

Creating an ebook out of a set of HTML pages

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1. What you'll learn in this document

1.1. About XMLmind Ebook Compiler

Free, open source software [XMLmind Ebook Compiler](#) (ebookc for short) may be used to create a self-contained book out of a set of HTML pages. If you [download](#) the distribution containing [Apache FOP](#), all you'll need to create your first book is just a text editor.

However, ebookc has been tightly integrated into XMLmind XHTML Editor (and, of course, its superset XMLmind XML Editor) to make this task much quicker and much safer than with a text editor.

The basic idea behind ebookc is simple. You author a set of HTML pages and then you create an ebook specification assigning a role —part, chapter, section, appendix, etc— to each page. To make this clear, let's take a look at a very simple ebook specification:

```
1 <book xmlns="http://www.xmlmind.com/schema/ebook"
2     href="titlepage.html">
3     <frontmatter>
4         <toc/>
5     </frontmatter>
6
7     <chapter href="ch1.html"/>
8
9     <chapter href="ch2.html"/>
10
11    <appendix href="a1.html"/>
12 </book>
```



Important

Before proceeding with this document, it's strongly recommended to read this [short primer](#) to quickly learn about ebook specifications and about what ebookc can do with these specifications.

1.2. What you'll learn

Creating an ebook out of a set of HTML pages involves the following steps:

1. Creating an ebook specification.

This XML file, generally having a ".ebook" extension, contains the structure of your book. A sample ebook specification is found in `XXE_install_dir/demo/ebook-sample.ebook`.

2. Creating the ebook pages which are referenced by your ebook specification.

An ebook page simply contains valid XHTML, preferably valid XHTML5 as ebookc anyway generates XHTML5 markup.

3. Creating a CSS stylesheet which will make your ebook look good.

Note that this CSS stylesheet also applies to output formats like PDF or DOCX which, unlike EPUB and Web Help, are not based on XHTML and CSS.

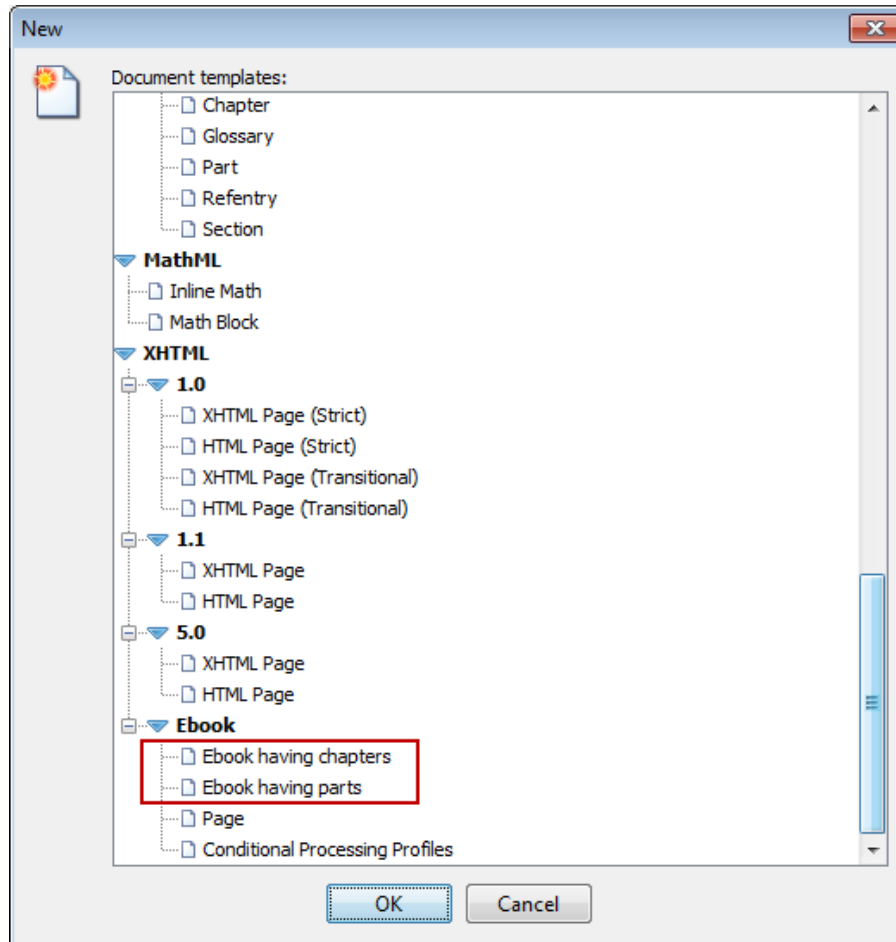
4. Optionally creating one or more conditional processing profiles.

