# BottomFeeder – A Standards-Compliant News Aggregator
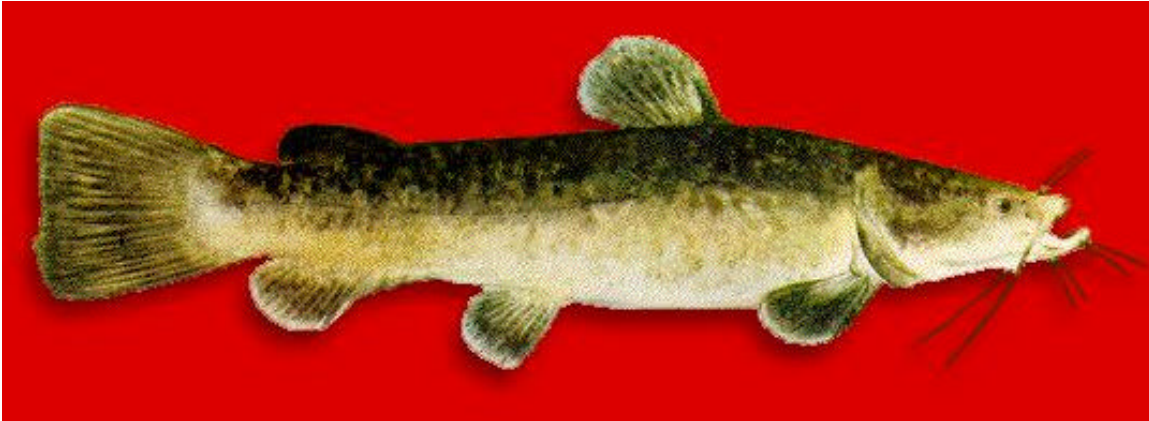
BottomFeeder is a standards-compliant news aggregator written in VisualWorks® Smalltalk™ (version 7.2).  What is a news aggregator?  A detailed explanation may be found at http://www.hebig.org/blogs/archives/main/000877.php.

Briefly, a news aggregator is an application that consumes XML-based news feeds, in a particular set of formats, and then displays the updates to the user in a clear and organized fashion.  There are a variety of XML formats used – RSS (versions 0.91 to 2.0) and Atom (0.2 and 0.3) being the most prevalent.  The common term for these formats is "feed" or "syndicated feed." A feed typically contains the latest set of updates to a website (similar to the "recent changes" feature of a Wiki).  As such, feeds are commonly used on weblogs, but are also quite common for news sites such as CNN, the *New York Times*, etc.  Many people do most or all of their web browsing through an aggregator instead of a web browser.  The two are not in competition, however, they are complementary tools.

