

RSS Feeds: A New Generation Information Tool for Special Libraries

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Abstract

Special libraries have emerged out as efficient information catering organizations with exquisite tools to meet the never saturating demands of the information seekers. Still due to time, budgetary and staff constraints it is not an easy task to provide quality services let alone value added services. Really Simple syndication or Rich Site Summary is a part of push technologies used to speed up on-time and up-to-date information dissemination. In other words it can be said that RSS is a newer version of Current Awareness Service. RSS feeds are used to share and deliver information spontaneously to the patrons. RSS are either posted on the website or read through RSS readers (eg. Bloglines and Google Reader). RSS in special libraries are used to - update web page contents, alert new additions in the online catalogue, give notifications, inform overdue materials, display new programs and events in the library, create electronic newsletter of the library, reflect press releases and media advisories, display job openings, create reading list, table of contents, provide current awareness and guides etc. This poster would outline what's and how's of RSS feeds and their applications in the special libraries. Furthermore sample demonstration of RSS feed creation, editing, downloading and hosting on the web page through freely available RSS feed software will be made.

Keywords: RSS, RSS Feeds, XML, Information Tool, Special Libraries

Introduction:

Libraries catering to the information needs of a specialized community of users and providing specialized and pin-pointed, on-time value information are designated as special libraries. A special library can be found in a university, museum, publishing house, government agency, hospital, or corporation. As defined by the Special Libraries Association, "it is a place where information is evaluated, analyzed, organized, packaged, and presented in a manner that maximizes its usefulness." Special libraries have emerged out as efficient information catering organizations with exquisite tools to meet the never saturating demands of the information seekers.

For the effective dissemination of information to the patrons in the least time and cost special libraries provide current awareness service (CAS) so as to fulfill the nascent and current information demands of the users. CAS can be understood as "A service or publication designed to alert scholars, researchers, readers, customers, or employees to recently published literature in their field(s) of specialization, usually available in special libraries serving companies, organizations, and institutions in which access to current information is essential. Such services can be tailored to fit the interest profile of a specific individual or group..."

In spite of the responsibilities sought upon special libraries due to time, budgetary and staff constraints it is not an easy task to provide quality services let alone value added services. With the advent of Web 2.0, RSS or Really Simple Syndication or Rich Site Summary has evolved as a solution for the aforesaid constraints while providing Current Awareness Services

RSS:

RSS is an acronym for **Really Simple Syndication** and **Rich Site Summary**. RSS is an XML-based format for content distribution. Webmasters create an RSS file containing headlines and descriptions of specific information. While the majority of RSS feeds currently contain news headlines or breaking information the long term uses of RSS are broad.

RSS is a defined standard based mostly on XML with the specific purpose of delivering updates to web-based content. Using this standard, webmasters provide headlines and fresh content in a succinct manner. Meanwhile, consumers use RSS readers and news aggregators to collect and monitor their favorite feeds in one centralized program or location. Content viewed in the RSS reader or news aggregator is known as an RSS feed.

RSS is becoming increasingly popular. The reason is fairly simple. RSS is a free and easy way to promote a site and its content without the need to advertise or create complicated content sharing partnerships.

RSS can be defined and understood by various definitions :

- RSS (n) RSS is a Web content syndication format. Its name is an acronym for Really Simple Syndication. RSS is a dialect of XML. (source Harvard)
- RSS (n) RSS is a format for syndicating news and the content of news-like sites, including major news sites like Wired, news-oriented community sites like Slashdot, and personal weblogs. (source XML.com)
- RSS (n) Really Simple Syndication (RSS) is a lightweight XML format designed for sharing headlines and other Web content. (source Web Reference)
- RSS (n) Really Simple Syndication (RSS) is an XML-based format for content distribution (source CNET)
- RSS (n) RSS is an XML-based format for syndicated content. (source IBM)
- RSS (n) RSS is an acronym for Rich Site Summary, an XML format for distributing news headlines on the Web, also known as syndication. First started by Netscape as part of the My Netscape site, it expanded through Dave Winer and Userland. RSS started off in an RDF format.