This step is often needed when the content of the ebook depends on the target format. For example, some ebook pages may contain interactive content (e.g. a feedback form) and this interactive content simply cannot be rendered in PDF or DOCX.

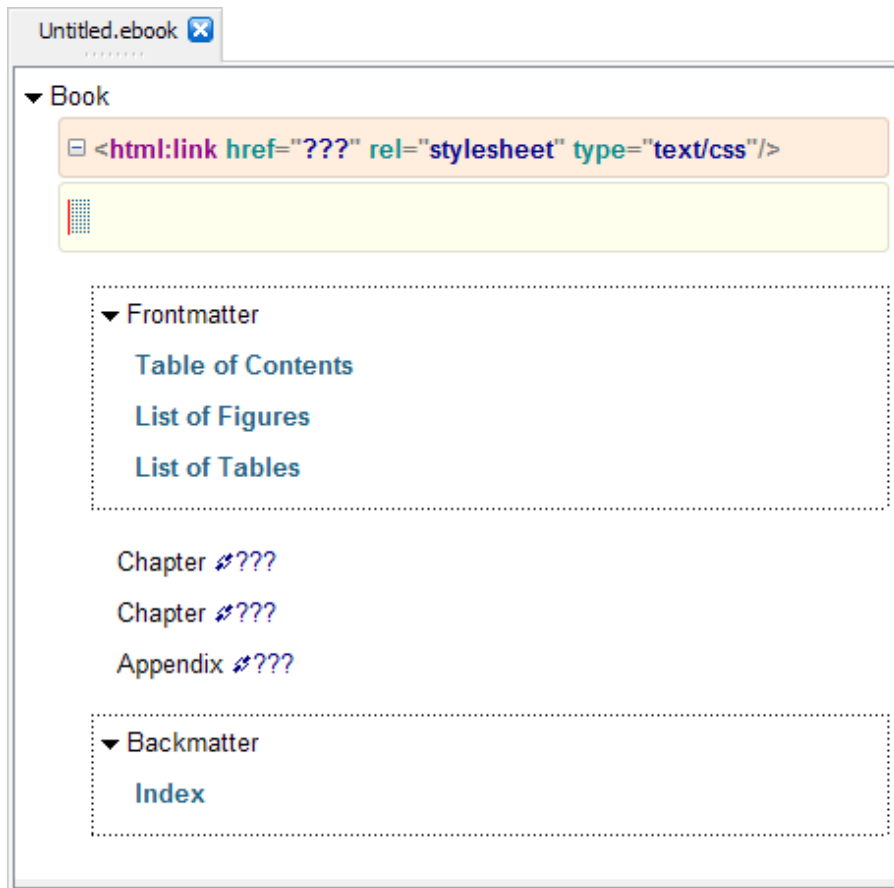
5. Converting your ebook specification to a number of output formats: [EPUB](#), [Web Help](#), PDF, RTF, WML, DOCX (MS-Word) and ODT (OpenOffice/LibreOffice).

2. Creating an ebook specification

An ebook specification is an XML generally having a ".ebook" file name extension. This file may be created by first selecting **File > New** and then choosing one of the two ebook specification templates.



An newly created ebook specification is then rendered as follows:



Notice that the ebook specification toolbar is divided in two parts.



