

‘Float’ Aims to Improve the Mobile Reading Experience

By Joseph Fieber, TechNewsDaily Contributor
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The document-sharing website Scribd today (July 19) released a new service called “Float,” which is designed to simplify and enhance the Internet reading experience.

Float makes it easier to read news and blogs by bringing them together in one place, displaying the article’s content without all the extra “junk,” and syncing it all across Float.com and your devices (iPhone/iPod Touch now, iPad and Android soon).

Scribd was started four years ago as a document uploading and sharing site. It has grown to become the largest document-sharing site on the Web, and has more than 75 million visitors a month and tens of millions of [pieces of content](#) uploaded not just by average users but also by big-name brands from publishing and media.

Realizing that “reading is a fragmented space, we thought we could build a better experience for readers by tying reading platforms together,” said Scribd CTO and co-founder Jared Friedman.

[Float](#) gathers and organizes your favorite content. It strips out clutter, like ads and navigation, from a page, allowing you to focus on the content for a clean reading experience. You can “Stylize” your text to give it the appearance of a newspaper, eInk reader, old-fashioned green-on-black computer monitor, as well as many other looks.

The “Reading Lists” feature allows you to see all the [articles you’ve gathered to read](#), while the “Library” feature makes everything you’ve read browse-able and searchable. Anything you do on Float, either through the website or on one of the device [apps](#), is immediately synced to your other devices to provide a seamless and portable reading experience. Your content is even available offline on portable devices.

Deep social functionality was a goal from the start, so Float makes it easy to share articles with friends on Facebook, Twitter and Scribd. You can also see an optimized list of recommendations gathered from your friends’ feeds that can be read through Float.

One of the [key innovations](#) is “Floating Text Experience,” which allows text from articles to scale to whatever device it is displayed on. No more scrolling left to right to read a line of text after zooming in. By “pinching” the iPhone [app](#), you can dynamically resize the text on your screen to make it easier to read. In PDF files, the structure of the content is examined and the text re-flowed, so it’s more readable, yet the meaning of the author is preserved.

With Float removing most ads from the articles, Scribd partnered with more than 150 publishers, including Time, Associated Press, The Atlantic, Entertainment Weekly, Fortune, People and Salon, offering a way to distribute, socialize and monetize their content. Expect this list to continue growing as Scribd talks with more content providers.