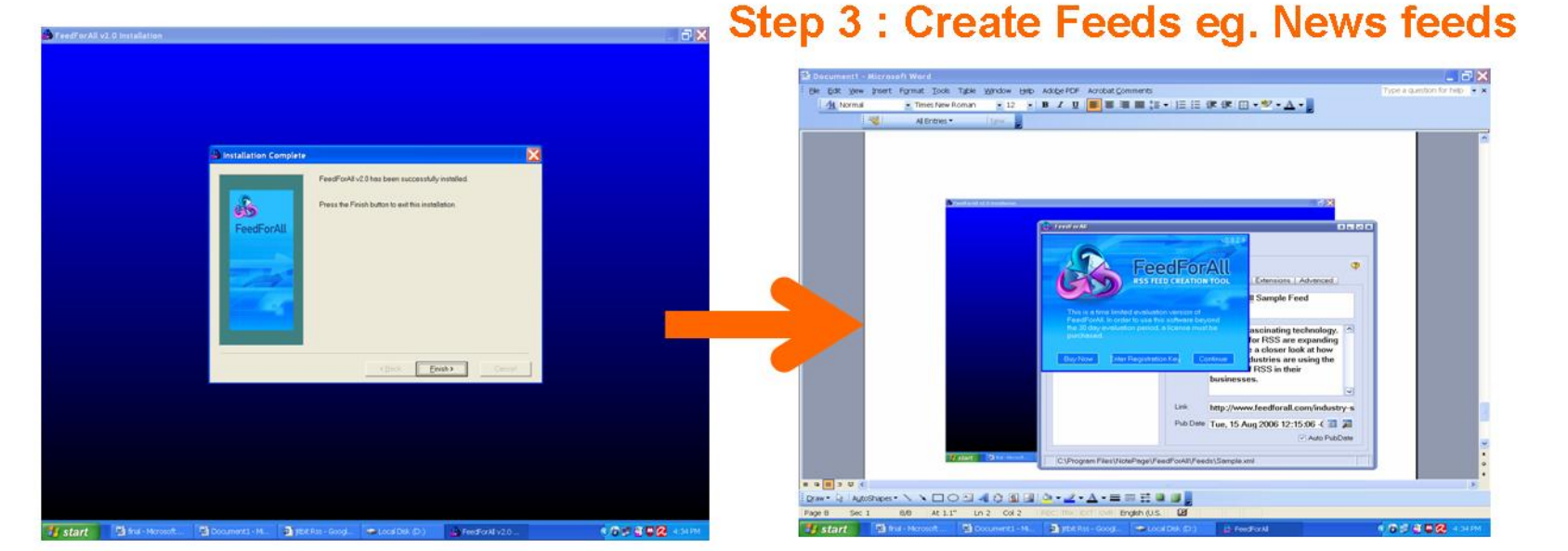
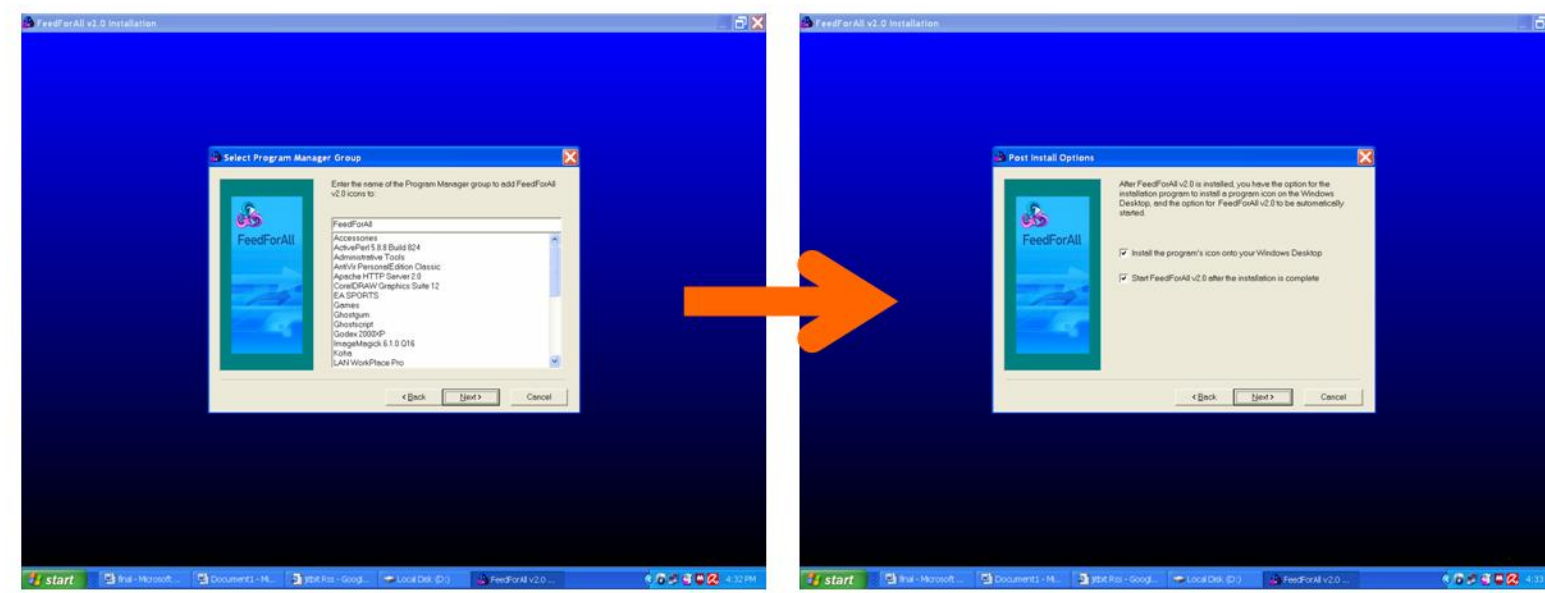
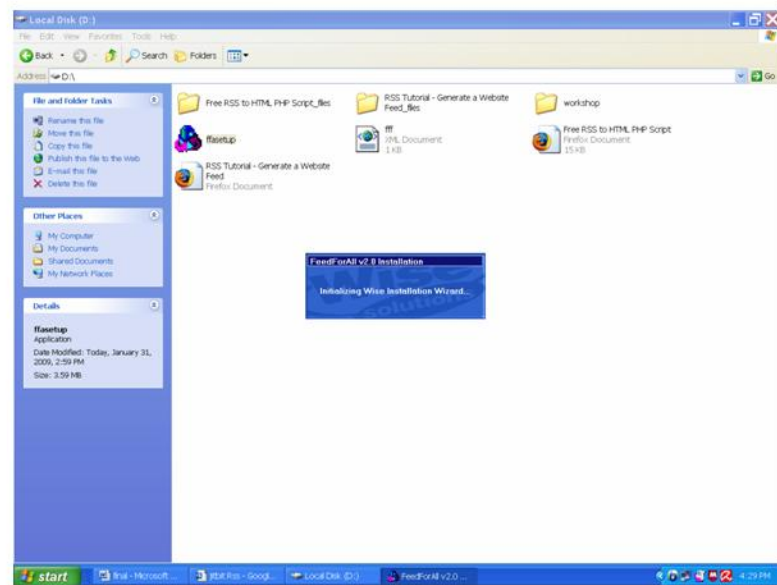
Special Libraries can use RSS :