- The first part of the toolbar contains buttons which may be used to edit the structure of the book.
- The second part of the toolbar is active only inside element `head/title`. It contains the same buttons as those found in an [XHTML page toolbar](#) and may be used to edit the “rich text” possibly contained in a `title`.

The first part of the toolbar contains the following buttons:

 **Insert Book Division Before**

Insert a book division (chapter, section, appendix, etc) before selected book division. Displays the **"Insert or Edit Book Division"** dialog box. Keyboard shortcut: Shift-ENTER.

 **Insert Book Division Into**

Insert a book division (chapter, section, appendix, etc) as the last child of selected book division. Displays the **"Insert or Edit Book Division"** dialog box. Keyboard shortcut: Ctrl-ENTER.

 **Insert Book Division After**

Insert a book division (chapter, section, appendix, etc) after selected book division. Displays the **"Insert or Edit Book Division"** dialog box. Keyboard shortcut: `ENTER`.

 **Edit Book Division**

Displays the **"Insert or Edit Book Division"** dialog box in order to modify selected book division (chapter, section, appendix, etc). Keyboard shortcut: `ESC e`.

 **Move Up**

Move selected element up, that is, swap it with its preceding sibling node. Requires the element to be explicitly selected. Keyboard shortcut: `Alt+Shift-UP`.

 **Move Down**

Move selected element down, that is, swap it with its following sibling node. Requires the element to be explicitly selected. Keyboard shortcut: `Alt+Shift-DOWN`.

 **Promote**


Decrease the nesting level of selected book division (chapter, section, appendix, etc). For example, convert a `section` to a `chapter`. Keyboard shortcut: `Alt+Shift-LEFT`.

 **Demote**

Increase the nesting level of selected book division (chapter, section, appendix, etc). For example, convert a `chapter` to a `section`. Keyboard shortcut: `Alt+Shift-RIGHT`.

 **Show Level**

Displays a menu containing **"Show Level 1"**, **"Show Level 2"**, ..., **"Show Level 9"** items. **"Show Level N"** means: expand all the collapsible elements of the ebook specification up to nesting level *N* and recursively collapse all the collapsible elements having a nesting level greater than *N*.

 **Open Source Page in Read-only Mode**

Opens in read-only mode the source HTML referenced by selected book division. Keyboard shortcut: `ESCAPE o`.

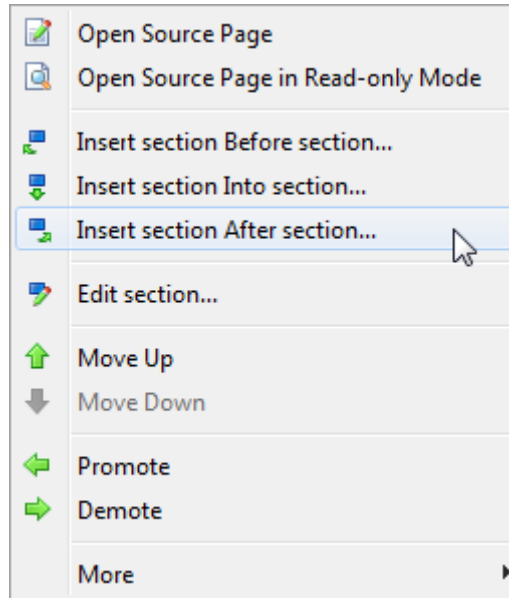
 **Open Source Page**

Opens in normal read-write mode the source HTML referenced by selected book division. Keyboard shortcut: `ESCAPE o`.

