

*Adding functions to conference and seminar announcements with ease—ICAL, RSS, Google Calendar and other related subscriptions*

## **Unified Conference and Seminar Announcement Plan**

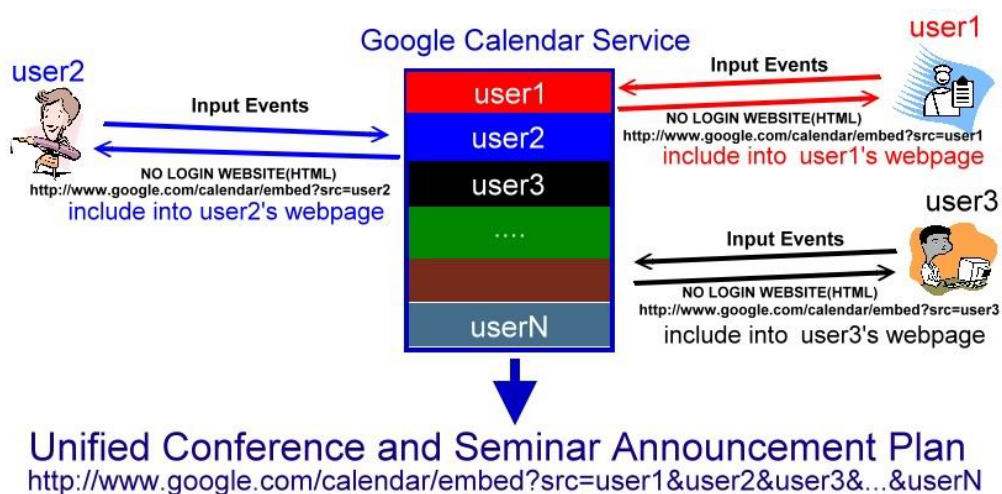
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Research institutions often hold regular academic seminars and conferences, and the means of announcing and publicizing these events often take the form of posters, emails (using mailing lists) and postings on the internet. Poster-form announcements are more suited for larger conferences, but often lack flexibility, effectiveness and the ability to meet time constraints which are required for smaller, more regularly held events. And while email has proven to become an effective means of communication, in the midst of junk mail and the proliferation of the overall volume of emails sent, its role in delivering sound information to intended recipients has also faced challenges. Most research institutions have a webpage in which conferences to be held are posted to, and usually someone is responsible for the upkeep of information and data regarding these scheduled events. Some institutes will use a static HTML-based presentation form while others may employ dynamic PHP, JSP or ASP-based applications which can connect to a database with the relevant information and relay the information seamlessly and simultaneously to a webpage. In the vast reaches of the internet, finding ways to allow users access relevant and accurate information resources in a timely and convenient manner has become more of a challenge and an increasingly important topic for further discussion.

As different means of communication continue to develop, functions such as RSS subscriptions, ICAL file exports, and other calendar based systems are becoming new ways in which net-savvy users can access information deemed relevant to them. The user no longer has to mechanically search for information on the Web, instead, information can be subscribed to and delivered to the digital doorstep. While institutions may adopt various information file types for subscribers (i.e. XML), users need only to install a browser or reader which can open these various file types and should never have to miss another important event again.

The Institute of Mathematics currently allows colleagues to suggest new RSS

feeds for conferences and is now in the process of considering implementing a subscription based RSS feed, allowing users to retrieve relevant information readable through an independent application (Reader). The information would thus be transmitted instantaneously without any effort required upon the subscriber. Conference and seminar announcements can be distributed using RSS, however, a lapse exists between the publication date of the announcement and the actual date when the event is held. Thus, subscribers must manually search for previous RSS information or input this information into their own calendars if they want to attend. Users of ICAL can import their individual schedules (Outlook, Vista Calendars, Mac OSX ICAL, etc.), which allows easier management of a multitude of scheduled events. The only disadvantage is that the user must have the ICAL file handy for import and use at a computer. Three weeks ago, Mr. An-sheng Chang of National Taiwan University's Department of Mathematics recommended using Google Calendar for conference and seminar announcements. After a detailed test-run, I discovered that the Google Calendar application can simultaneously export files to RSS, ICAL, and HTML templates. What I found exciting was that Google's exported template could also be placed on any institutional or departmental webpage, and could be customized to perform a series of other functions as well. Upon later discovery I even found that one could use a Google account to organize events hosted by other institutions and display their schedules with use of color-coding, a truly exceptional feature. Google's HTML template allows for non-account holding users to access scheduling information. This led me to conclude that if institutions and departments of similar specializations used a unified HTML-based scheduling system to replace the smattering of scattered systems currently only the internet, users could access wide-ranging amounts of information deemed relevant to them with even greater convenience.