- To Create an RSS feed for new additions to the online catalog.
- To Create an RSS feed tied to a library card account for hold notifications and/or overdue materials.
- To Create an RSS feed for new programs and events posted on the library website.
- To Create an RSS feed for the library's electronic newsletter.
- To Create an RSS feed for press releases and other media advisories.
- To Create an RSS feed for library closings, including emergency closings.
- To Create an RSS feed for library job openings.
- To Subscribe to a few RSS feeds, such as local news websites, and share the content on the library's website. This could be included on a page containing other local resources and local links.
- To Subscribe to RSS feeds of interest to library users and share the content on the customer's personalized library webpage. Users can choose to access selected RSS feeds, their library account information, subscription databases, and email/chat with a librarian all in one spot.
- To Subscribe to a few professional RSS feeds and share with library's staff on the library intranet.

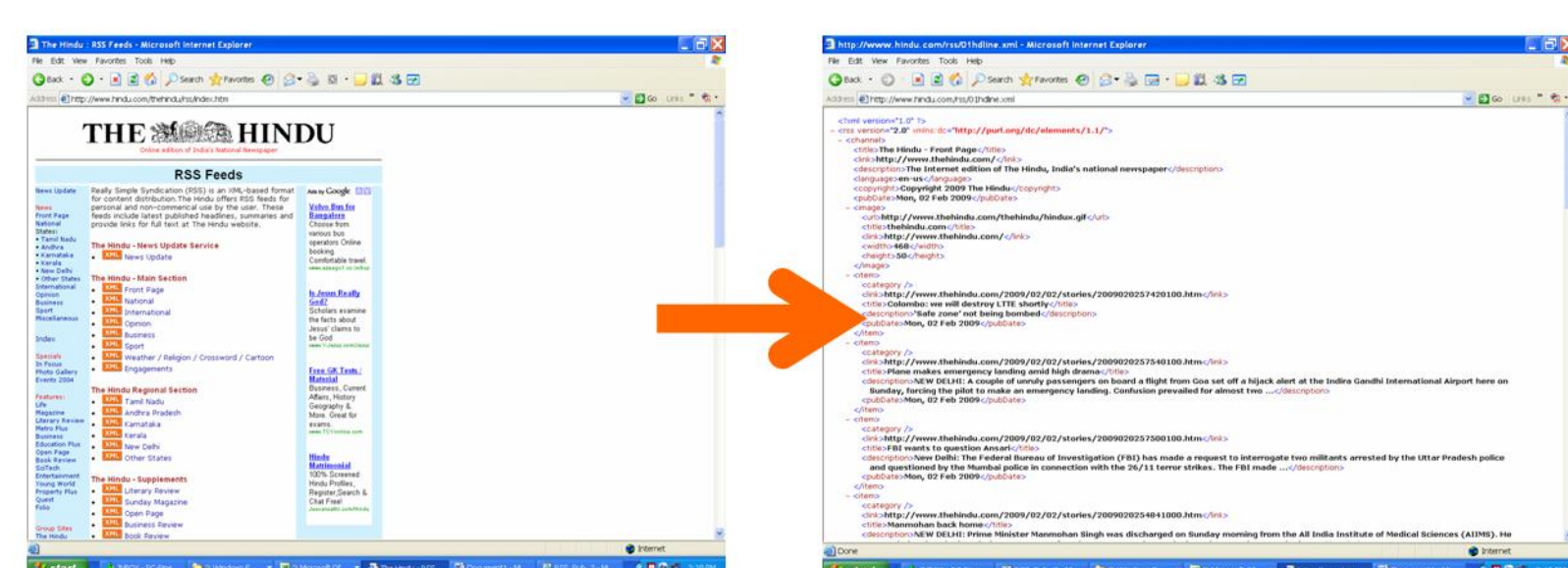
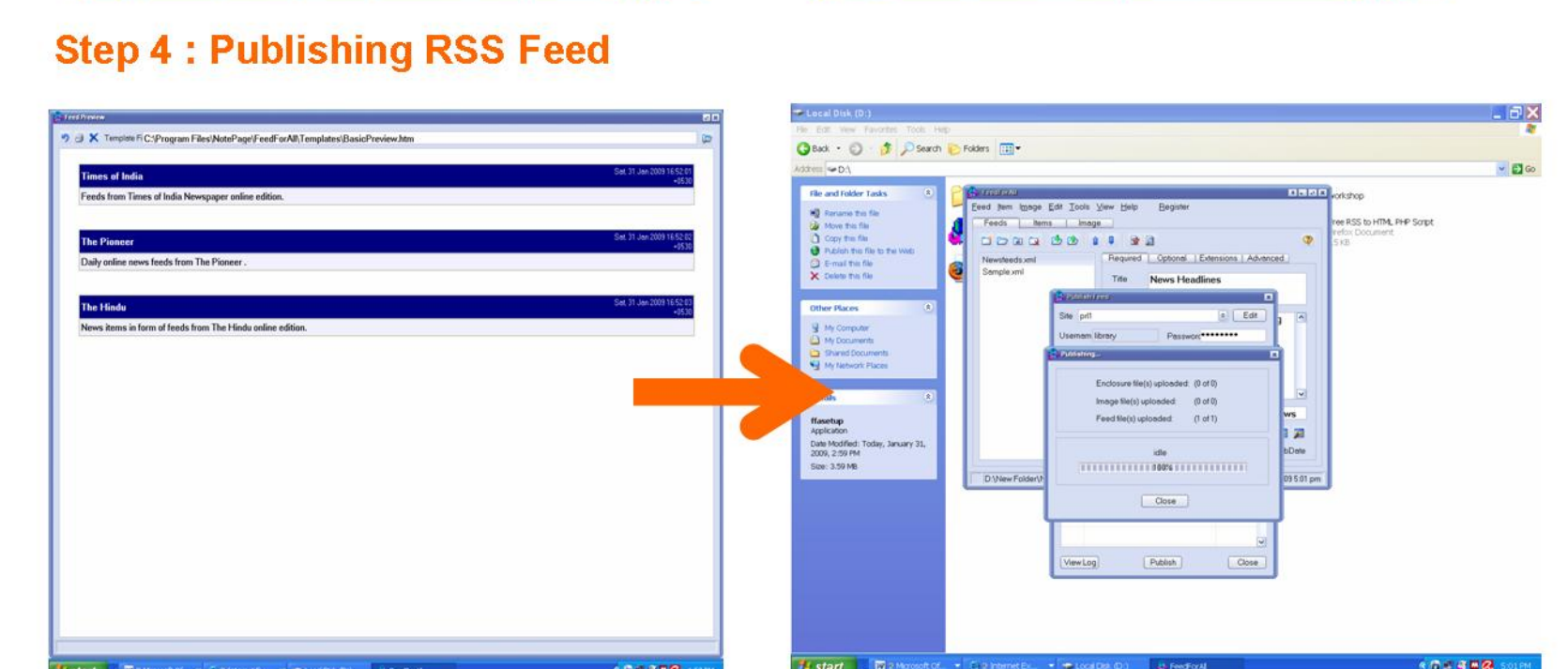
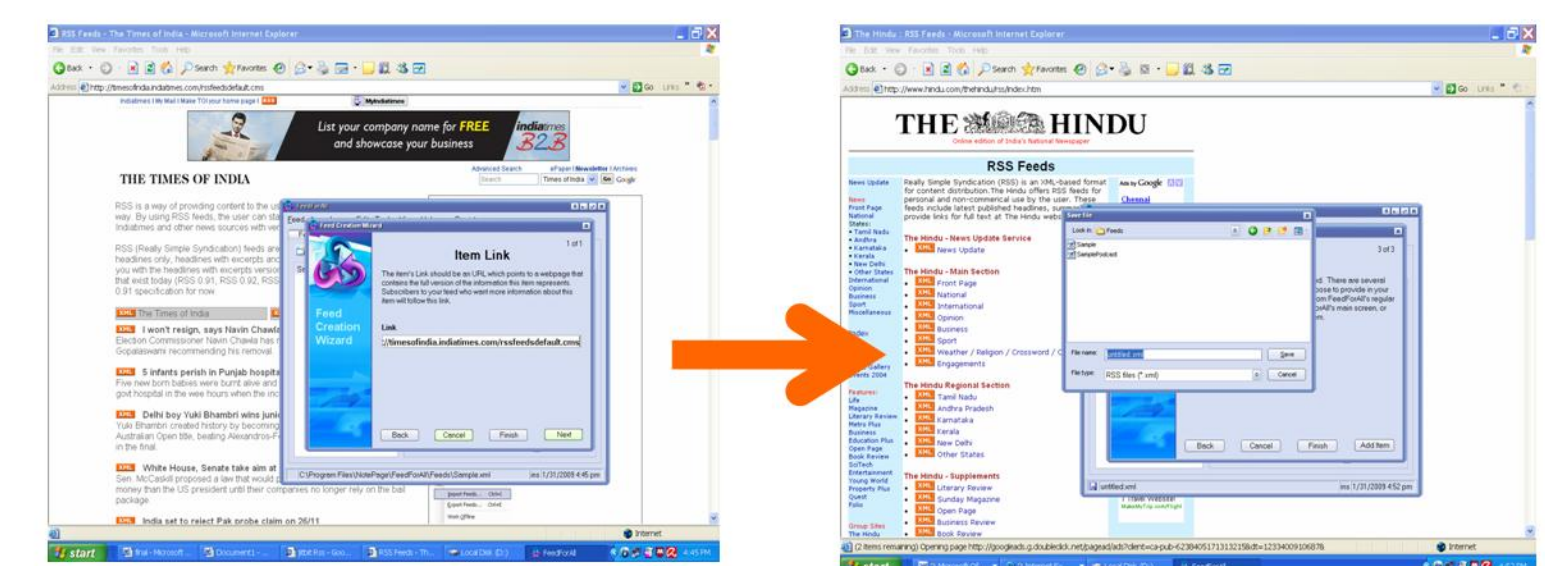
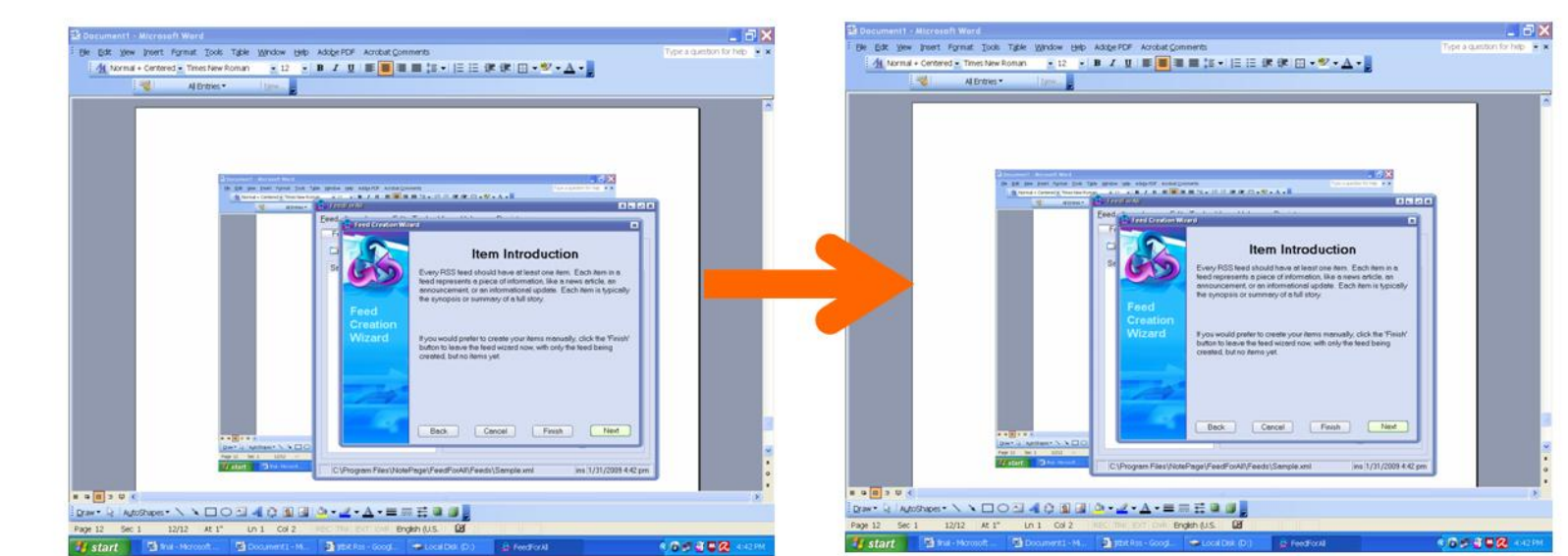
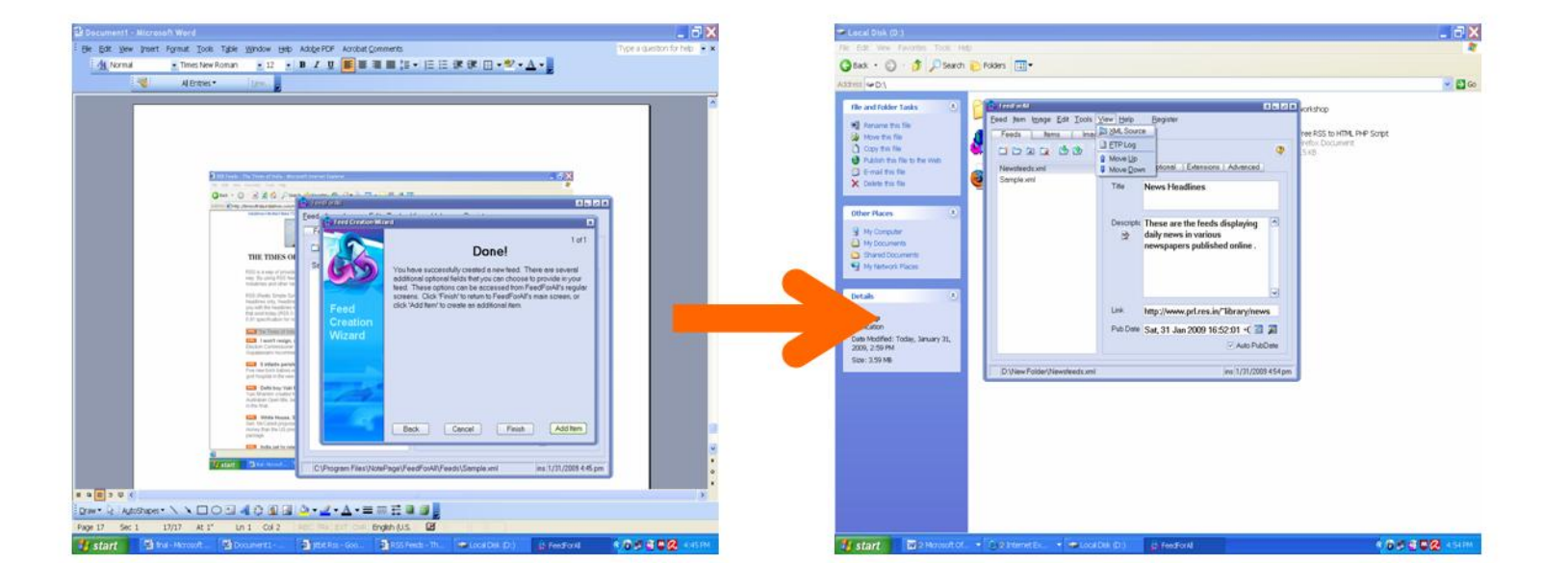