BottomFeeder is an application that allows end-users to subscribe to syndicated content.  Subscribed content will be checked on a regular basis by BottomFeeder, so that the end-user need not manually do so.  BottomFeeder may also be used when not connected to the internet – it supports offline viewing of downloaded content.  BottomFeeder is written completely in VisualWorks Smalltalk, but can be integrated with a browser (the default browser on Windows or Macintosh platforms) for viewing of full content.
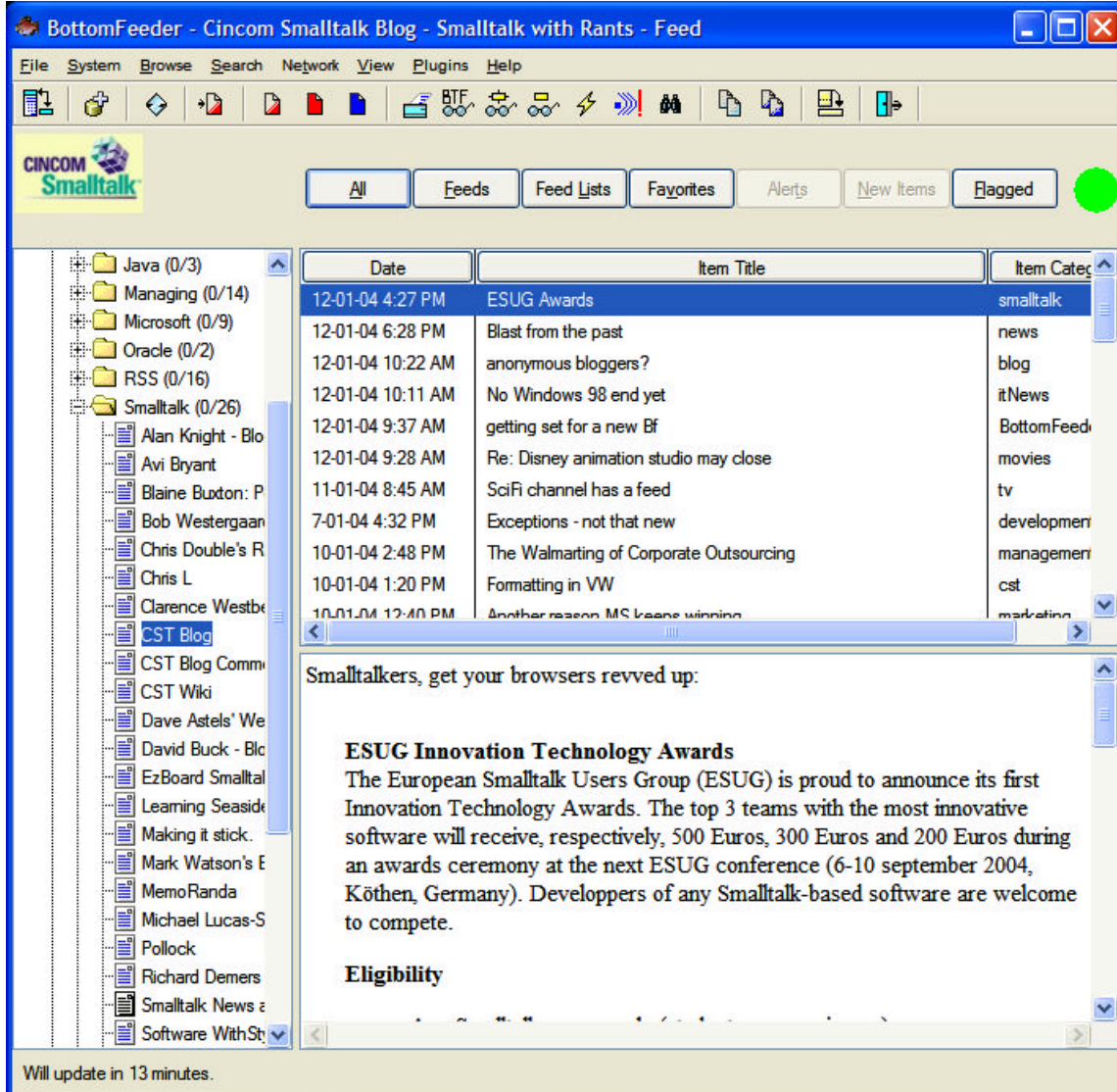
There are a number of feed formats supported by BottomFeeder, including:

- RSS 0.91, RSS 0.92, RSS 0.93, RSS 2.0
- RSS 1.0 (also known as RDF)
- Atom 0.2, Atom 0.3
- OCS 0.4, OCS 0.5
- OPML 1.0, OPML 1.1

End-users do not need to know what these are; the application sorts that out for them.

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Here's a screen shot of BottomFeeder:



The screen shot shows the following:

1. A tree of feeds in the left pane. This tree may be organized in the manner preferred by the end-user.
2. An upper pane of items in the selected feed. A feed contains news items. The upper right pane contains a grid view of the items downloaded.
3. The lower right pane shows an HTML view of the selected item.

There are numerous ways for a user to interact with a feed or item; many of these depend on whether or not a given feed/item has been marked by the content producer to support such interaction. Common options are to comment on an item, print, or browse (using an external browser).

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Additionally, BottomFeeder ships with a number of additional components that are dynamically loaded as plugins. BottomFeeder has a defined API for adding plugins at runtime:

- TypeLess – an IRC client tool, written by David Murphy and Michael Lucas-Smith
- Pongo – an MSN IM client, written by Anthony Lander
- Blog Poster – a client blog posting tool, written by James Robertson and Michael Lucas-Smith.  The poster supports a posting API specific to the Cincom Smalltalk blog site, as well as the more common Blogger API and MetaWebLog API.