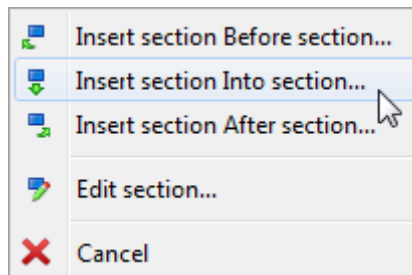


Tip

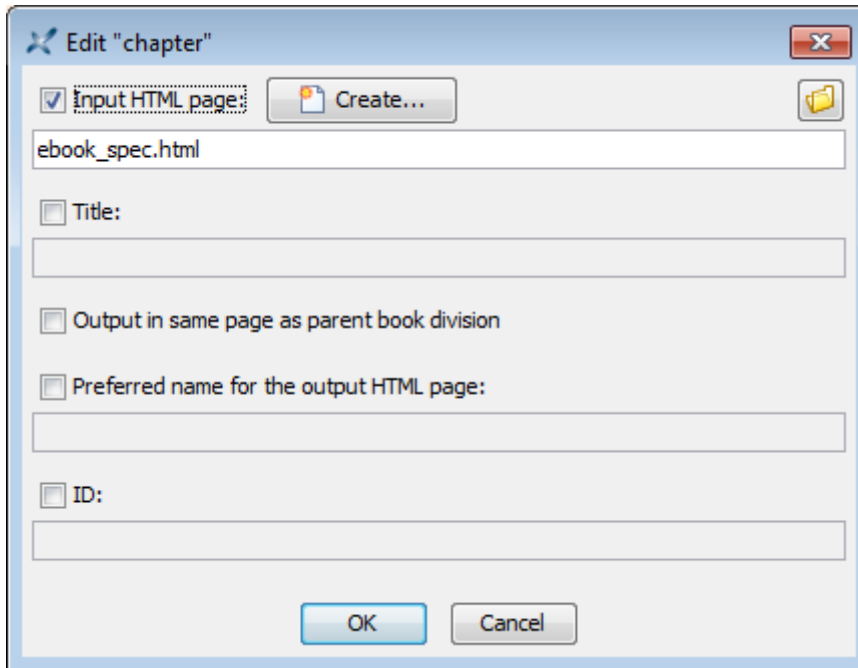
Right-clicking (Ctrl-click on the Mac) a book division (chapter, section, appendix, etc) displays a contextual menu containing some of the buttons found the ebook specification toolbar.



Dropping a file or URL onto a book division (chapter, section, appendix, etc) displays a contextual menu containing some of the buttons found the ebook specification toolbar.



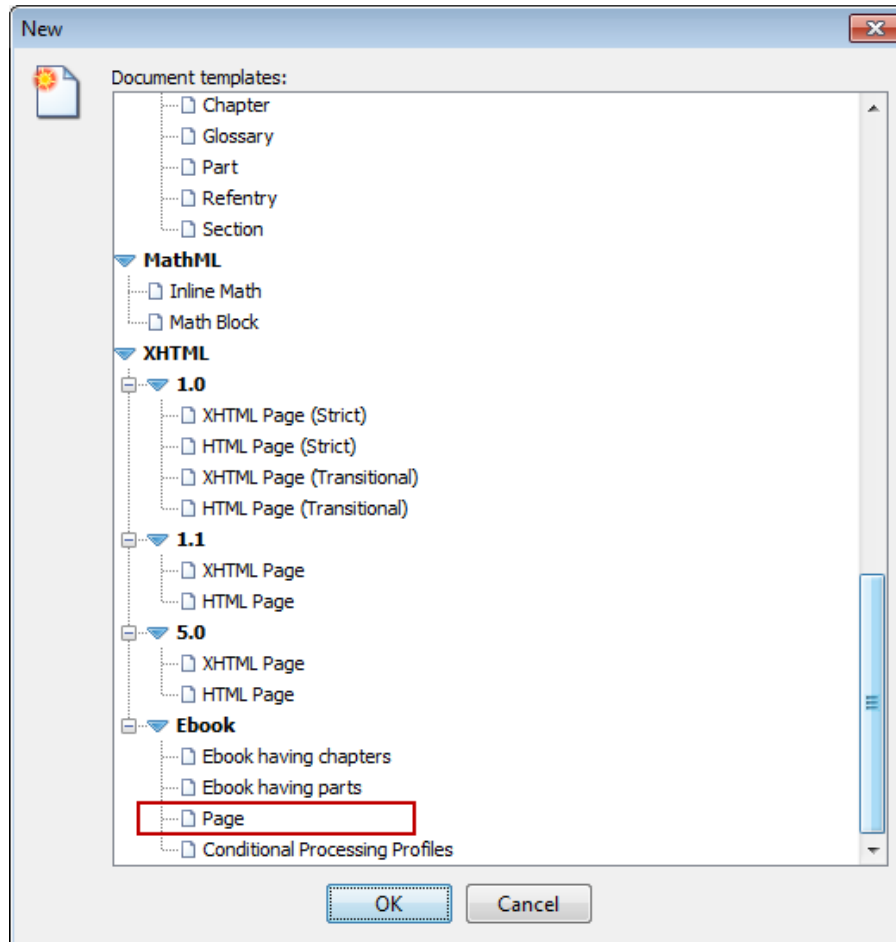
The "Insert or Edit Book Division" dialog box



