

RSS Import: A How-To Guide

DRAFT Version 0.20

Paul Wilson, 22st February 2007

Document Purpose

The purpose of this document to help achieve RSS import in EZ Publish 3.9.0 (and similar versions). The examples in this document are produced using EZ Publish version 3.9.0.

I hope this helps.

I'd like to briefly explain an approach that I think will be valuable for EZ Publish and the EZ community.

I suggest we need to develop EZ documentation that follows whole processes - from initial configuration of a function to achieving a desired outcome. Forum activity tends to provide spot answers to problems, but not reveal the whole process to other EZ Publish users. Similarly, technical documentation only becomes useful when you already know what you want to achieve, have designed a solution, and need clues on how to implement it.

I've been using EZ for over three years, so I have a few clues at least. Still I burn vast amounts of time trying to figure out whole processes from small clues in forum posts or technical documentation. This is just too slow, too costly, and too inefficient. Whole process documentation seems like a constructive addition to the existing range of EZ documentation and community support activities.

I suggest that whole process documentation is becoming critically important to the value of EZ Publish and the health of the EZ Publish community/ecosystem. It can help:

- Accelerate the adoption and use of EZ Publish by new-comers;
- Add to EZ Publish's overall value and cost-effectiveness;
- Provide more achievable steps for nurturing EZ publish developers and the EZ community;
- Provide a way to check expected EZ Publish behaviour, thereby helping in the identification, testing and resolution of bugs – and the identification of new enhancements.

EZ Publish has a wealth of features and possibilities, and thanks to the EZ Team and Community, this just keeps on growing. Perhaps, as a community, we need to explore new ways we can work together and help make EZ Publish even more valuable, usable, and powerful ... and to more people.

This document is my little contribution to achieving that outcome.

Paul Wilson
February 2007

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Important Disclaimer

This documentation is provided on a no liability basis. It is based on personal notes developed from using EZ Publish. Please contact EZ Systems (www.ez.no) or an EZ accredited partner / professional developer if you need to have reliable, thorough, and up-to-date information or services.

About the Author

Paul Wilson

B.Com, G.Dip Sc (IT), B.Comp (Hons)

Some of Paul's work experience has included:

- Designing strategies, projects and education programs to accelerate the adoption of e-commerce by businesses and industries in regional Australia – as part of the Australian Government's first major program of this type (1998-2002);
- Co-authoring university (MBA) and national industry training courses on e-commerce and Internet-related business strategies;
- Co-authoring research and strategy reports on national ICT training needs across regions and industries for Australian State and National government organisations.

Paul has been using EZ Publish to further his (now discontinued) PhD studies and professional work, with a view to creating shared knowledge systems for businesses, industries and community organisations.

Paul lives in Tasmania, Australia. He enjoys getting away from a computer screen for mountain-biking and (too infrequently now) sailing.

1 RSS Import

(Brief overview of RSS – to be developed)

1.1 ***RSS: Is it valuable for your business and website users?***

For the moment, this document assumes you know what RSS is about and why it might be of value.

However here are some business/organizational-level questions you may find it useful to consider:

- How will RSS contribute to achieving website/business/organisation's purpose?

And as a part of this first question,

- How can RSS help our website to deliver value for our website users/customers?

For clues on your own answers to these questions, try looking at some other websites to see how they have used RSS. What works? What doesn't? Why? What does this mean for your project?

If you're not clear why RSS is of value and how, then chances are that your business client and their users/customers will not be either. The fact that RSS is technically possible does not automatically mean it will be valuable for your business/website/customers.

(Note: These comments may seem obvious, but I suggest that in addition to nurturing technically savvy EZ Publish developers/users, EZ and the EZ community can also distinguish themselves by encouraging awareness of how to use EZ Publish to achieve practical and valuable business/user-focussed outcomes.)

2 Walkthrough of Process for Creating RSS Import

The sections below describe how to achieve RSS Import using EZ Publish 3.9.0, without using any extra RSS-related extensions.

2.1 ***Identify RSS Feed to Import***

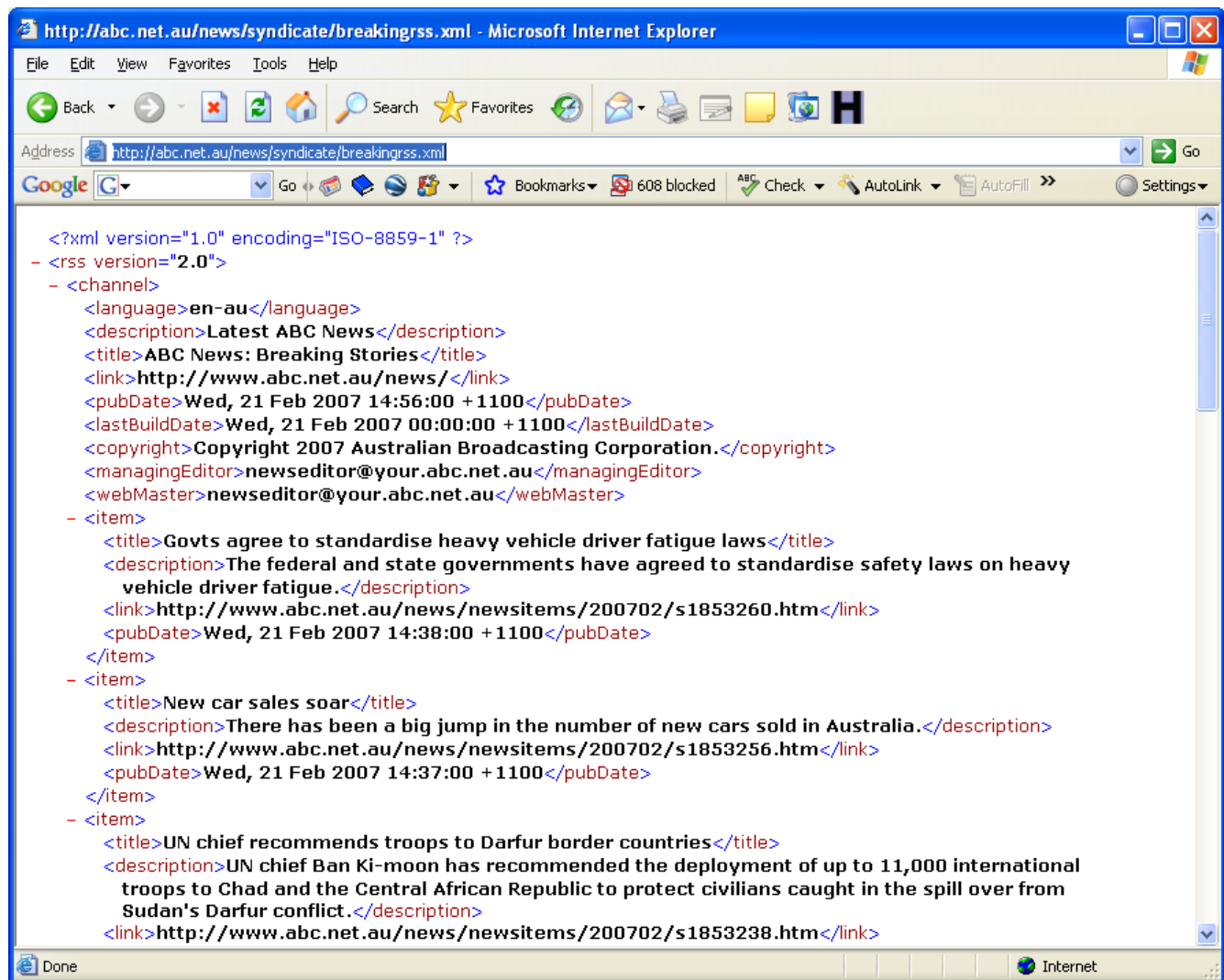
Find the URL of the RSS feed you want to import into EZ Publish.

This document uses a breaking news feed from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's site.

The URL of this RSS feed is:

<http://abc.net.au/news/syndicate/breakingrss.xml>

Examining this URL in a browser will show the contents of this XML file, for example see below.

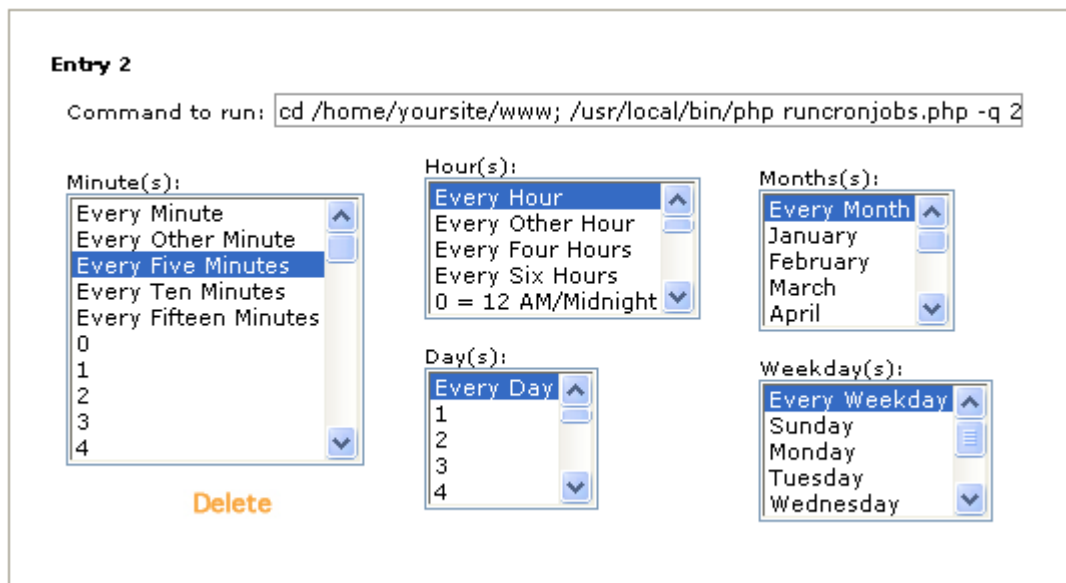


The broad process for RSS import involves:

- Configuring EZ Publish to run a php “cronjob” script so that EZ Publish can automatically collect RSS information from an external website URL;
- Creating a class of EZ Publish objects to receive and display the RSS items;
- Configuring the RSS functions of EZ Publish to automatically generate these RSS item objects from the collected RSS information;
- Configuring EZ Publish permissions so that users can view the RSS item objects; and finally,
- Customising views for the RSS item objects to display them effectively.

2.2 Establishing Cronjobs

RSS functions depend on an EZ Publish site having cronjobs enabled. This involves a server-level “cronjob” that periodically runs an EZ Publish php script. For example, in a Cpanel administers hosting environment, a cronjob like the following:



The screenshot shows a Cpanel cronjob configuration window titled "Entry 2". At the top, there is a text field labeled "Command to run:" containing the command `cd /home/yoursite/www; /usr/local/bin/php runcronjobs.php -q 2`. Below this are five dropdown menus for scheduling: "Minute(s)" with "Every Five Minutes" selected, "Hour(s)" with "Every Hour" selected, "Months(s)" with "Every Month" selected, "Day(s)" with "Every Day" selected, and "Weekday(s)" with "Every Weekday" selected. A "Delete" button is located below the "Minute(s)" dropdown.

The full text of the “Command to run” used here is:

```
“cd /home/yoursite/www; /usr/local/bin/php runcronjobs.php -q 2>&1”
```

However this will change with hosting, server and installation arrangements. Refer to EZ Publish documentation/forums for more information.

NOTE: it will be helpful not to run your RSS-related cronjobs too frequently ... this places unnecessary load on your hosting service / server and on the RSS feed provider. Check the site you are sourcing your RSS feed from – they might have some information on how frequently they update their RSS feeds.

2.3 Establishing a EZ Publish Class for RSS Items

Examine the RSS/XML file you have chosen in your web browser. Some elements will be irrelevant, but others will represent the material you want to incorporate into your EZ Publish site. For example, examining the ABC Breaking News RSS Feed, it can be seen that there is “Channel” information followed by the “item” elements that might be useful.

```

<?xml version="1.0" encoding="ISO-8859-1" ?>
- <rss version="2.0">
- <channel>
  <language>en-au</language>
  <description>Latest ABC News</description>
  <title>ABC News: Breaking Stories</title>
  <link>http://www.abc.net.au/news/</link>
  <pubDate>Wed, 21 Feb 2007 14:56:00 +1100</pubDate>
  <lastBuildDate>Wed, 21 Feb 2007 00:00:00 +1100</lastBuildDate>
  <copyright>Copyright 2007 Australian Broadcasting Corporation.</copyright>
  <managingEditor>newseditor@your.abc.net.au</managingEditor>
  <webMaster>newseditor@your.abc.net.au</webMaster>
- <item>
  <title>Govts agree to standardise heavy vehicle driver fatigue laws</title>
  <description>The federal and state governments have agreed to standardise safety laws on heavy vehicle driver fatigue.</description>
  <link>http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200702/s1853260.htm</link>
  <pubDate>Wed, 21 Feb 2007 14:38:00 +1100</pubDate>
</item>
- <item>
  <title>New car sales soar</title>
  <description>There has been a big jump in the number of new cars sold in Australia.</description>
  <link>http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200702/s1853256.htm</link>
  <pubDate>Wed, 21 Feb 2007 14:37:00 +1100</pubDate>
</item>

```

(Note that this image does not show a complete file).

The following steps explain how to create an object for capturing these item elements.

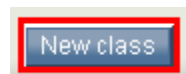
2.3.1 Login to the EZ Publish administration interface

2.3.2 Create a new Class

To do this, navigate to Setup / Classes, and then select the “Content” class group (as shown below).



This will then display a list of items in the “Content” class group. Scroll down to the bottom of this list and click on the “New Class” button.




2.3.3 Enter New Class Attributes

Give the new class a name relevant to your RSS feed, and then start to create attributes that match the RSS feed information that you want to import into EZ Publish.


For example, to import the title, description, link and pubdate elements shown in the XML file (see below), we need to create object attributes equivalent to those elements.

```
- <item>
  <title>New car sales soar</title>
  <description>There has been a big jump in the number of new cars sold in Australia.</description>
  <link>http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200702/s1853256.htm</link>
  <pubDate>Wed, 21 Feb 2007 14:37:00 +1100</pubDate>
</item>
```

For example:

 **ABC RSS Item [Class]**

Last modified: 21/02/2007 2:53 pm, Administrator User

English (Australia) 

Name:
ABC RSS Item

Identifier:
abc_rss_item

Object name pattern:
<title>

Container:
Yes

Default object availability:
Not available

Default sorting of children:
Path String / Ascending

Object count:
19

Attributes

1. Title [Text line] (id:300)

Name:	Identifier:	Flags:
Title	title	Is not required
		Is searchable
Default value: Empty	Max string length: 0 characters	Does not collect information
		Translation is enabled

2. Description [Text line] (id:301)

Name: Description	Identifier: description	Flags: Is not required Is searchable Does not collect information Translation is enabled
Default value: Empty	Max string length: 0 characters	
3. Link [URL] (id:302)		
Name: Link	Identifier: link	Flags: Is not required Is not searchable Does not collect information Translation is enabled
4. Publication Date [Text line] (id:303)		
Name: Publication Date	Identifier: pub_date	Flags: Is not required Is searchable Does not collect information Translation is enabled
Default value: Empty	Max string length: 0 characters	
Edit		

When finished creating the attributed needed, store the object.

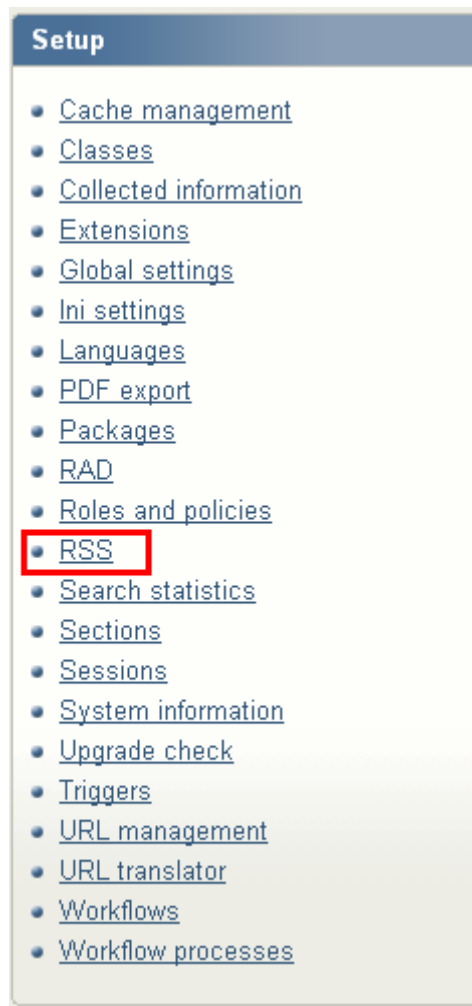
2.3.4 Create a location / new Folder for the RSS Objects

Navigate to the “Content Structure” area of the EZ Publish administration system, and then create a new Folder object in a location useful for your site. The RSS objects will be created within/underneath this folder. For example:



2.3.5 Setup the EZ Publish RSS Function

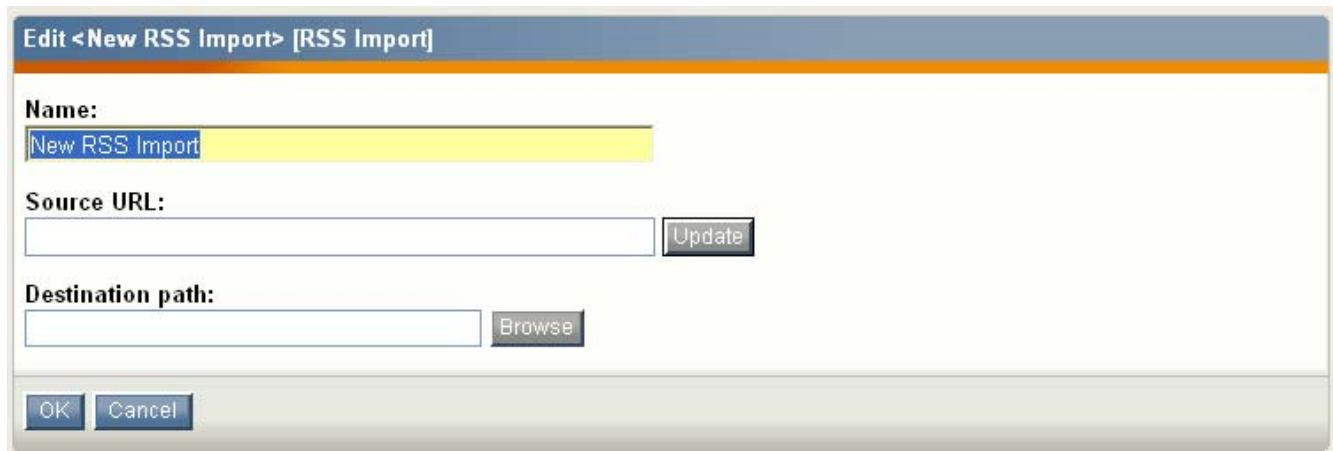
Return to the Setup area of the EZ Publish administration site and select the RSS item from the Setup menu.



A page like the following will be displayed. Click on “New Import”.

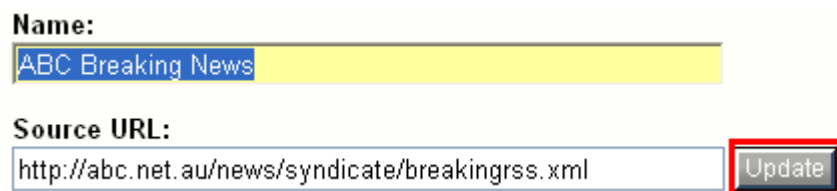


The following page will be displayed.



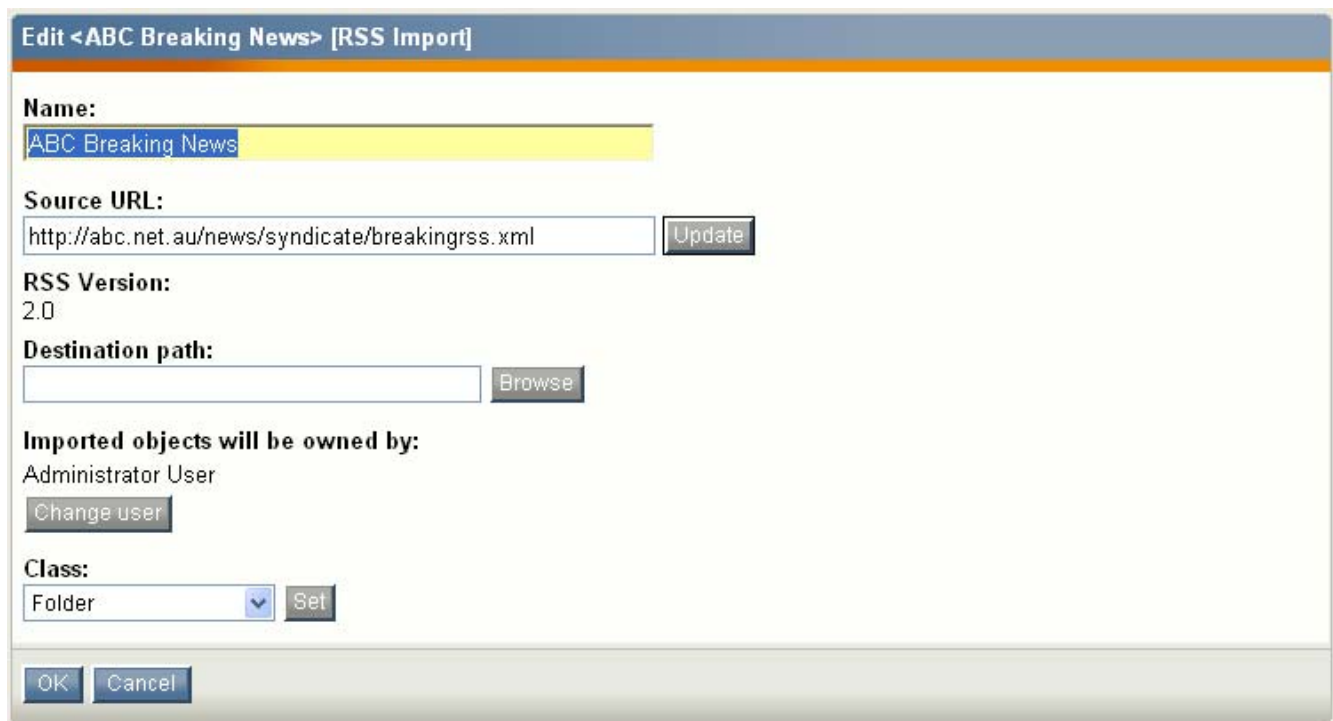
The screenshot shows a dialog box titled "Edit <New RSS Import> [RSS Import]". It contains three main input sections: "Name:" with a text field containing "New RSS Import"; "Source URL:" with an empty text field and an "Update" button; and "Destination path:" with an empty text field and a "Browse" button. At the bottom are "OK" and "Cancel" buttons.

Enter the name of the import, and the source URL for the RSS feed (ie the one you identified in step 2.1, above). Then click the “Update” button.



This partial screenshot shows the "Name:" field with "ABC Breaking News" and the "Source URL:" field with "http://abc.net.au/news/syndicate/breakingrss.xml". The "Update" button next to the source URL is highlighted with a red rectangle.

The following page will then be displayed.



The screenshot shows the "Edit <ABC Breaking News> [RSS Import]" dialog box. It includes the "Name:" field with "ABC Breaking News" and the "Source URL:" field with "http://abc.net.au/news/syndicate/breakingrss.xml" and its "Update" button. Below these is the "RSS Version:" field set to "2.0". The "Destination path:" field is empty with a "Browse" button. A section titled "Imported objects will be owned by:" shows "Administrator User" with a "Change user" button. The "Class:" dropdown is set to "Folder" with a "Set" button. "OK" and "Cancel" buttons are at the bottom.

Click the “Browse” button adjacent to the Destination Path text box, and then find the folder you created in step 2.3.4.

Destination path:

Browse

Then, in the Class drop-down box, select the Class you created in step 2.3.3, and then click the “set” button.

Class:

ABC RSS Item

Set

With this done, a new section will appear at the bottom of the page, as shown below.

Class:

ABC RSS Item

Set

Class Attributes

Title:

Ignore

Description:

Ignore

Link:

Ignore

Publication Date:

Ignore

Object attributes

Published:

Ignore

Modified:

Ignore

Active:

☐

The Title, Description, Link and Publication Date relate to the attributes created for the ABC RSS Item created in step 2.3.3.

The task now is to select, from the drop boxes beside each of the attributes, the field from the XML file that relates to the data that should be loaded into that class-attribute. For example:

Class Attributes

Title:
 Item - Title ▼

Description:
 Item - Description ▼

Link:
 Item - Link ▼

Publication Date:
 Item - PubDate ▼



The other object attributes listed relate to publish / modification dates, which can be used/ignored as appropriate.

The next step is to check the Active box to set the RSS import to being active, and then click “OK” to complete the work on the RSS import.

Active:
☒


























OK **Cancel**

The RSS Import will then be listed as shown below.

RSS imports [4]				
 Name	Status	Modifier	Modified	
<input type="checkbox"/> ABC Australia - Breaking News	Active	Administrator User	21/02/2007 2:31 pm	

2.3.6 The Result

After the above steps, and with a cronjob having run, the Folder created in step 2.3.3 will now contain ABC RSS Item objects. For example:

Sub items [6]									
10 25 50			List Thumbnail Detailed						
	Name	Visibility	Type	Modifier	Modified	Section			
<input type="checkbox"/>	 Govts agree to standardise heavy vehicle driver fatigue laws	Visible	ABC RSS Item	Paul Admin Wilson	21/02/2007 2:57 pm	Restricted			
<input type="checkbox"/>	 New car sales soar	Visible	ABC RSS Item	Paul Admin Wilson	21/02/2007 2:57 pm	Restricted			
<input type="checkbox"/>	 Bracks's water plan 'more of the same'	Visible	ABC RSS Item	Paul Admin Wilson	21/02/2007 3:30 pm	Restricted			
<input type="checkbox"/>	 Assistance boost 'bandaid' solution to housing squeeze	Visible	ABC RSS Item	Paul Admin Wilson	21/02/2007 4:00 pm	Restricted			
<input type="checkbox"/>	 Assistance boost 'bandaid' solution to housing squeeze	Visible	ABC RSS Item	Paul Admin Wilson	21/02/2007 4:00 pm	Restricted			
<input type="checkbox"/>	 PM plays down British troop withdrawal	Visible	ABC RSS Item	Paul Admin Wilson	21/02/2007 4:00 pm	Restricted			

2.4 Further Steps

These are not documented or tested here, but the next steps include:

- Creating permission for users to view the ABC RSS Item objects (or your version of them).
- Creating custom templates to display the items.

[End of Document]