BottomFeeder itself was written by:

- James Robertson – jarober@gosmalltalk.com.  James Robertson is the Cincom Smalltalk Product Manager.
- David Murphy – dwmurphy@canada.com.  David is a software developer located in Vancouver, B.C.
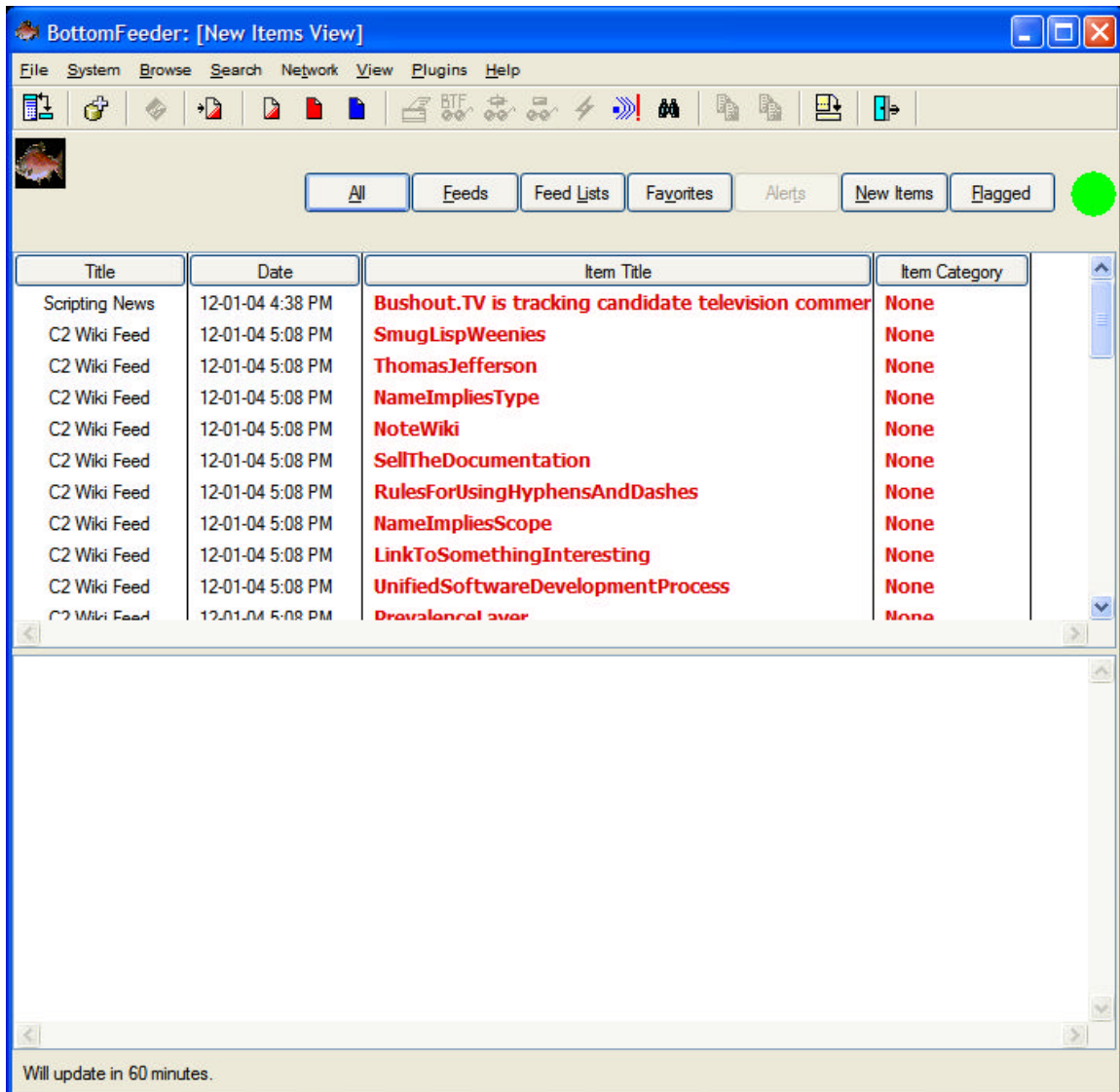
BottomFeeder is open source and free for any and all use under the Artistic License. Ready-to-install details, source, and binary downloads may be found on the BottomFeeder website at http://www.cincomsmalltalk.com/BottomFeeder.

