

Transforming RFC2629-formatted XML through XSLT

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1 Introduction

This document describes a set of XSLT transformations that can be used to transform RFC2629-compliant XML (see [\[RFC2629\]](#)) to various output formats, such as HTML and PDF. The main topics are

- compliance to the xml2rfc XML element set ([Section 2](#)),
- support for xml2rfc processing instructions ([Section 3](#)),
- the names of anchor elements generated in HTML and PDF output ([Section 4](#)),
- various XSLT engines that can be used ([Section 5](#)),
- outputting HTML ([Section 6](#)) and XHTML ([Section 7](#)),
- outputting CHM (Compiled Microsoft Help, [Section 8](#)),
- outputting PDF through XSL-FO ([Section 9](#)) and
- various utilities ([Section 10](#)).

2 Supported RFC2629 elements

`rfc2629.xslt` supports both all RFC2629 grammar elements and the extensions implemented in `xml2rfc 1.21`.

2.1 Extension elements

In addition, `rfc2629.xslt` supports a set of extension elements, using elements and attributes in the namespace "`http://greenbytes.de/2002/rfcedit`". They are used for

- simple issue tracking and change tracking and
- adding additional metadata to the generated documents (such as HTML LINK elements to related documents, see [Section 6.2](#)).

Note that these extensions are experimental. Please email the author in case you're interested in using these extensions.

3 Processing Instructions

All PIs can be set as XSLT parameter as well, overriding any value that is found in the source file to be transformed.

Using processing instructions:

```
<?rfc toc="yes"?>
<?rfc-ext support-rfc2731="no"?>
```

Using XSLT parameters:

```
saxon foo.xml rfc2629.xslt xml2rfc-toc=yes \
  xml2rfc-ext-support-rfc2731=no > result.hzml
```

3.1 Supported xml2rfc-compatible PIs

PI target	PI pseudo-attribute	XSLT parameter name	default	comment
rfc	background	xml2rfc-background	(not set)	
rfc	compact	xml2rfc-compact	"no"	only applies to HTML output method when printing
rfc	editing	xml2rfc-editing	"no"	
rfc	footer	xml2rfc-footer	(not set)	
rfc	header	xml2rfc-header	(not set)	
rfc	iprnotified	xml2rfc-iprnotified	"no"	
rfc	linkmailto	xml2rfc-linkmailto	"yes"	
rfc	private	xml2rfc-private	(not set)	
rfc	sortrefs	xml2rfc-sortrefs	"no"	
rfc	symrefs	xml2rfc-symrefs	"no"	
rfc	toc	xml2rfc-toc	"no"	
rfc	tocdepth	xml2rfc-tocdepth	99	
rfc	topblock	xml2rfc-topblock	"yes"	

3.2 Unsupported xml2rfc-compatible PIs

PI target	PI pseudo-attribute	comment
rfc	include	incompatible with XML/XSLT processing model
rfc	needLines	
rfc	slides	

PI target	PI pseudo-attribute	comment
rfc	strict	
rfc	subcompact	
rfc	tocindent	
rfc	tocompact	

3.3 Extension PIs

PI target	PI pseudo-attribute	XSLT parameter name	default	description
rfc-ext	support-rfc2731	xml2rfc-ext-support-rfc2731	'yes'	Decides whether the HTML transformation should generate META tags according Section 6.4 .

4 Anchors

The transformation automatically generates anchors that are supposed to be stable and predictable and that can be used to identify specific parts of the document. Anchors are generated both in HTML and XSL-FO content (but the latter will only be used for PDF output when the XSL-FO engine supports producing PDF anchors).

The following anchors get auto-generated:

Anchor name	Description
rfc.abstract	Abstract
rfc.authors	Authors section
rfc.copyright	Copyright section
rfc.copyrightnotice	Copyright notice
rfc.figure.n	Figures (titled)
rfc.figure.u.n	Figures (untitled)
rfc.index	Index
rfc.ipr	Intellectual Property
rfc.iref.n	Internal references
rfc.note.n	Notes (from front section)
rfc.references	References
rfc.references.n	Additional references
rfc.section.n	Section n
rfc.section.n.p.m	Section n, paragraph m
rfc.status	Status of memo
rfc.toc	Table of contents

5 Supported XSLT engines

The transformation requires a non-standard extension function (see [exsl:node-set](http://www.exslt.org/exslt/functions/node-set/exslt.node-set.html)¹) which is however widely available. XSLT processors that do not support this extension (or a functional equivalent) currently are not supported.