This dialog box displayed by the **Insert Book Division Before**, **Insert Book Division Into**, **Insert Book Division After** and **Edit Book Division** tool bar buttons let's the user easily add or remove the main attributes of a book division (chapter, section, appendix, etc). Note that the `book` root element is also considered to be a book division.

3. Creating an ebook page

An ebook page is simply an **XHTML5** file where the root `html` element has attribute `class="role-ebook-page"`. This file can be created by first selecting **File > New** and then choosing the **"Page"** template.

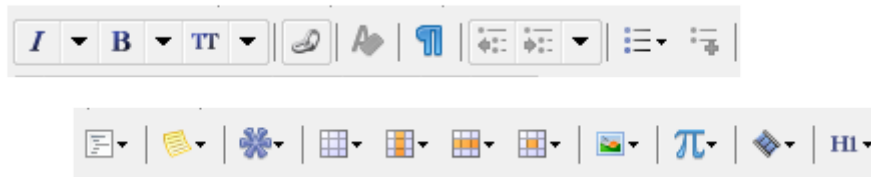


Important




Attribute `class="role-ebook-page"` is not required to use an HTML page in an ebook specification. Simply XMLmind XHTML Editor (or its superset, XMLmind XML Editor) automatically detects this attribute and replaces its stock **"XHTML"** menus and toolbars by extended **"XHTML"** menus and toolbars.


Moreover you are not restricted to using pages containing XHTML5 markup. You may use pages containing XHTML 1.0 Strict or Transitional or XHTML 1.1 if you prefer. However you must keep in mind that ebookc anyway generates XHTML5 markup. In all cases, you have to make sure that the contents of your input pages is valid.

The "XHTML" menus and toolbars displayed for an ebook page slightly differ from those displayed when opening a plain XHTML5 document.



The toolbar contains the following specific buttons:

-  **Add pre**
Menu entry "**pre(listing)**" adds a `<pre class="role-listing-1">` element. Menu entry "**figure(example)**" adds a `<figure class="role-example">` element. See "*Content of a source HTML page, Examples*".
-  **Add note**
These menu entries add admonitions like the `<blockquote class="role-important">` element. See "*Content of a source HTML page, Admonitions*".
-  **Add footnote**
Menu entry "**span(footnote)**" inserts a `` element at caret position or converts selected text to this element. Menu entry "**div(footnote)**" adds a general footnote, that is, both a footnote body (element `<div class="role-footnote" id="ID">`) and the corresponding footnote marker (element ``). See "*Content of a source HTML page, Footnotes*".

Note that in order to delete a general footnote suffice to delete its body or its marker; no need to delete both. This will be done automatically the next time you'll save your ebook page to disk.
-  **Add MathML equation**
Menu entry "**figure(equation)**" adds a `<figure class="role-equation">` element. See "*Content of a source HTML page, Equations*".

4. Styling an ebook

The ebook you'll generate using submenu **Ebook > Convert Document** is styled using CSS stylesheets.

Creating a good CSS stylesheet for your ebook is really a required step. Without this CSS stylesheet, the ebook you'll generate would be *very poorly formatted*. More information in *Primer, Nicely formatted books*.

