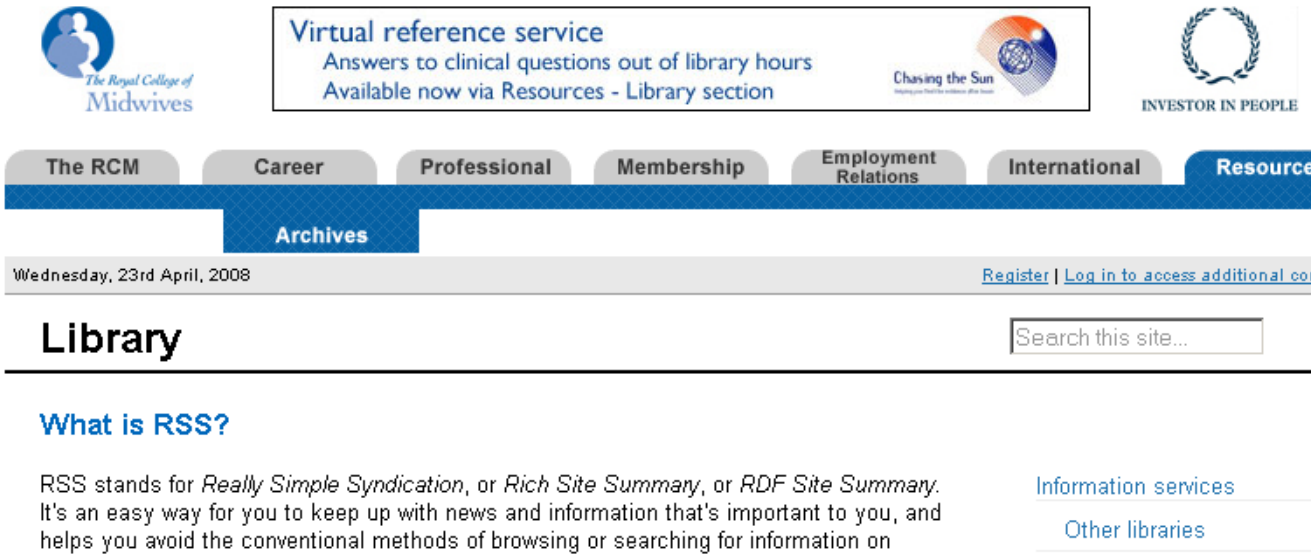
Guides to RSS



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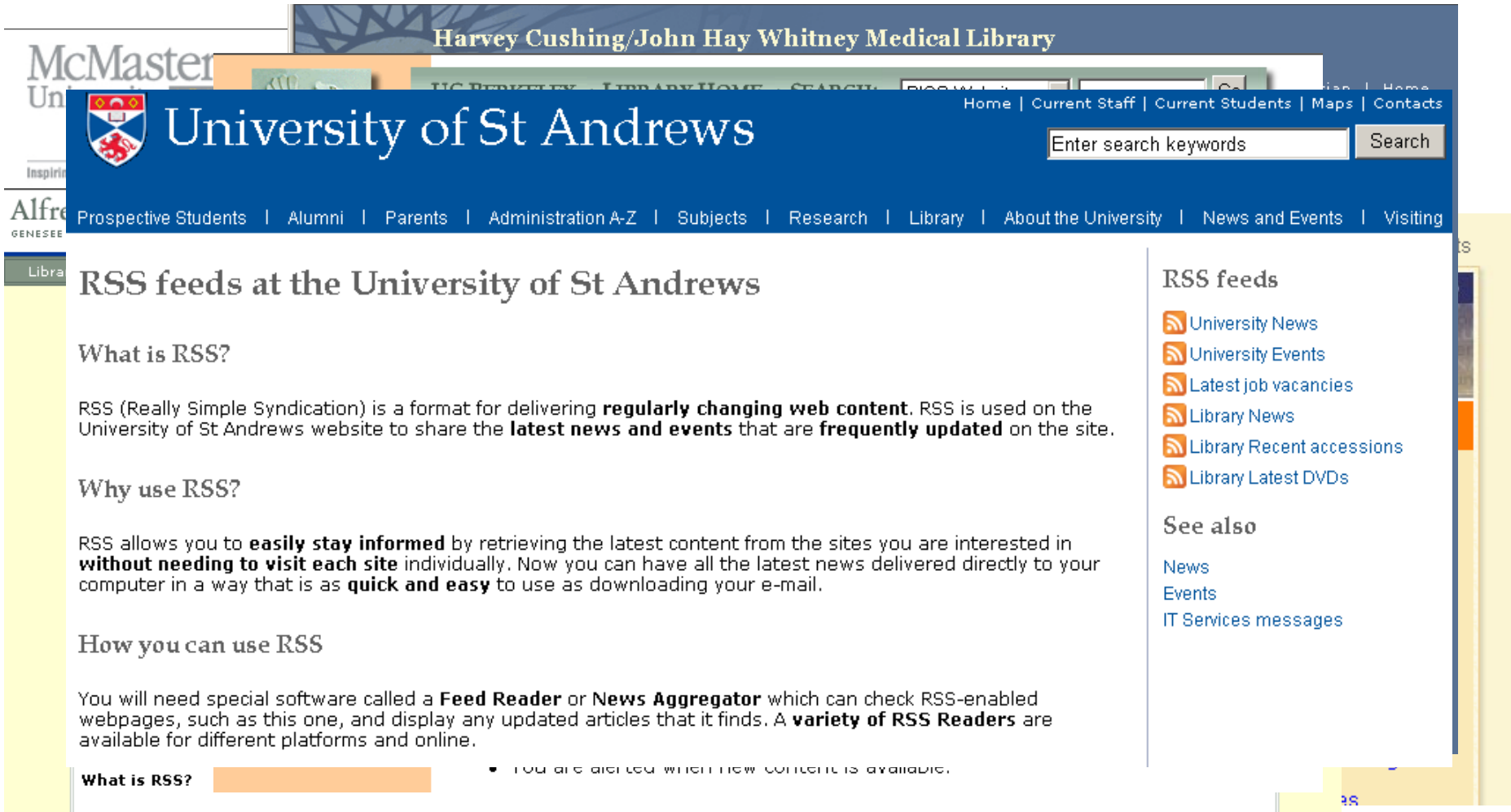
Guides to RSS