5.1 Standalone Engines

The following XSLT engines are believed to work well:

- MSXML3 and MSXML4 (<<http://msdn.microsoft.com/xml>>; these processors do not support exsl:node-set(), but have a similar proprietary extension)
- Saxon (<<http://saxon.sourceforge.net/>>)
- Xalan (<<http://xml.apache.org/xalan-j/>>)
- xsltproc (libxslt) (<<http://xmlsoft.org/XSLT/>>, make sure that you have a current version)

5.2 In-Browser Engines

The following browsers seem to work fine:

- Internet Explorer 5.5 (Windows version, if MSXML3 is installed)
- Internet Explorer 6 (Windows version)

The following browsers are known not to work properly:

- Mozilla (missing extension function - see change request at [Mozilla Bug 215242](http://bugzilla.mozilla.org/show_bug.cgi?id=215242)²)

¹ <http://www.exslt.org/exslt/functions/node-set/exslt.node-set.html>

² http://bugzilla.mozilla.org/show_bug.cgi?id=215242

6 Transforming to HTML

Transformation to HTML can be done inside the browser if it supports XSLT. To enable this, add the following processing instruction to the start of the source file:

```
<?xml-stylesheet type='text/xsl' href='rfc2629.xslt' ?>
```

(and ensure that `rfc2629.xslt` is present).

6.1 HTML compliance

The transformation result is supposed to conform to the HTML 4.01 strict DTD [HTML]. This can be checked using the W3C's online validator at <http://validator.w3.org>.

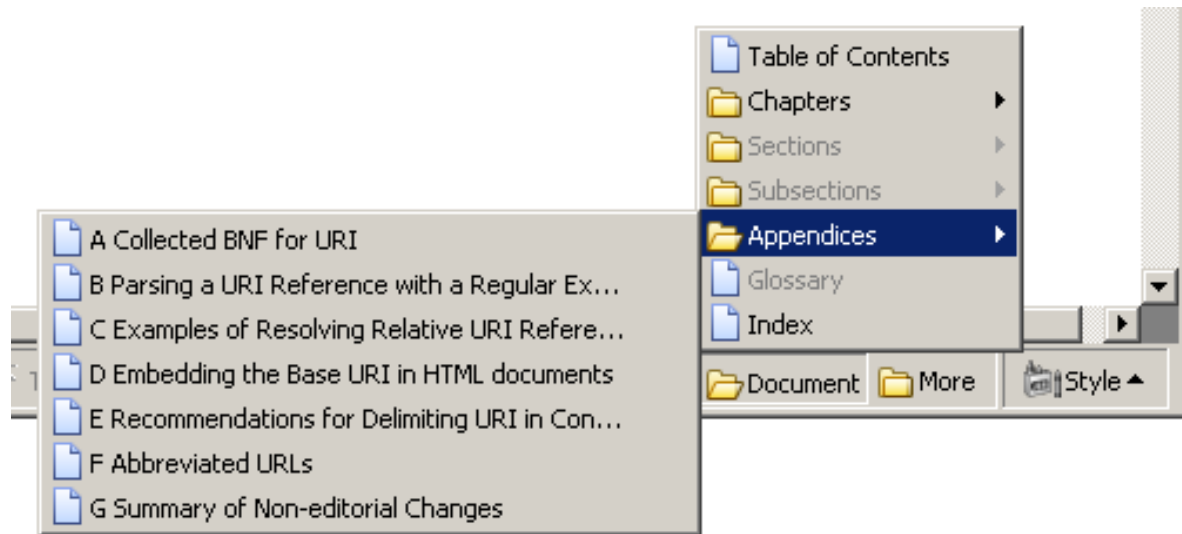
6.2 Standard HTML LINK elements

LINK elements exist since HTML 2.0. They can be used to embed content-independant links inside the document. Unfortunately, only few user agents fully support this element, namely Mozilla where it's called "Site Navigation Bar" (by default disabled!).

The following LINK elements are produced:

LINK type	description
alternate	for RFCs, a link to the authoritative ASCII version on the IETF web site
appendic	pointer to all top-level appendics
author	pointer to "authors" section
chapter	pointer to all top-level sections
contents	pointer to table of contents
copyright	pointer to copyright statement
index	pointer to index

The figure below shows how Mozilla Firebird displays the Site Navigation Bar for `rfc2396.xml`.



6.3 Standard HTML metadata

The following standard HTML META elements are produced:

META name	description
generator	from XSLT engine version and stylesheet version
keywords	from keyword elements in front section

6.4 Dublin Core (RFC2731) metadata

Unless turned off using the "rfc-ext support-rfc2731" processing instruction, the transformation will generate metadata according to [\[RFC2731\]](#).