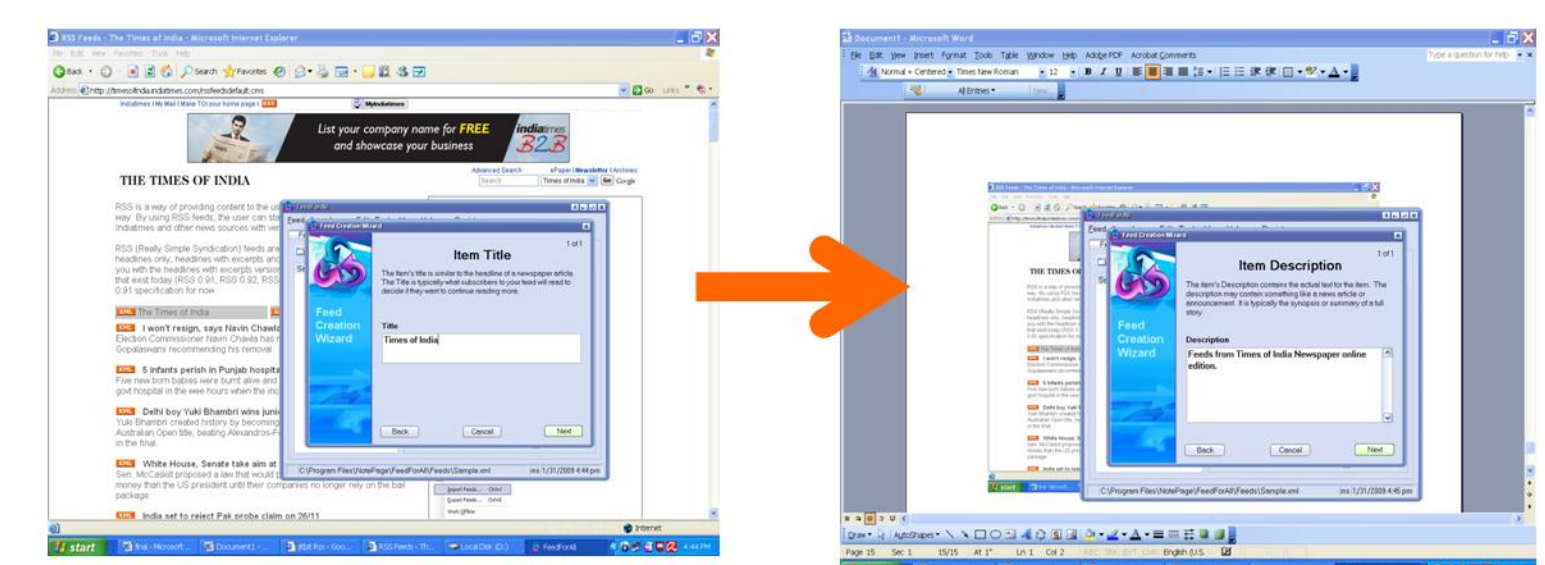
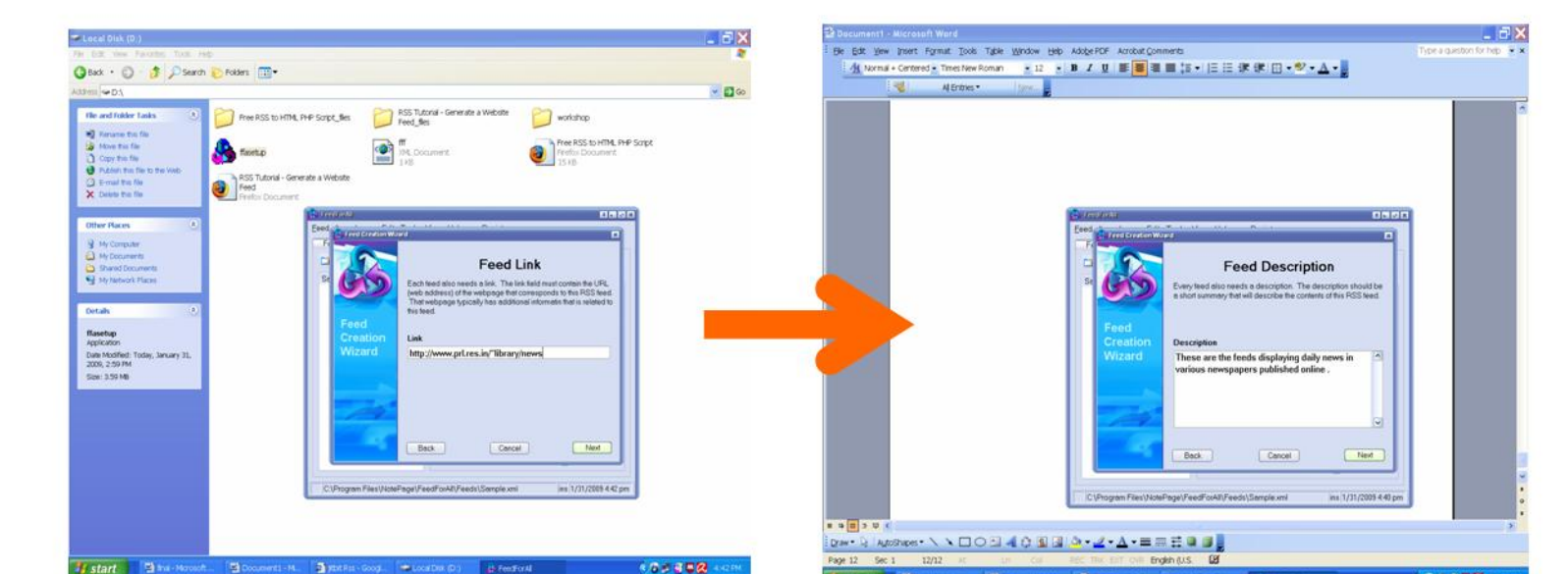
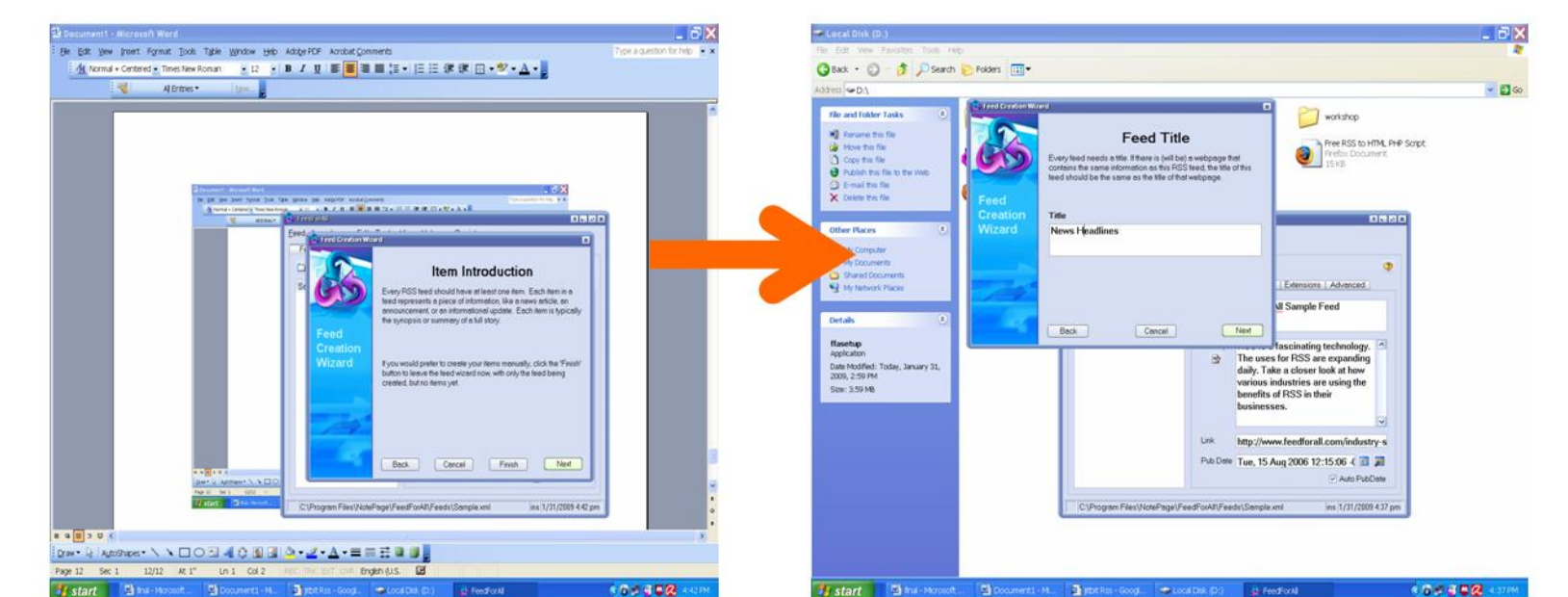
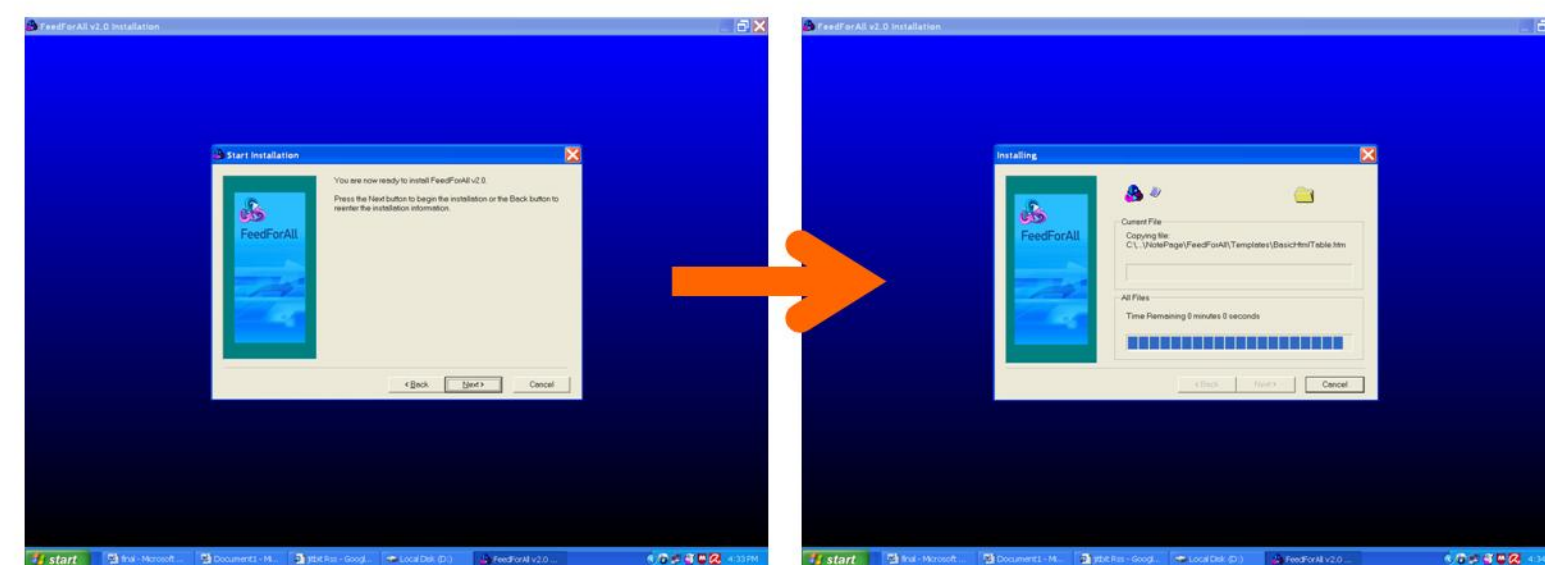
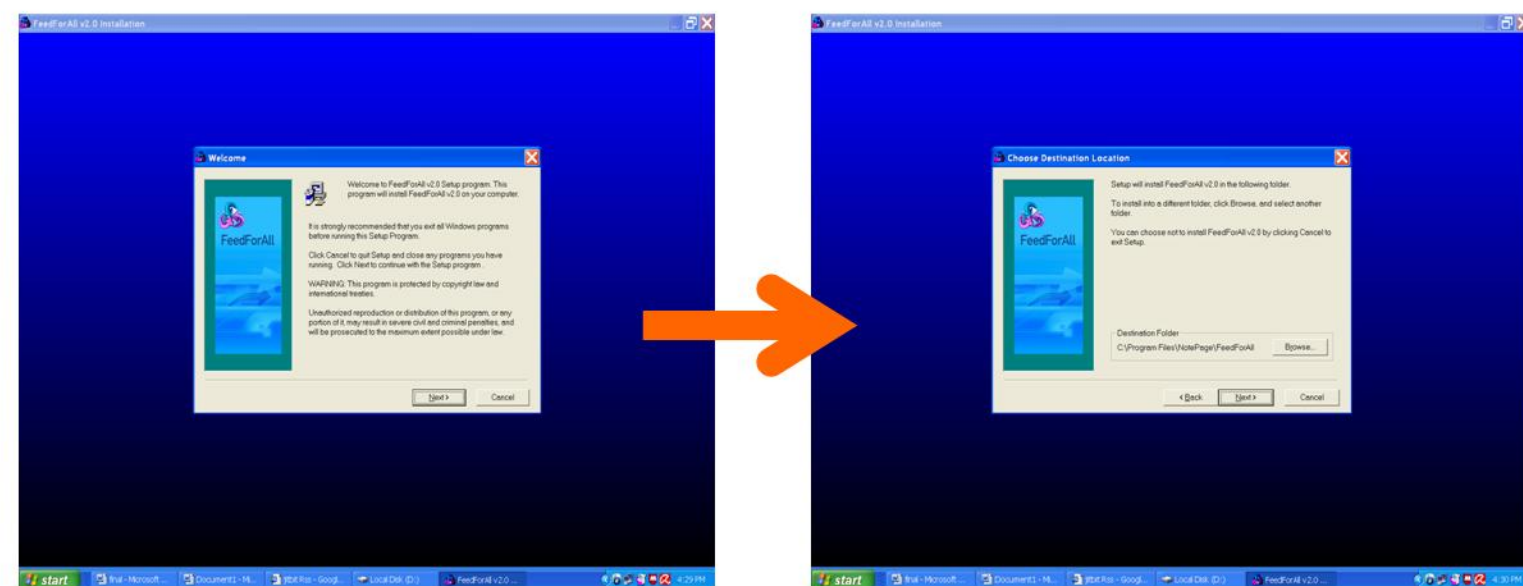
Implementing RSS in special library services:

As stated above RSS in special libraries have numerous applications while providing current information. A step by step method for implementing RSS through a freely available one month trial based software viz. Feedforall RSS Feed creator is illustrated below :

Step 1: Downloading the Feedforall RSS feeds creator software from the internet :



Step 2: Installation of the software



The above demonstration shows the creation and publishing of RSS Feeds, displaying News Feeds from various Newspapers. These feeds will get updated automatically on regular basis. In the similar manner special libraries can implement RSS feeds for their respective information demands.

Conclusion : Utilizing RSS Feeds to provide library services within a special library environment is an effective tool to provide target users group, relevant, authoritative, current and on-time information.

Kindly provide your valuable feedback for the effectiveness of this tool in special libraries if implemented.
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