Additionally, BottomFeeder relies on Twoflower, an HTML browser written by Holger Kleinsorgen.  Complete details on BottomFeeder may be found in the online documentation at http://www.cincomsmalltalk.com/BottomFeeder/doc/UsersGuide/UsersGuide.htm.

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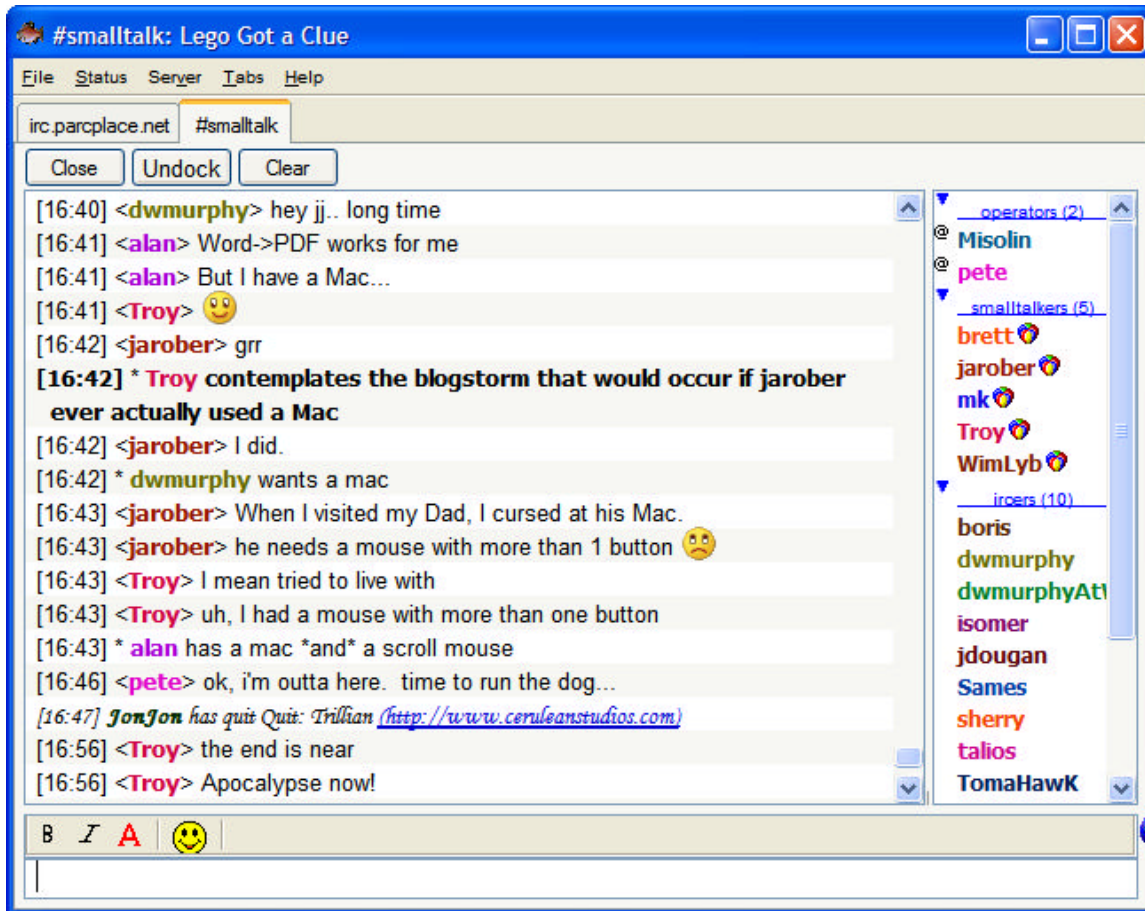# BottomFeeder – A Standards-Compliant News Aggregator

Below are some additional screen shots.

BottomFeeder in the two-paned "new items" view:

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The TypeLess plugin:

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The Blog Poster plugin, being used to blog an item selected in BottomFeeder: