

The Origins and Importance of RSS

A simple background for podcasters

What RSS Is

RSS stands for **Really Simple Syndication**.

It is a standard way for content to be published on the internet so that other software can automatically read and update it.

In podcasting, RSS is the file that carries your show and episodes from your hosting platform to listening apps.

Why RSS Was Created

In the late 1990s, the internet was growing fast. Blogs and news sites were updating frequently, but there was no easy way for people to keep track of new content without visiting each site individually.

RSS was created to solve this problem by:

- Allowing creators to publish updates in a structured format
- Allowing readers to subscribe and receive updates automatically
- Removing the need for a central platform to control distribution

The goal was simplicity and independence.

How RSS Became the Foundation of Podcasting

RSS was originally designed for text, not audio.

However, in the early 2000s, developers added support for media files, allowing audio to be included in RSS feeds.

This made it possible for:

- Audio files to be automatically downloaded
- New episodes to appear in listening software without manual uploads

When Apple introduced podcast support in iTunes in 2005, it adopted RSS rather than creating a new system. This decision established RSS as the global standard for podcast distribution.

How RSS Works for Podcasts

A podcast RSS feed contains:

- Podcast title and description
- Episode titles, summaries, and publish dates
- Links to audio files
- Artwork and other metadata

Podcast platforms regularly check this feed. When a new episode appears, it is automatically updated across those platforms.

The RSS feed remains the single source of truth for the podcast.

Why RSS Still Matters

RSS is important because it is:

- **Open:** no single company owns or controls it
- **Portable:** podcasters can change hosting providers without losing their audience
- **Consistent:** all platforms read from the same source
- **Long-lasting:** it has remained stable for over two decades

While platforms may add their own features, RSS is what ensures podcasts remain independent of any one service.

Why RSS Is Central to the Nigerian Podcast Index

The Nigerian Podcast Index is designed to document and make Nigerian podcasts discoverable, not to rank or host them.

Using RSS allows the Index to:

- Verify podcasts directly from their original source
- Collect accurate and up-to-date information
- Avoid reliance on individual platforms or algorithms
- Preserve a reliable record of Nigerian podcasts over time

RSS makes the Index neutral, consistent, and sustainable.

What This Means for Podcasters

For podcasters, RSS ensures that:

- Your podcast can be found beyond major listening apps
- Your show can be accurately indexed and archived
- You retain control over your content and distribution
- Your work remains accessible in the long term

In simple terms, RSS is how your podcast is recognised, distributed, and preserved.

In Summary

RSS is not new, but it is essential.

It is the technology that made podcasting possible and keeps it open.

The Nigerian Podcast Index starts with RSS because it provides a dependable way to document podcasts today and preserve them for the future.