The following DCMI properties are produced:

META name	description
DC.Creator	from author information in front section
DC.Date.Issued	from date information in front section
DC.Description.Abstract	from abstract
DC.Identifier	document URN [RFC2648] from "docName" attribute
DC.Relation.Replaces	from "obsoletes" attribute

7 Transforming to XHTML

Transforming to XHTML requires slightly different XSLT output options and is implemented by the derived transformation script `rfc2629toXHTML.xslt`.

Note: Microsoft Internet Explorer does *not* support XHTML. Therefore it usually makes more sense to generate plain old HTML.

8 Transforming to CHM (Microsoft Compiled Help)

To generate a CHM file using Microsoft's HTML Help Compiler (hhc), three files are required in addition to the HTML file.

1. hhc - table of contents file (HTML)
2. hhk - index file (HTML)
3. hhp - project file (plain text)

The three files are generated with three specific transformations, each requiring the additional XSLT parameter "basename" to specify the filename prefix.

Example:

```
saxon rfc2616.xml rfc2629toHhp.xslt basename=rfc2616 > rfc2616.hhp
saxon rfc2616.xml rfc2629toHhc.xslt basename=rfc2616 > rfc2616.hhc
saxon rfc2616.xml rfc2629toHhk.xslt basename=rfc2616 > rfc2616.hhk
hhc rfc2616.hhp
```

9 Transforming to PDF via XSL-FO

Transformation to XSL-FO [\[XSL-FO\]](#) format is available through `rfc2629toFO.xslt` (which includes `rfc2629.xslt`, so keep both in the same folder).

Compared to HTML user agents, XSL-FO engines unfortunately either come as open source (for instance, Apache FOP) or feature-complete (for instance, AntennaHouse XSL Formatter), but not both at the same time. The transformation does it's best to workaround known issues with Apache FOP, yet also tries to support as many extensions (primarily for PDF output) at the same time.

9.1 Extension feature matrix

	PDF anchors	PDF bookmarks	PDF document information	Index cleanup
Antenna House XSL formatter ³		yes ⁴	yes ⁵	yes ⁶
Apache FOP ⁷	yes ⁸	yes ⁹		
RenderX XEP ¹⁰		yes ¹¹	yes ¹²	

³ <http://www.antennahouse.com/>

⁴ <http://www.antennahouse.com/XSL20/axf-extension.htm>

⁵ <http://www.antennahouse.com/XSL20/axf-extension.htm>

⁶ <http://www.antennahouse.com/XSL20/axf-extension.htm>

⁷ <http://xml.apache.org/fop/>

⁸ <http://xml.apache.org/fop/extensions.html#named-destinations>

⁹ <http://xml.apache.org/fop/extensions.html#bookmarks>

¹⁰ <http://xep.xattic.com/>

¹¹ <http://xep.xattic.com/xep/spec.html>

¹² <http://xep.xattic.com/xep/spec.html>

10 Utilities

10.1 Checking References

`check-ietf-references.xslt` can be used to check all references to RFC-series IETF publications (note this script requires a local copy of <http://ftp.isi.edu/in-notes/rfc-index.xml>). For instance:

```
> saxon rfc2518.xml check-ietf-references.xslt
RFC1766: obsoleted by RFC3066 RFC3282
RFC2277: ok
RFC2119: ok
RFC2396: ok
RFC2069: obsoleted by RFC2617
RFC2068: obsoleted by RFC2616
RFC2141: ok
RFC2279: ok
RFC2026: ok
RFC1807: ok
RFC2291: ok
RFC2413: ok
RFC2376: obsoleted by RFC3023
```

10.2 Producing reference entries for books

`amazon-asin.xslt` uses the Amazon web services to generate a `<reference>` element for a given ASIN (ISBN). For instance:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<references>
  <reference target="urn:isbn:0134516591">
    <front>
      <title>Simple Book, The: An Introduction to Internet Management,
        Revised Second Edition</title>
      <author surname="Rose"
        fullname="Marshall T. Rose" initials="M. T. " />
      <author surname="Marshall"
        fullname="Rose T. Marshall" initials="R. T." />
      <seriesInfo name="Prentice Hall" value="" />
      <date year="1996" month="March" />
    </front>
  </reference>
</references>
```

Note that the resulting XML usually requires checking, in this case Amazon's database is playing tricks with Marshall's name...

Informative References

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- [XSL-FO] Adler, S., Berglund, A., Caruso, J., Deach, S., Graham, T., Grosso, P., Gutentag, E., Milowski, R., Parnell, S., Richman, J. and S. Zilles, "[Extensible Stylesheet Language \(XSL\) Version 1.0](#)",
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