

2 Google Reader

Some people have the habit of catching up with the daily news or current affairs, sports news, the latest stock market trends updates etc. via specific websites that they usually bookmark as their favourite sites. Similarly, there may be certain blogs, videos or even other business related websites that you may like to follow on a daily basis and would like to be updated whenever there is any fresh content posted. This is where **Google Reader** comes in handy. Google Reader presents a remarkably simple way to subscribe to feeds from your favourite websites and blogs you want to follow. Google defines Reader as, “*tool for gathering, reading, and sharing all the interesting blogs and websites you read on the web.*”

2.1 About Google Reader

In order to understand how the Google Reader works, you need to know what a “**feed**” is and how it works. A web *feed* is a method of providing users with frequently updated content. Suppose your favourite news website is CNN.com. Now, for checking the news you will always have to go to the website, which may not be a problem. However, if you are following many such websites then you have to visit all the sites individually to check for new content. “**Feeds**” help you to resolve this issue and instead of you visiting the websites again and again, the website syndicates its content, thereby allowing you to *subscribe* to it.



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One generation's transformation is the next's status quo. In the near future, people may soon think it's strange that devices ever had to be “plugged in.” To obtain that status, there needs to be “The Shift”.



On the user end, an aggregator like the **Google Reader**, aggregates all the feeds, i.e. checks for new content on all the subscribed websites and downloads the fresh content. It may be entire content or just the title along with a snippet of the article. The two prominent formats available for feeds are *RSS* and *Atom*. **RSS Feeds** are generally identified with the symbol  and **Atom Feeds** use the word *Atom*. A major advantage of feeds is that you do not have to give your username or email id to the website you are following. Also, you do not have to *unsubscribe* from a website, just deleting the feed from your reader stops any annoying content.

The Reader access tab is available under “*more*” on the top bar of the Google homepage. As mentioned above, you can use your standard Google username and password to sign in to Reader. When you sign in for the first time you get the screen as shown in the figure 2.1 below.

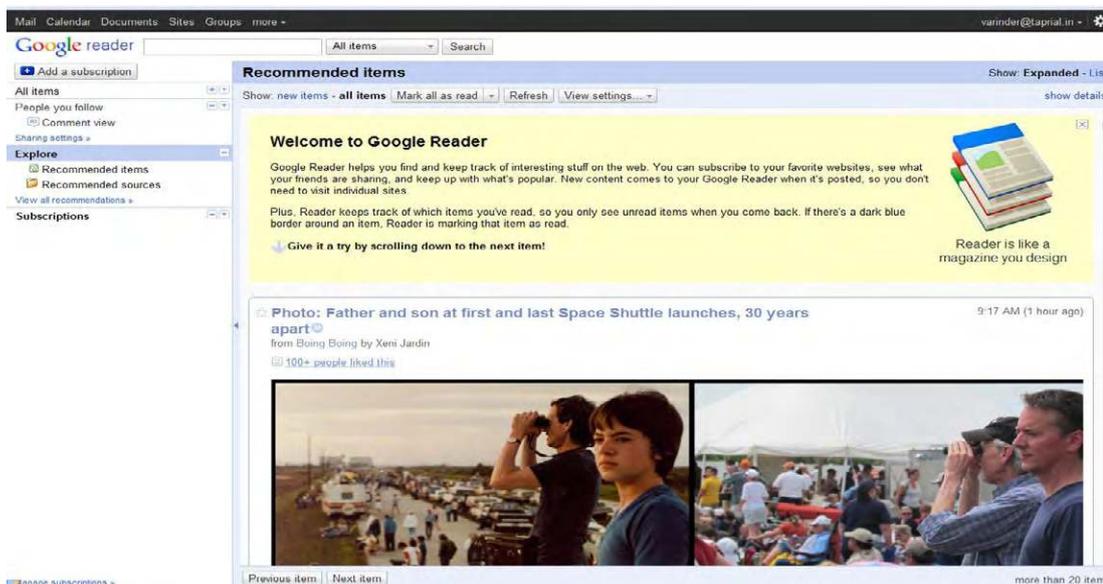


Figure 2.1 Screenshot of Google Reader Home Page

You have the option for seeing the contents of the page in the *Expanded* or *List form*. You can toggle between the two anytime you like. To begin with, the Google Reader shows you the *Recommended items*, but once you start adding feeds of your own, the default view will show your feeds instead.