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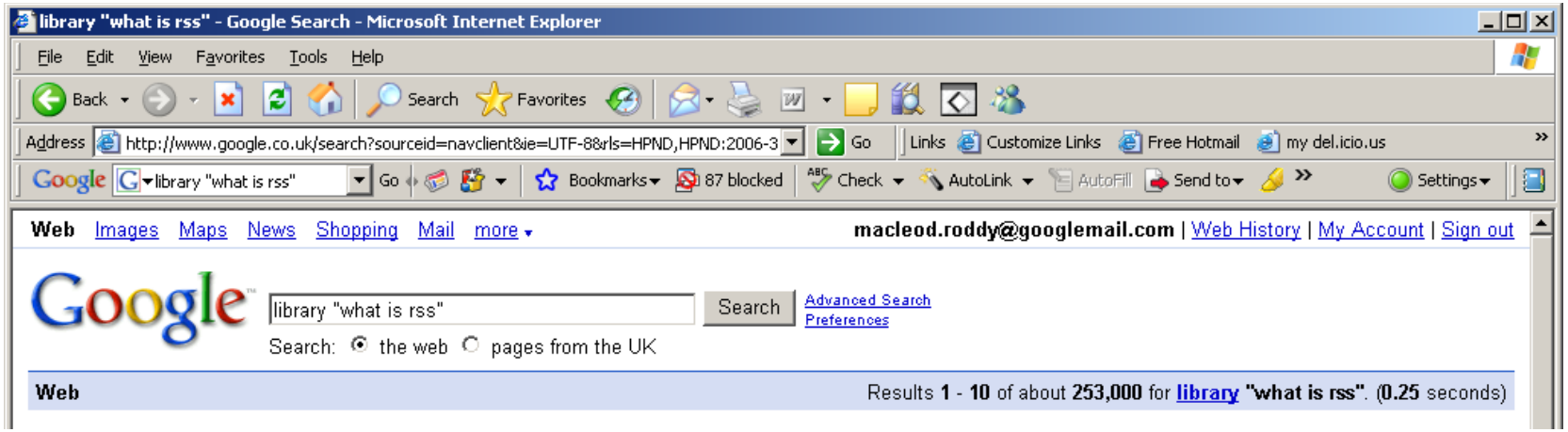
Response from downstream – LIS community



- Google search:
  - Library + “what is rss” = 253,000 hits!!
- What a lot of duplicated effort!!!