After spending many strenuous days in search of a way to make the Google Calendar application suitable for use and after repeated exchanges of opinions and insights with several specialists on online discussion boards, I finally found a Google Calendar Gadget which would allow the creation of “A Unified Conference and Seminar Announcement System” (encompassing the Academia Sinica Institute of Mathematics, National Taiwan University Department of Mathematics, NCTS Mathematics Division and the National Taiwan University Institute of Mathematical Sciences). In order to further research the special aspects of this tool, the Academia Sinica Institute of Mathematics and the Dean of the Mathematics Research and Promotion Center are jointly promoting the creation of a unified announcement system for mathematics and statistics institutions and divisions throughout Taiwan. We ask that all participating institutes, departments and divisions enter Google’s website to create an account and input their public schedule of events into the Google Calendar system. Each institution should then notify the Mathematics Center of the account name created so that the Academia Sinica Institute of Mathematics can write a program that can simultaneously read the Google Calendar accounts of all participating institutions. Future plans call for an island-wide network divided into the sub-regions of: Northern Region, Hsin-chu area, Central Region, etc. Conference and seminar announcements will be issued regionally, allowing mathematicians and statisticians to fully access information regarding these important events.

### 中研院數學所、台大數學系 聯合演講公告

The screenshot shows a Google Calendar gadget for July 2007. The calendar grid highlights the 25th as the current date. Below the calendar, a list of events is displayed for the following days:

Today	Wed, Jul 25
No events on the 25th.	
Tomorrow	Thu, Jul 26
10:00	Cubic generic polynomials and some Cremona transformations / A. Hoshi A.Hoshi ( Waseda University, Tokyo ) - NCTS 國家理論科學中心臺北辦公室(數學組)
In 2 days	Fri, Jul 27
11:00	From Thomas-Fermi to Chern-Simons / Augusto C. Ponce ( Université François Rabelais ) - TIMS 台大數學科學中心
15:10	Effect potential of Helium Atom from Quantum Number D-Scaling / Zhonghai Ding ( University of Nevada Las Vegas ) - TIMS 台大數學科學中心
Next week	Wed, Aug 1
15:00	Multiple Periodic Oscillations in Suspension Bridge Systems; 丁中海 教授 (University of Nevada, Las Vegas)MATH SINICA
	Thu, Aug 2
15:00	Verification and Validation for Unstable Problems in Compressible Fluid Flow; Prof. James Glimm (SUNY at Stony Brook)

Another issue relates to the conferences and seminars hosted by the Academia Sinica which are often attended by visitors outside of Sinica. The announcements for these conferences and seminars are often scattered throughout each institute's individual website, which often translates into visitor's missing out on several interesting events based on the myriad of information sources. Currently, each institute at the Academia Sinica submits a schedule of events to the Weekly Bulletin for publication. However, due to short-notice scheduling of some events, not all conferences and seminars appear on the printed bulletin. This problem highlights the necessity of a flexible and adaptable seminar announcement mechanism which the Unified Conference and Seminar Announcement System would provide. We therefore recommend the Academia Sinica to adopt this system, and encourage all of its institutes to use similar means to input conference and seminar scheduling information. Subsequently, the Computing Center will provide maintenance of the Unified System, giving the Academia Sinica a comprehensive system for presenting conference and seminar information to scholars and the public at large.

For more details and instructions: <http://www.math.sinica.edu.tw/ical/>