The good news is that the CSS styles specified in the ebook specification and in the source HTML pages are also used when generating output formats like PDF, RTF, DOCX, even if these formats are not directly related to HTML and CSS.

You'll find a CSS stylesheet template in `XXE_install_dir/doc/ebook/css/template.css`.

Alternatively, you may use the XMLmind CSS stylesheet

`XXE_install_dir/doc/ebook/css/xmlmind_ebook.css` as is for your own ebooks. You may also use the XMLmind stylesheet as a starting point for developing your own CSS stylesheet. In both cases, make sure to add the following links to the `headcommon` element of your root `book` element:

```
1 <headcommon>
2   <html:link href="css/xmlmind_ebook.css" rel="stylesheet"
3     type="text/css" />
4   <html:link href="css/icons/" rel="resource"
5     type="inode/directory" />
6 </headcommon>
```

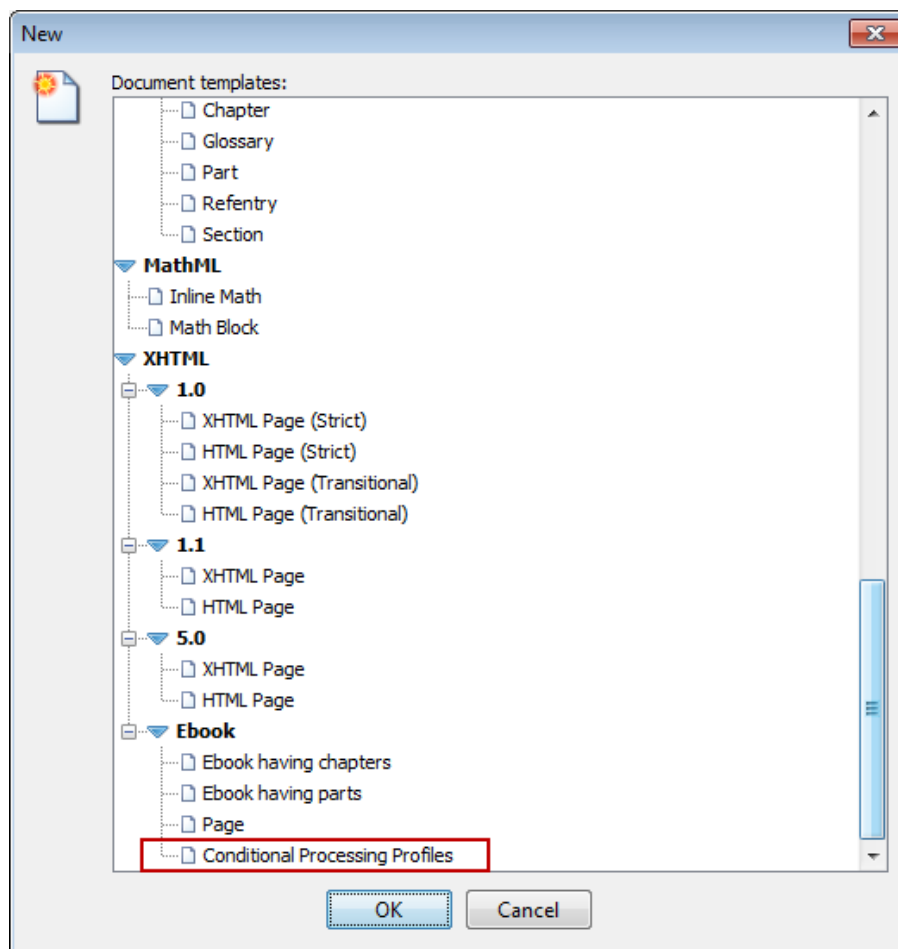
5. Applying conditional processing profiles to the ebooks you'll generate

What is conditional processing is explained in "*Handy features, Conditional processing*".