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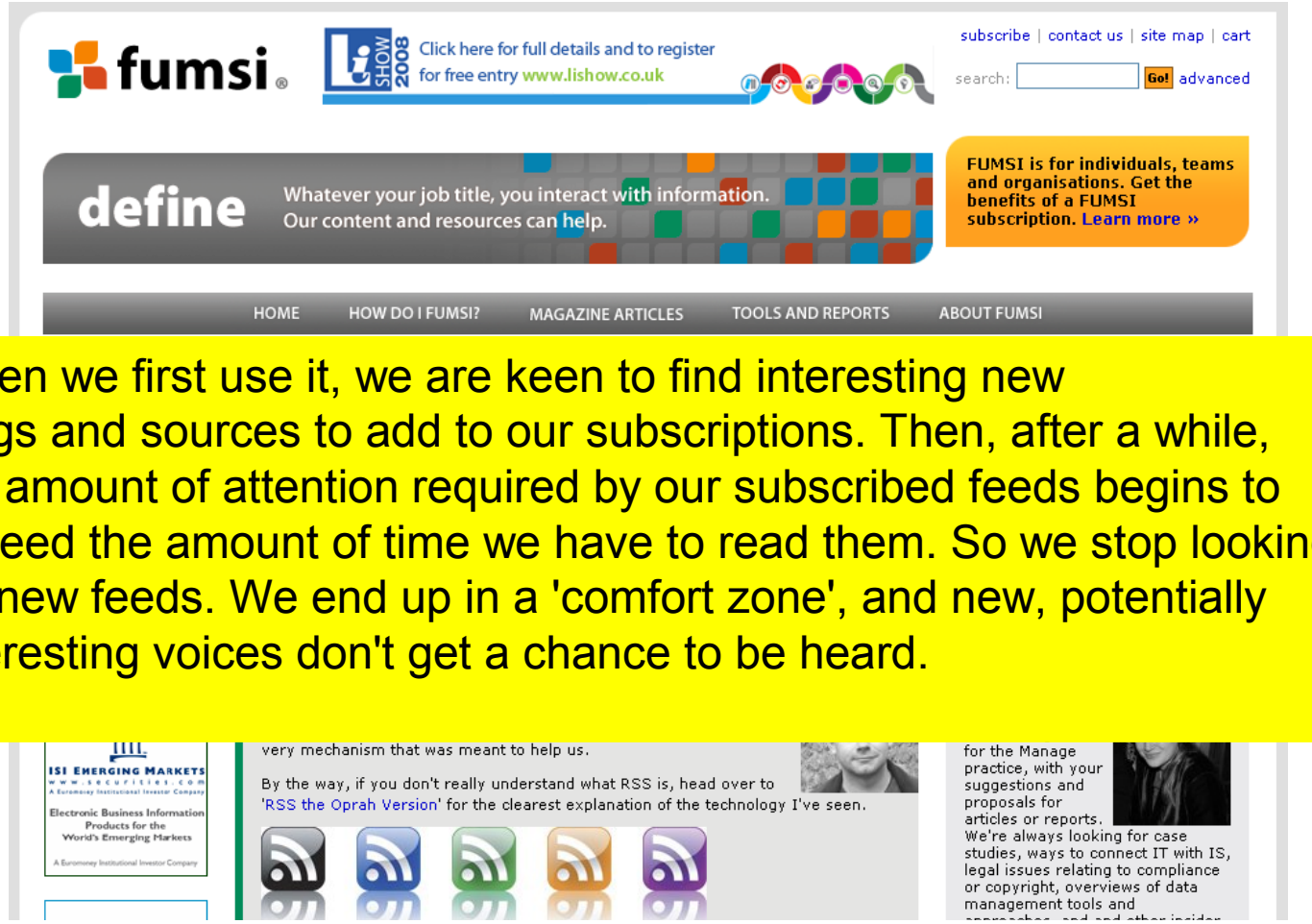
fumsi March 2008



When we first use it, we are keen to find interesting new blogs and sources to add to our subscriptions. Then, after a while, the amount of attention required by our subscribed feeds begins to exceed the amount of time we have to read them. So we stop looking for new feeds. We end up in a 'comfort zone', and new, potentially interesting voices don't get a chance to be heard.

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Problems with RSS

- Sometimes still a bit technical
- Too many possibly relevant RSS feeds, and not always easy to find them
- These produce a torrent of items within which only a very small number may be of interest to academics
- It can take much time to manage the process

Save the time of the user

- Better RSS finding tools
- Better RSS filtering tools
- Better RSS personalisation tools
- Services aimed at niche areas of interest to academics
- Save their precious time
- ticTOCs Journal Tables of Contents Service http://www.tictocs.ac.uk
- Gold Dust http://www.hull.ac.uk/golddust/

ticTOCs

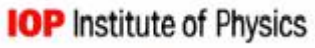
- Project to develop a freely available **current awareness service** which will make it easy for academics and researchers to **find**, **display**, **store**, **combine** and **reuse** scholarly journal tables of contents (TOCs) RSS feeds from multiple publishers in a personalisable website, and also facilitate the export of TOC RSS feeds to feedreaders of choice.
- http://www.tictocs.ac.uk