2.2 Browse for Stuff

If you don't know where to start there are *bundles* in various categories like news and sports etc available for subscription, just like you take magazine or newspaper subscriptions. You can browse through these bundles by clicking on the + sign next to “**All items**” (circled in yellow) in the left navigation menu and then clicking on “**Browse for stuff**” (circled in red) as shown in the Figures 2.2 (a) & (b) below.

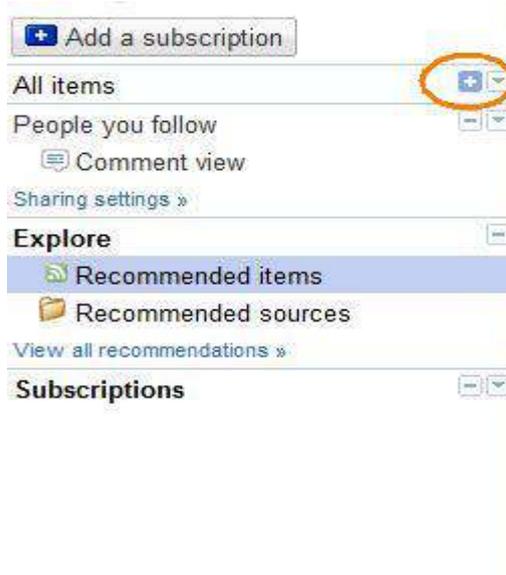


Figure 2.2 (a) Left Nav Bar in Google Reader Home Page



Figure 2.2(b) Browse for Stuff

If you choose to **Browse for stuff**, the various bundles available are displayed as shown in figure 2.3 below.



Figure 2.3 Discover and Search for Feeds

When you *subscribe* to a bundle, you will automatically start getting all the feeds, which are part of the bundle. For example, the *News* bundle will get you the news feed from nine (at this time) News websites. You can also *search* for feeds based on keywords as well as by checking out the feeds *from people you follow*.

The **Explore** tab (figure2.2a) in the left navigation bar contains the recommended items and sources. This starts working as you use the Google Reader and the automated process recommends feeds for you based on your interests.

The advertisement for Maastricht University features the university logo and the slogan 'Leading in Learning!'. The main headline reads 'Join the best at the Maastricht University School of Business and Economics!'. To the right, a list of 'Top master's programmes' includes:

- 33rd place Financial Times worldwide ranking: MSc International Business
- 1st place: MSc International Business
- 1st place: MSc Financial Economics
- 2nd place: MSc Management of Learning
- 2nd place: MSc Economics
- 2nd place: MSc Econometrics and Operations Research
- 2nd place: MSc Global Supply Chain Management and Change

 Sources are cited as 'Keuzegids Master ranking 2013; Elsevier 'Beste Studies' ranking 2012; Financial Times Global Masters in Management ranking 2012'. A circular badge states 'Maastricht University is the best specialist university in the Netherlands (Elsevier)'. The bottom section features a call to action: 'Visit us and find out why we are the best! Master's Open Day: 22 February 2014' and the website 'www.mastersopenday.nl'.



2.3 Adding a Feed

If you already have a list of regular websites or blogs that you follow on a daily basis or want to keep yourself updated on their content and activities, then you can straightaway get down to adding your own subscriptions to the Google Reader. Doing this is very simple. The “**Add a subscription**” button at the top of the left navigation bar opens the form where you can enter the web address of the website or blog you wish to subscribe to.