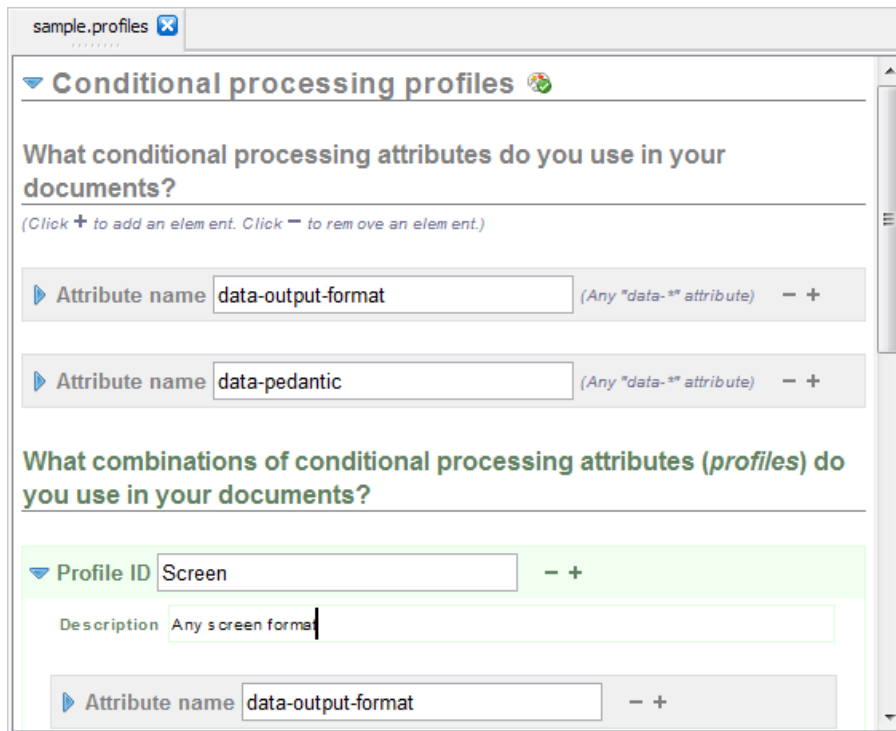
With XMLmind XHTML Editor (or its superset, XMLmind XML Editor) the only way to apply conditional processing profiles to the ebooks you'll generate is to use the facilities of the "Easy Profiling" add-on (installed by default).

Applying conditional processing profiles to the ebooks you'll generate involves the following steps:

1. Create a ".profiles" file. This is done by first selecting **File > New** and then choosing the "**Conditional Processing Profiles**" template.

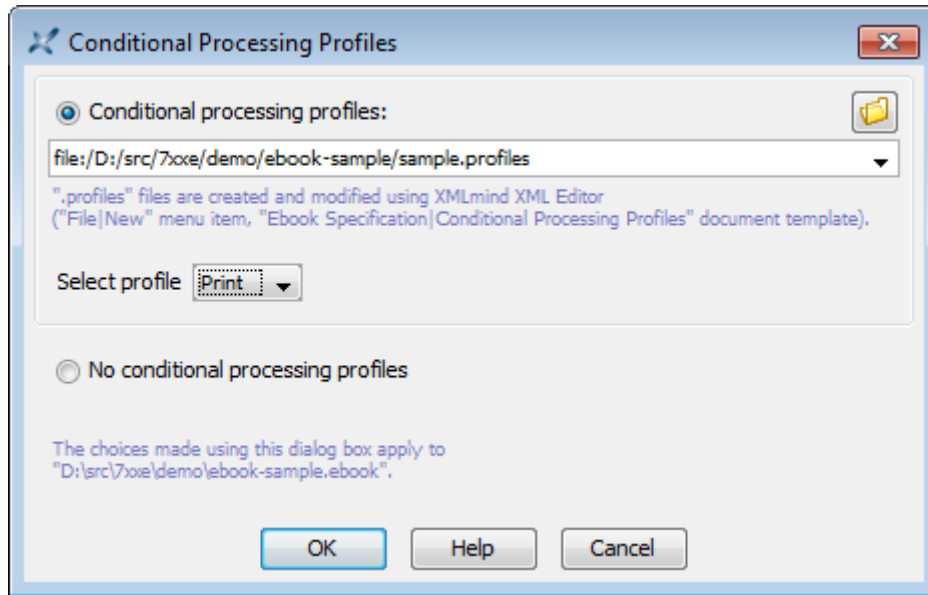


2. Specify the "data-*" attributes you'll use for profiling and the values allowed for each of these attributes. Specify one or more of conditional processing profiles.



