The aKregator newsfeed reader

Hunters and Gatherers

The aKregator news feed reader brings headlines right to your desktop – and offers a convenient GUI.

BY STEFANIE TEUFEL

The Internet is a treasure trove of useful and useless information, and news feeds that bring the latest breaking news, or the latest gossip, to your desktop are growing in popularity. In this issue of Ktools, we will be looking at aKregator, a GUI-based news feed front-end that makes this particular form of knowledge seeking a tiny bit more convenient.

aKregator was originally developed by Stanislav Karchebny, who now has a lot of support from other programmers. Once you have aKregator configured it sits on your computer and grabs the latest news from your favorite **RSS** or **RDF** feeds, displaying the content you need in an eye-catching way.

Figure 1: The news collector waiting for your input.

The current version of the news feed grabber is available from the project homepage at *http://akregator.sourceforge.net*. As the program is still under active development, it makes sense to check out the page regularly.

Unfortunately, the project does not offer an RPM download, so you will have to download the source code archive, unpack the archive, and build the program from scratch. To do so, follow the usual *configure; make; make install* steps. And don't forget to set the *KDEDIRS* environment variable to the path for your KDE software directories, for example

```
export KDEDIRS=/opt/kde3:
/usr/local/kde
```

After completing the install, you should have an entry for aKregator in your start menu. You can select *Internet | Feed Reader (aKregator)* to launch the program, or you can type *akregator &* in a terminal window of your choice. After launching the application, you should see a fairly empty window, like the one in Figure 1, just waiting for you to tell it what to do next.

Feed Me!

aKregator expects you to specify at what intervals it should attempt to download news. Use the window shown in Figure 2 for these settings. Select *Settings | Configure aKregator…* to open the window. As you can see, the *General* tab has a *Use interval fetching* checkbox that you can select to tell aKregator to fetch news feeds at regular intervals (you also need to type the interval in the text box underneath the checkbox).

If you enable *Fetch all feeds on startup*, the application will dash off to the

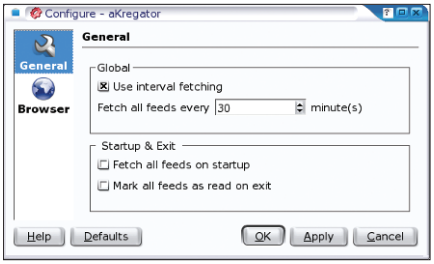

Figure 2: If necessary, aKregator will be quite happy to fetch the latest news every 30 seconds.

KTools

In this column we present tools, month by month, which have proven to be especially useful when working under KDE, solve a problem which otherwise is deliberately ignored, or are just some of the nicer things in life, which – once discovered – you would not want to do without.

GLOSSARY

RDF: *Short for Resource Description Framework. RDF provides an infrastructure for encoding, exchanging, and reusing metadata on the Internet. This is an approach by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) to creating a uniform and extensible metadata format with an XML-based syntax, just like RSS.*

RSS: *Short for Rich Site Summary. RSS is an XML and RDF based Internet standard for news feeds. It gives computers continuous access to information from content providers, and displays a title, abstract, and link to that content on a website or the local desktop.*

Figure 3: A dialog box helps you add news feeds.

sites you specify when launched and download the latest news to your desktop. *Mark all feeds as read on exit* is a useful option, as it helps you identify the latest news among the masses of news feeds.

You can use the second tab, *Browser* to tell aKregator either to display the news itself, or to pass the news on to an external browser. If you take the latter option, you also need to specify whether you will be using the KDE browser, Konqueror, or an external browser such as Mozilla. If you opt for an external browser, you additionally need to specify the command to launch that browser: *mozilla '%u'*, for example.

The prettiest of news feed grabbers would be useless without news feeds. To add a source, select *Feed | Add...* in the menu. This pops up a dialog like the one shown in Figure 3, where you can enter the URL for the RSS feed and then click the *OK* button – aKregator immediately dashes off to fetch the latest news, when you click *OK*.

Before the news feed is displayed in the main window, you have the option of entering a name for the feed in another dialog box (Figure 4). At the same time, you can specify the fetch interval. Click *OK* again to display the news feed on the left of the main window below the *All Feeds* heading.

After selecting the feeds, you still need to select the news. By default, aKregator uses settings that immediately give you the headlines for each feed you select when you select it. The left pane lets you see the selected feeds and the number of news items; the headings are shown top right.

The bottom right half of the window tends to fill up quickly if you click on one of the headlines. aKregator immediately displays the ID, the publication date, and a link to the *Full Story* behind the headline.

When you click on a heading, the program tags that heading as read. You can use the menu in the top right hand corner to decide whether you want aKregator to remove the heading from the display. If you opt to display all articles, you can use color coding to keep track of article status. aKregator displays unread articles in blue, read articles in black, and new headlines in red.

To fetch new headlines, you can either select *Fetch | Fetch all* (for all your selected feeds), or *Fetch* for a specific feed, or you can right click on a feed in the left panel. This drops down a context menu where you can select *Fetch*. The menu has other useful tricks up its sleeve: clicking on *Open Homepage* will take you directly to the homepage for the selected news feed; *Delete* removes a feed; and *Mark all as Read* tells aKregator to mark all headlines from the feed as read.

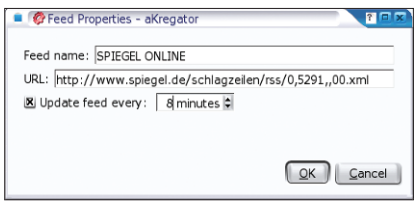

Figure 4: You can specify an individual fetch interval for each feed.

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