ticTOCs partners

Universities, etc

For profit publishers, etc

Not-for-profit



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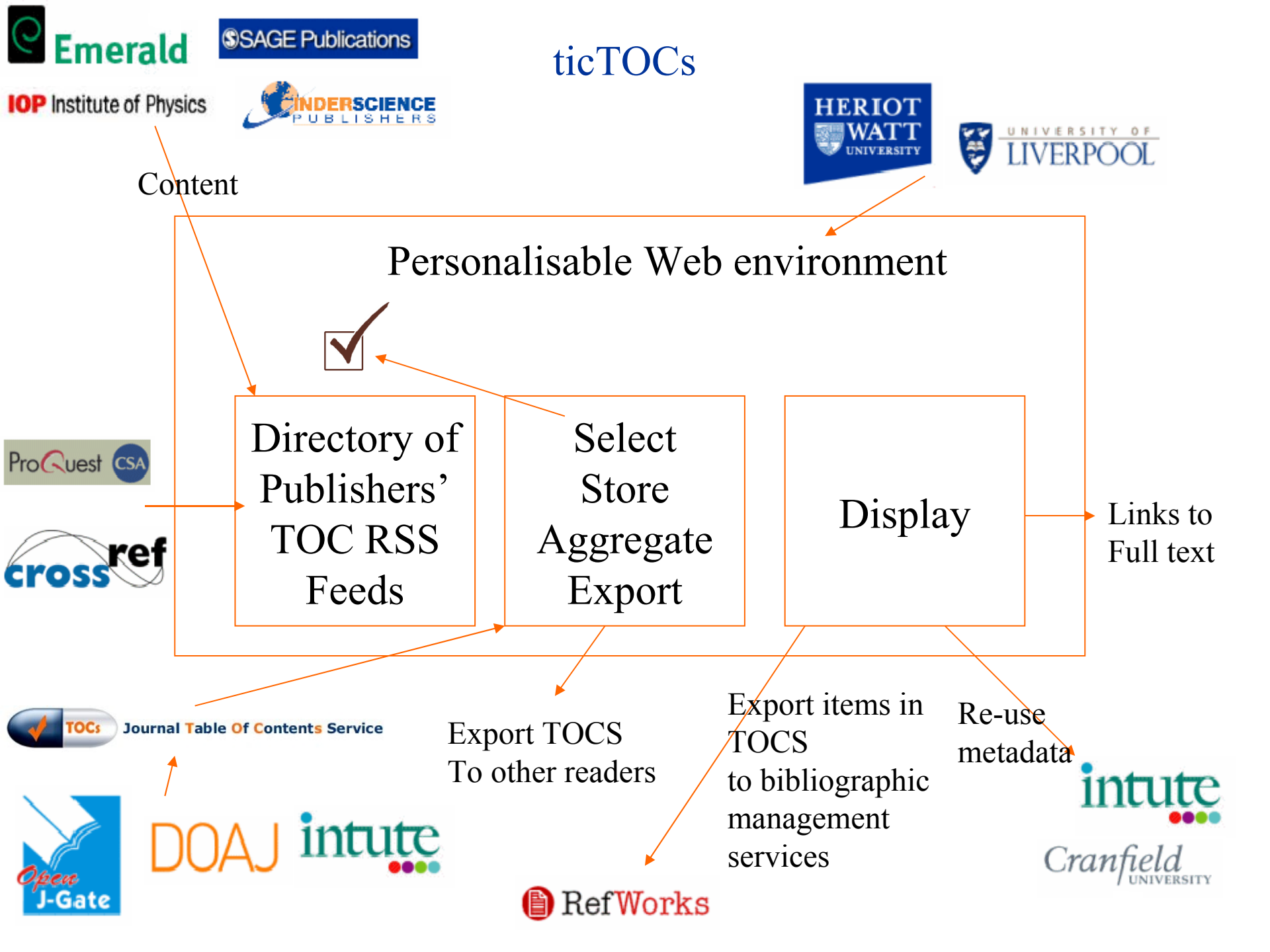
Emerald
SAGE Publications
IOP Institute of Physics
INDERSCIENCE PUBLISHERS
HERIOT WATT UNIVERSITY
UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL
Content
Personalisable Web environment
Directory of Publishers' TOC RSS Feeds
Select Store Aggregate Export
Display
Links to Full text
ProQuest CSA
crossref
TOCs Journal Table Of Contents Service
Export TOCS To other readers
Export items in TOCS to bibliographic management services
Re-use metadata
DOAJ
intute
Open J-Gate
RefWorks
intute
Cranfield UNIVERSITY

TOCs by RSS

- March 2005 - 13 Publishers with 1,139 titles
- October 2006 - 38 Publishers with more than 7,000 titles
- April 2008 – many more publishers, 000s more titles!

TOCs by RSS

American Chemical Society
American Institute of Physics
American Physical Society
Annual Reviews
ANSI Journals
BioMed Central
Blackwell Synergy
BMJ Journals
CALIBER - University of California Press
Cambridge Journals Online
Cell Press
International Union of Crystallography
EDP Sciences
Emerald
Haworth Press
HighWire Press
Hindawi Publishing Coporation
IEEE Xplore
Inderscience
Ingenta Connect
Institute of Physics
Karger Publishers
Lippincott Williams & Wilkins
Mary Ann Liebert, Inc.
MIT Press
Nature Publishing Group
New England Journal of Medicine
New Scientist
New Statesman
Oxford University Press
Peeters Publishers
PLoS - Public Library of Science journals
Project MUSE
Royal Society of Chemistry
SAGE Publications
Science
ScienceDirect
SIAM
Springer
Taylor & Francis informaworld
Thieme –
Wiley InterScience
Zetoc
…