Since most websites and blogs have auto-discovery feature for feeds, entering the URL of the home page of the website generally gets the feed. However, if the auto-discovery feature is not available, then you have to get the *feed URL* from the website and enter it in the box. You can find the *feed URL* by clicking on the RSS  or Atom symbol on the website. The URL of the page, which opens after you have clicked on RSS or Atom symbol, is the feed URL.

For example, if we want to add the feed of the blog “Reading café” at *www.priyakanwar.com*, we would enter the URL as above into the box and the auto-discovery feature will automatically enable subscription to the blog. However, if nothing happens then we go to the website and look for the feed button. In this case, we find a link *Subscribe to: Posts (Atom)* towards the bottom of the page. We right click on the link, click on the *Copy Link location* and the URL *http://www.priyakanwar.com/feeds/posts/default* gets copied. Now we paste this URL in the box **Add a subscription** instead of the main URL. Google Reader now shows the feed from the blog as seen in figure 2.4 below.

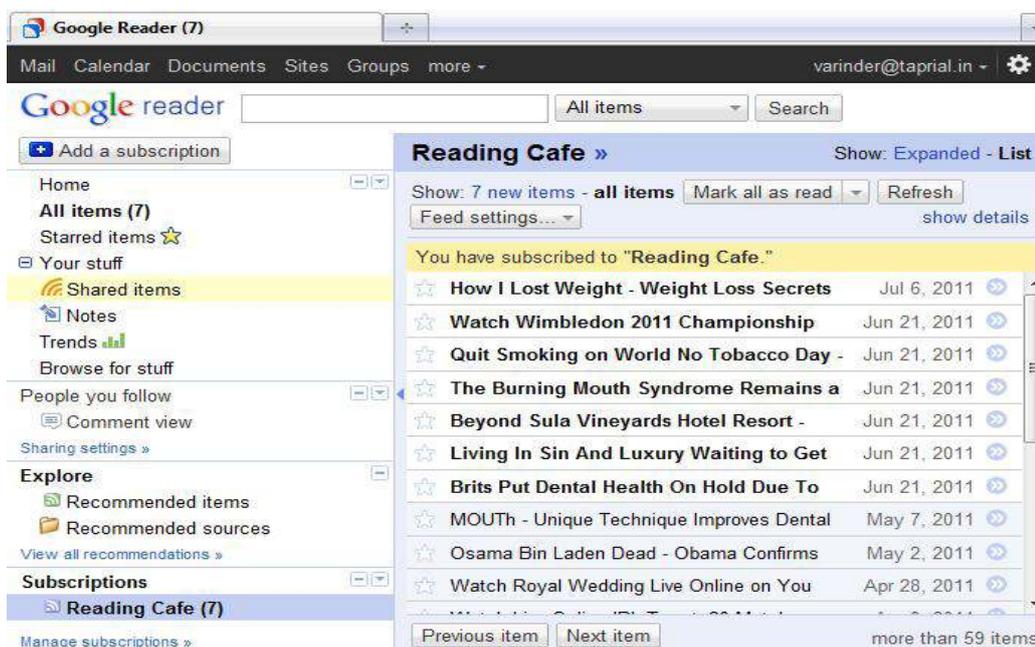


Figure 2.4 Blog Feed in Google Reader

The feed shown in the figure is in the *list view* and you can expand individual items by clicking on the items. At the end of each item you have links to **share**, **email** or **tag** those items, in case you want to share with your friends, family or colleagues. If you are sharing an item and want to add your own comments or opinion you can use the option **Share with note**.

Deleting the subscription to any website or blog is simple and can be managed from the link **Manage Subscription** at the bottom of the left navigation. On the same page, you can also organize your feeds in separate folders for ease of access.

Using feeds is the easiest way to keep track of multiple websites that you may be interested in, specifically the ones which are updated too frequently or even those like blogs of your near and dear ones who publish stuff only when they feel like and are offended if you do not notice their new post without them having to tell you. As an aggregator, Google Reader is certainly one of the best and free. Try it.