

8 February 2007

By: Ionut Ilascu, Editor, Software Reviews



[Get U'R Widget](#)

Washington Post in your face

"Distrust Hinders FBI In Outreach to Muslims", "The Domestic Threat", "Congress Has So Little to Do, And So Much Time". These are just three of the front page titles in Washington Post on February 8 2007. They are pretty interesting despite the fact that you are not an American. However, it is nice to learn once in a while about what is going on in USA, the position with regards to the Iraq war and the debate on the subject. Regular RSS readers can bring the front page titles of every newspaper on your computer everyday. But how about a widget? To tell the truth, I am becoming more and more a fan of these little applications that are quiet, easy to harness and configure and require no installation steps to go through. The only condition to make them run on your computer is to set up Yahoo!Widget Engine. By the way, the Yahoo! application also comes strapped with a number of widgets of its own. Washington Post Reader is a small application belonging to the widget category with strong RSS reader traces. The combination is great, despite the fact that it provides top titles from a single newspaper. However, the free application sports some features a regular RSS aggregator only dreams of, for now. The interface is not the regular widget like, but more like a snippet from Washington Post page. In the top left corner there is the date and time and in the opposite side, the window displays the section of the paper the titles are from. The middle part of the top part of the window is occupied by the title of the American newspaper. Clicking on one title will surely take you to the respective article, automatically opening the page in the default web browser. Right clicking the window opens an unusually rich context menu for a widget. There are the preferences, the recently opened sections of the newspaper, update section, and the update section. Preferences section is the most important of them all and here's where we'll hang around for a minute or two. The stylish application sports a RSS feeds tab which lets the user choose the feeds s/he wants to read in the widget's window. This way you can choose one of the 14 sections available. The domains they cover include almost every aspect of life from Politics, Style, Business, and Technology to Health, Sports and Education. The special section like Real Estate, internal national news and international happenings, Top News and Front Page are not neglected either. Feeds updating option is available in this window too and the frequency ranges from 30 minutes to 24 hours updates. The developer warns that updating the feeds more often than the minimum limit "puts too much stress on the server" and no good can come out of this. Moving to the next tab in the right, you get to choosing the alerting sound when the feeds are updated. The audio alert can be disabled, but this way you will no longer know when new feeds are available to read. The audio formats supported for the alert are MP3, AIFF, AU, WAV and SND (more than many RSS readers available on the Internet). The developer thought about the fact that there may be some time interval in which you would not like to hear the updating sound (Sunday morning at 6 o'clock for instance or in the evening). The application provides the necessary flexibility so that the user can set times when not to be alerted by the update operation. The next window in Preferences is Interface. Settings like changing the font size and displaying the feeds in context menu are available to the user in order to properly customize the feed display. Also, enabling checking for updates on start up will let you off the hook in what concerns updating to new versions of the widget. Window tab shelters the regular widget settings for opacity and window level. This tab is available in absolutely every widget you encounter. **The Good** This is the widget with the most options embedded I have seen up till now. It provides fast retrieval of the Washington Post titles and the automatic feed update options make it very flexible. Alerting options are also highly flexible and allow configuration

for both daily alert and time interval. **The Bad** Adding more newspapers would make this really popular. **The Truth** You can learn about the headlines of the day without even opening your web browser. A free way to read one of the most prestigious newspapers in America. *Here are some snapshots of the application in action:*