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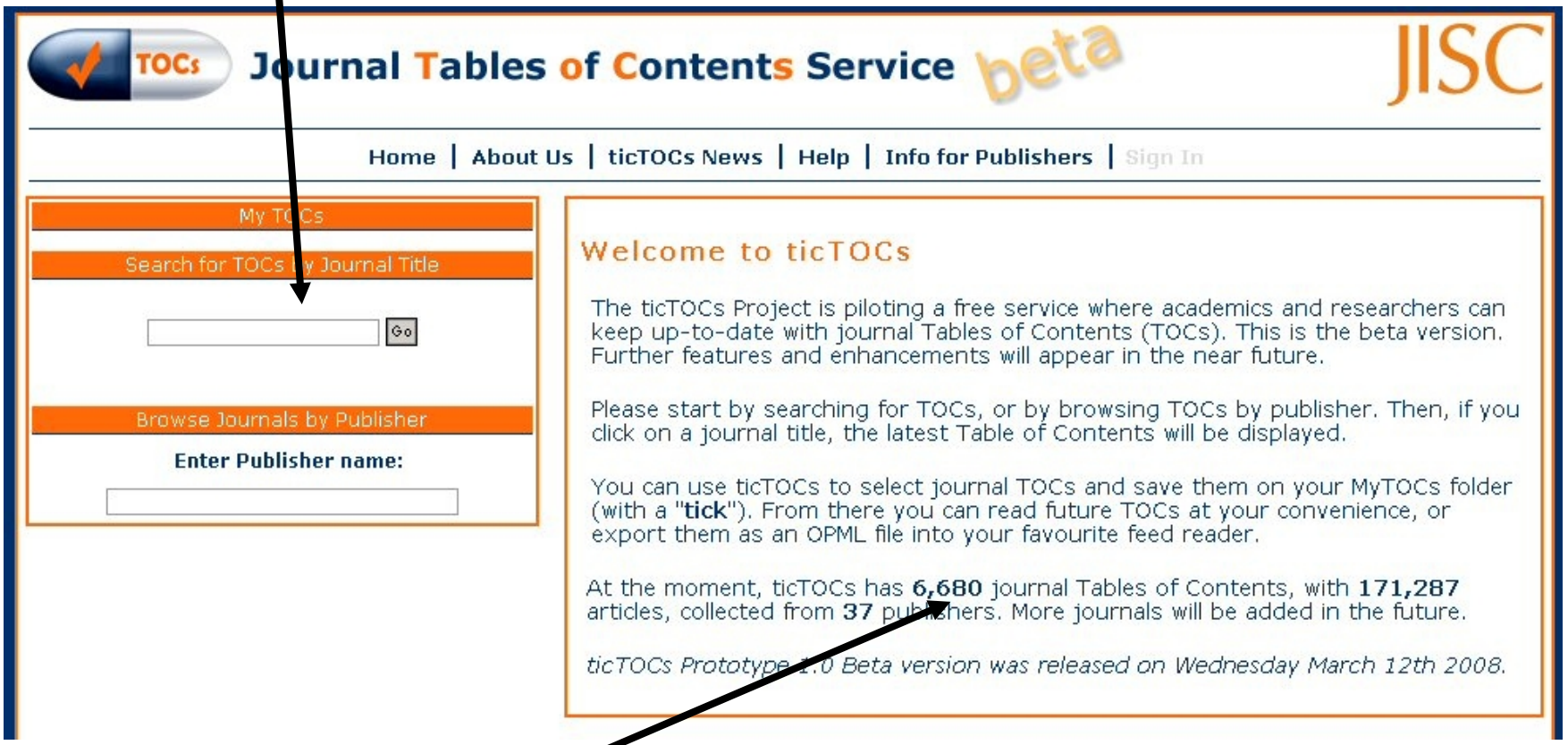
Exploitation of current content

- Publisher revenues $5 billion p/a STM journals.
- 20,000 – 25,000 Peer Reviewed journals.
- 200,000 researchers UK, 5.5 million globally.
- Latest articles are ‘cream on this cake’
- Efficient exploitation of latest issues is vital for publishers, researchers and authors.

ticTOCs

TOC directory



ticTOCs contains 6,680 TOCs

OPML

Tick here to add to MyTOCs

RSS feed

Export item to RefWorks

Are you a geek?

- You definitely won't have to be an RSS geek to use ticTOCs.
- If you are one, however, there's stuff for you too

Metadata inconsistencies

- <title>Nature</title>
- <title>BMJ Current Issue</title>
- <title>Journal of Geophysics and Engineering latest papers</title>
- <title>SpringerLink – Journal</title>
- <title>Blackwell Synergy International Journal of Cosmetic Science: Table of Contents</title>
- <title>NATURE-LONDON-</title> [Zetoc feed]

Metadata inconsistencies

- [multiple authors - IOP]
  - <dc:creator>Luciano Telesca</dc:creator>
  - <dc:creator>Antonio Lanorte</dc:creator>
  - <dc:creator>Rosa Lasaponara</dc:creator>
- [multiple authors - Biomed Central]
  - <dc:creator>Alexandra Devine, Michelle Kermode, and Helen Herman</dc:creator>
- [multiple authors – Elsevier]
  - <description>Dostal, M. , Roberts, J.B. , Holmes, R.</description>

Best practice recommendations

- CrossRef and ticTOCs will produce best practice recommendations covering what information to include in journal TOC RSS feeds, and the best way to structure that information.

ticTOCS Blog

- See News from ticTOCs blog http://tictocsnews.wordpress.com/

Gold Dust

- Develop innovatory **solutions** to the problem of **information overload**. It will deliver highly relevant, **personalised** current awareness content of a variety of kinds to **academics**, without the need for any input by those academics, in a **flexible** way from within selected JISC and non-JISC presentation services.

Gold Dust Partners (12)

Lead institution

Gold Dust Project

Gold Dust
Project Associates (6)

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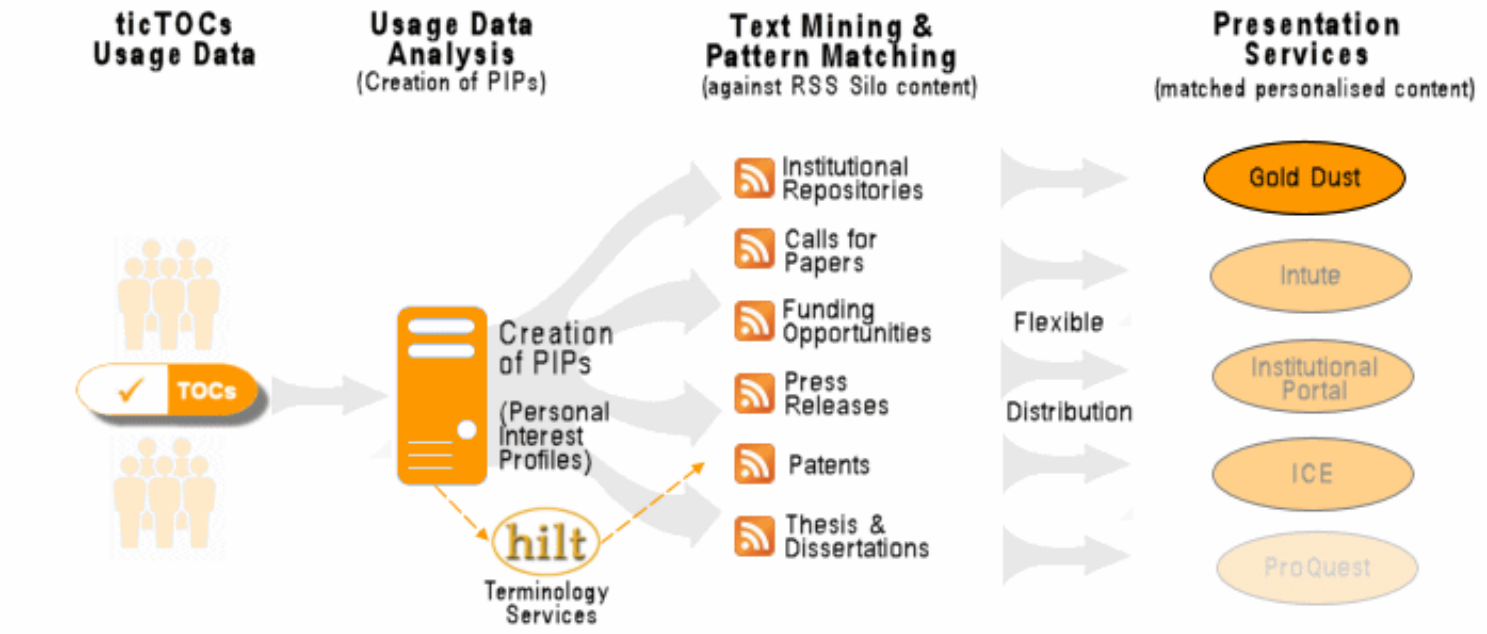

Fig 1. Principles of Gold Dust. Aggregation of new content, effortless discovery of relevant materials - delivery via service of user's choice.

Gold Dust

- http://www.macs.hw.ac.uk/~mthljr/golddust

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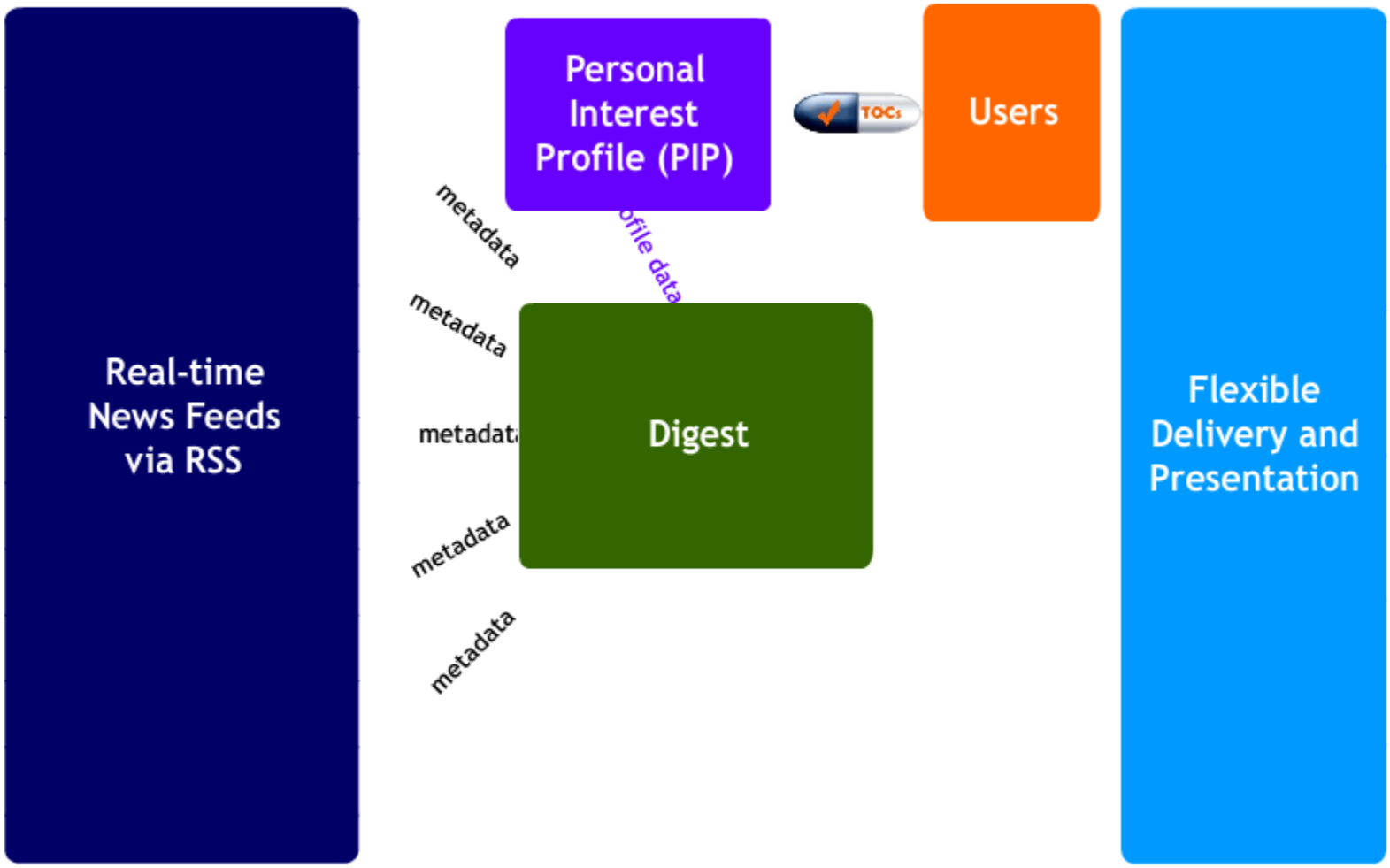

