

Web Tools for 21st-Century Learners

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All of the resources on this list are free or of minimal cost. It's not intended to be comprehensive, but does review some of the better resources we've tried or are currently using with our students.

Getting to know your users

Learn about your users and the services they want by asking them directly with easy to use online survey tools.

- SurveyMonkey** — <http://www.surveymonkey.com/> — allows you to create an online survey that can be linked from your webpages, and also includes tools for real-time analysis.
- Zoomerang** — <http://info.zoomerang.com/> — same idea as SurveyMonkey with very similar functionality.

Keeping patrons informed

It seems not everyone subscribes to an RSS feed in an aggregator! Many people prefer the tried and true email approach. The following web-based tools will allow a user to enter an email address, and will then send them RSS or ATOM posts to their email inbox.

- Rmail** — <http://www.kbcafe.com/rss/rss2smtp.aspx>
- RSS-Fwd** — <http://www.rssfwd.com/rssfwd/index>
- Bloglet** — <http://www.bloglet.com/>
- Bot A Blog** — <http://www.botablog.com/index.php>
- Blogarithm** — <http://www.blogarithm.com/>
- Feedblitz** — <http://www.feedblitz.com/>

Allowing patrons to contact you

It's pretty tough to cover all the possible ways a patron might want to get in touch with you, so offering solutions that cover many possibilities is a good idea.

- Chatango** — <http://www.chatango.com> — allows you to embed a Flash-

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- based text chat tool on any (including multiple) page. You control the size and color. Patron only has to enter their text in the box on your page – no account or software needed. Includes a presence indicator.
- ❑ **ConvoqASAP** — <http://www.convoq.com> — Same idea as Chatango, but also allows audio and document sharing. Once was a free version, but that appears to be no longer available. Keeping our fingers crossed. Also includes a presence indicator. (no longer free)
 - ❑ **Trillian** — <http://www.trillian.cc/> — multi-platform Instant Messenger client (AIM, ICQ, MSN, Yahoo Messenger, and IRC).
 - ❑ **Meebo** — <http://www.meebo.com/> — multi-platform Instant Messenger client (AIM, ICQ, MSN, Yahoo Messenger, and Jabber or GTalk).
 - ❑ **MECA Experience Messenger** — <http://www.mecamessenger.com/> (AIM, MSN, Yahoo!, and ICQ)
 - ❑ **Skype** — <http://www.skype.com> — One of, if not the most well-known Voice over IP (VOIP) options. Mac or PC, free to call between machines, or cheap to make calls from computer to landline.
 - ❑ **Jybe** — <http://www.jybe.com/> — co-browse the web with ease with users and without the hefty expense of virtual reference software. The Jybe plugin works with Internet Explorer and Firefox. Also integrates with Skype.
 - ❑ **Jyve Browser Sync** — <http://plugin.jyve.com/> — much the same idea as above, the Jyve Browser Sync is part of the general Jyve Skype Web Plugin that works with the Skype IM client.

Making your presence known!

You can quickly and easily broadcast your online availability to users with these simple presence indicators.

- ❑ **Online Status Indicator** — <http://www.onlinestatus.org/> — includes online status indicators for many popular IM clients which can be added to your webpages, campus portal or courseware environments to alert users to your online status.
- ❑ **Jyve Skype Web Plugin** — <http://plugin.jyve.com/> — once the plugin is installed you can implement a web presence button specifically for the Skype IM client.

Putting your content in front of your patrons

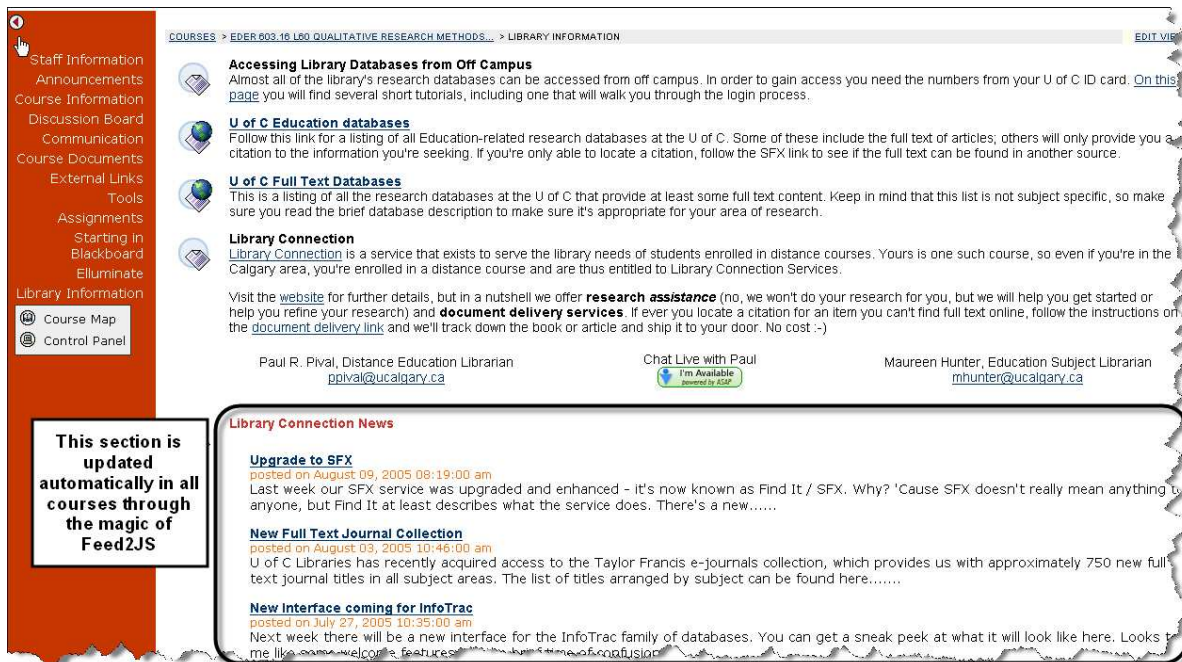
It's all fine and good to have wonderful and current information on your homepage, but if that's not where your patrons are it's not going to do much good. The

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following tools will allow you to repurpose and repackage RSS feeds for inclusion elsewhere on the web (or even in an email signature!)

- **Feedburner** — <http://www.feedburner.com> — provide an RSS feed and create a headline animator or use their BuzzBoost to create customized HTML.
- **Feed2JS** — <http://jade.mcli.dist.maricopa.edu/feed/> (with many mirror sites) — allows you to customize the look of any RSS feed and insert it on your page (or multiple pages).

An example of Feed2JS inserted in BlackBoard at the U of Calgary (this same page appears in every Graduate Education distance course)



The screenshot shows a BlackBoard course page for 'EDER 803.16 L60 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS...'. The left sidebar contains navigation links such as 'Staff Information', 'Announcements', 'Course Information', 'Discussion Board', 'Communication', 'Course Documents', 'External Links', 'Tools', 'Assignments', 'Starting in Blackboard', 'Illuminate', and 'Library Information'. The main content area includes sections for 'Accessing Library Databases from Off Campus', 'U of C Education databases', 'U of C Full Text Databases', and 'Library Connection'. At the bottom, there is a 'Library Connection News' section with three items: 'Upgrade to SFX', 'New Full Text Journal Collection', and 'New Interface coming for InfoTrac'. A callout box on the left states: 'This section is updated automatically in all courses through the magic of Feed2JS'.

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