

## Tech Talk Tuesdays #3: Alternatives

*Note: words in bold might include a hyperlink to a relevant source.*

### Topics

- Free your feeds with RSS.
- Side-step profiling with Searx.
- Unplug from the cloud with Syncthing.

### RSS

*What is it?*

“RSS is a web feed that allows users and applications to access updates to websites in a standardized, computer-readable format. Subscribing to RSS feeds can allow a user to keep track of many different websites in a single news aggregator, which constantly monitor sites for new content, removing the need for the user to manually check them.”

*Why should you use it?*

One interacts with feeds every day, especially when interacting with social media platforms. These feeds are strongly curated, so the user will only be able to see what the curators want it to see. Some themes or news sources will not show up in your feed, even though they might match your profile. By “shadow banning” (hiding these sources of information), platform owners can promote the narratives they want.

By using RSS, you curate your own feed. Most websites offer RSS subscriptions to notify their readers of new content. Search the website for RSS or this symbol:



Figure 1: RSS icon

One can then copy the link to the RSS feed (for ex: <https://portugalfreedomcells.cyou/public-feed.xml>) and add it to a RSS reader/aggregator of choice.

If you are on Android you can download **Feeder** from F-droid.

On desktop, you can add your feeds to **Thunderbird** or a standalone RSS client.

*If you want something that is multiplatform and self-hosted, you can ask for an account on our instance of FreshRSS, a web RSS aggregator that you can run from your browser.*

## Searx

When you input a query, the search engine can extract a profile about you based on your search history. Also, search engine results are curated in a way that you'll only find the information that has been "approved". Searx can help us side-step this.

"Searx is a free metasearch engine [i.e. gathers results from several search engines of choice], with the aim of protecting the privacy of its users. To this end, Searx does not share users' IP addresses or search history with the search engines from which it gathers results. Tracking cookies served by the search engines are blocked, preventing user-profiling-based results modification. By default, Searx queries are submitted via HTTP POST, to prevent users' query keywords from appearing in webserver logs. Each search result is given as a direct link to the respective site, rather than a tracked redirect link as used by Google. In addition, when available, these direct links are accompanied by cached and/or proxied links that allow viewing results pages without actually visiting the sites in question."

You can select a public instance of Searx from this **list**.

## Syncthing

If you are using the cloud as part of your workflow as a way to make your files and photos available on all your devices, know that you don't need to share your files with Google, Microsoft or Dropbox. By using Syncthing, all the folders you choose to share will be available on the devices of your choosing. Your files are not stored on any server, just your devices.

"Syncthing is a free, open-source peer-to-peer file synchronization application available for Windows, macOS, Linux, Android, Solaris, Darwin, and BSD. It can sync files between devices on a local network, or between remote devices over the Internet. Data security and data safety are built into the design of the software."

Check the **website** for more information and download the relevant clients for your devices.