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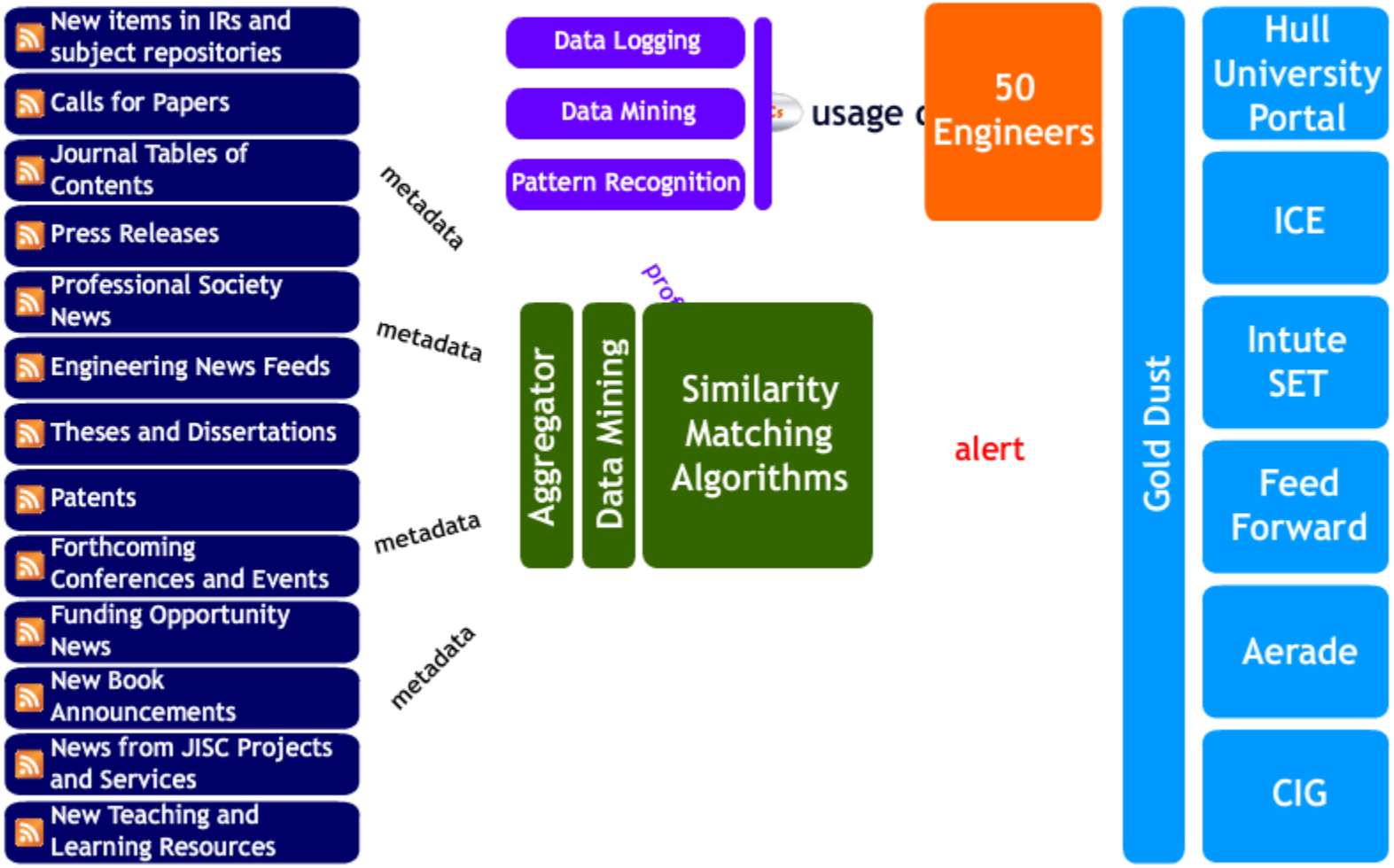

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ticTOCS and Gold Dust - benefits

- ticTOCs
  - Make it easy for researchers to find and exploit journal Tables of Contents, without having to understand the technicalities of RSS, or spend lots of time managing the process

ticTOCS and Gold Dust - benefits

- Gold Dust
  - Develop **practical solutions** to identify **highly relevant** (personalised) items of interest from amongst a mass of potentially relevant **current awareness** information which is being generated via **RSS** by **numerous** content providers, and then test its **delivery,** as required, to **academics,** without requiring their direct input in the whole process.

More information

Current awareness

Helping RSS help researchers

Roddy MacLeod reveals how universities, publishers and funding bodies have come together to improve how researchers are informed of the latest journal content

Scholarly journal publishing is a major business. It is worth more than $5 billion per year and around 2,000 STM publishers are estimated to publish between 20,000 and 25,000 peer-reviewed scholarly journals worldwide[1].

With most of these titles, newly-published articles form the cream of the journal publishing cake. These new articles reveal the results of recent research, often for the first time, so it is important that researchers know about them as soon as possible. This is particularly true now that many research funding bodies require submission of research output to institutional or subject repositories within a few months of publication in scholarly journals. If researchers do not hear about new papers when they are first published then they could choose to go straight to the repository and bypass the publisher altogether – a situation that could cause concerns for the publisher's accountants.

Despite the issues at stake, however, discovery methods for new articles appear to be underdeveloped at present.

The people behind the project

The ticTOCs project, which is being led by the University of Liverpool Library, began in April 2007 and is scheduled to run for two years. The UK funding body JISC is the primary funder of ticTOCs and Crossref, ProQuest, RefWorks and Emerald have also invested in the project. Other consortium partners include Heriot-Watt University, where most of the technical development is being undertaken, and Cranfield University, Nature Publishing Group, SAGE Publishers, Institute of Physics, Inderscience Publishers, MIMAS, Directory of Open Access Journals, Open J-Gate and Intute.

More details about ticTOCs can be found at www.tictocs.ac.uk and a ticTOCs news blog is available at: tictocsnews.wordpress.com.

The project will allow researchers to select Tables of Content from journals of interest from an easy-to-use online directory of thousands of feeds.

Traditionally, keeping up with the literature meant physically browsing journals in a library or scanning cross-publisher clipping services. More recently, it has involved saved searches in online databases or the delivery of Tables of Contents (TOCs) by email. Many publishers provide email TOC alerting facilities, and private research has shown that such services are very popular. However, the process usually involves additional registration processes, and can result in administrative overheads.

RSS (Really Simple Syndication) has emerged as another delivery mechanism for journal TOCs, with many journal publishers now offering this option (a good list of publishers providing RSS feeds is available at the University of Liverpool Library's website: www.liv.ac.uk/Library/techserv/ejrnl/rss.html).

However, exploiting RSS today can involve a certain level of understanding of the principles of feed syndication. It may also require the downloading of a desktop feedreader or registration with a web-based feedreader, although internet browsers are becoming

issue of finding out what journal TOC RSS feeds are available. At the present time this can involve considerable effort.

These barriers to easy-to-use journal TOC RSS are being addressed in a new project known as ticTOCs (see box). The project has been named ticTOCs because part of the service will involve the ticking of selected TOCs of interest, from an easy-to-use online directory of thousands of feeds.

The main goal of this project is to develop a freely-available service that will make it easy for academics, researchers and anyone else to find and display scholarly journal tables of contents from multiple publishers, without having to understand the technical or procedural concepts involved in the process. In addition, it will facilitate the aggregation of TOC feeds and their reuse at other sites, and enable items in feeds to be exported to bibliographic management software, from within a simple web-based environment.

The intention is to encourage showcasing of the latest research output at numerous websites. This will happen by enabling the reuse of TOC content by gateways, subject-based discovery services, library services and others. Another aim is to make it easy to subscribe to journal TOC RSS feeds, with one click, through seamless linking to the ticTOCs service.

Tackling standards

Finally, ticTOCs is producing recommendations for good practice for TOC RSS feeds. These are important because an analysis of the current practice of publishers with regard to the provision of TOC RSS feeds has revealed a wide variety of different processes. There is a need to encourage the production of more standardised journal TOC RSS feeds, thereby facilitating their interoperability and improving the quality of their data.

The project is being hailed as a significant development in journal current awareness. The intention is to demonstrate how the innovative application of simple technologies enables the easy delivery of valuable services. A prototype service is expected to be running by April 2008

Roddy MacLeod is senior subject librarian at Heriot-Watt University, UK.

FURTHER INFORMATION

1. *UK scholarly journals: baseline report*. RIN, RCUK and DTI, 2006. www.rin.ac.uk/data-scholarly-journals

- *Research Information*, Issue 33, December 2007/January 2008
- *Free Pint*, No 234
- *Multimedia Information & Technology*, Vol 34 no 1, Feb 2008.
- News from ticTOCs blog

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- Thank you
- Questions?

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- r.a.macleod@hw.ac.uk