The above screenshot shows `XXE_install_dir/demo/ebook-sample/sample.profiles` which is part of the `XXE_install_dir/demo/ebook-sample.ebook` demo.

- This ".profiles" file specifies that 2 profiling attributes may be used in the `ebook-sample.ebook` demo: `data-output-format` and `data-pedantic`.
 - It defines 3 conditional processing profiles called "Screen", "Print" and "Online".
 - It also gives distinctive screen styles to elements belonging to any of the unselected conditional processing profile (e.g. in XXE's styled view, strike through excluded spans), which is a very convenient feature of the "Easy Profiling" add-on.
3. Turn on **View > Use as Master Document** for the ebook specification if this is not already the case. More information in "*XMLmind XML Editor - Easy Profiling, Associating the ".profiles" file to the map rather than to individual topics*".
 4. Associate a conditional processing profile to the ebook specification using **Ebook > Conditional Processing > Select Profile**.



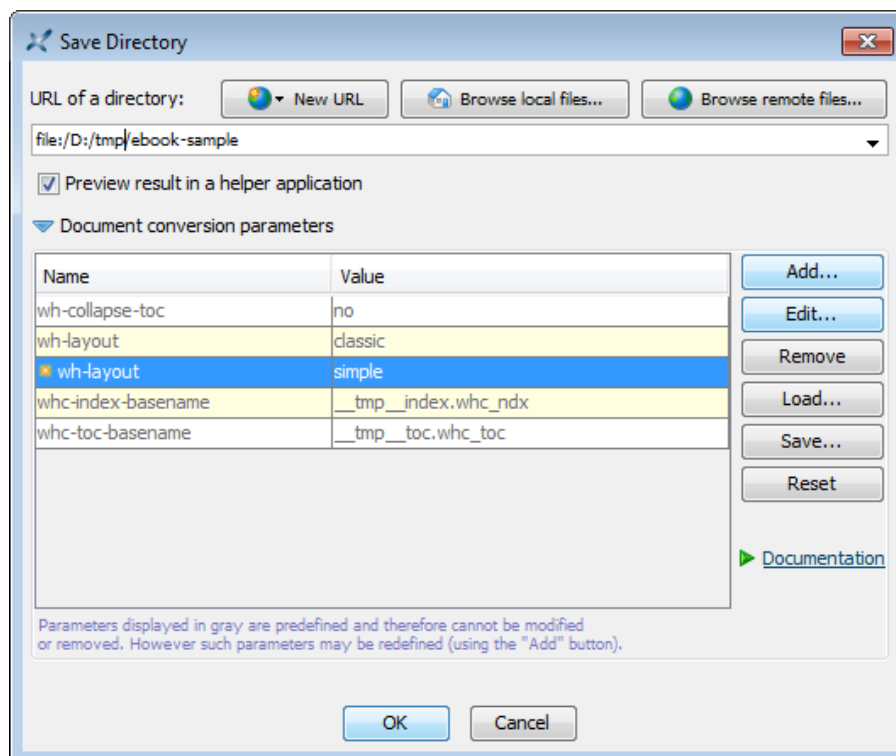
5. Convert the the ebook specification using **Ebook > Convert Document**.
6. Repeat steps 5 and 6 with different conditional processing profiles and/or different output formats.

6. Converting your ebook specification to a number of output formats

Converting your ebook specification to a number of output formats is done by using the entries of submenu **Ebook > Convert Document**. However, before attempting to use any of these menu entries

1. Make sure to save your ebook specification to disk.
2. You may want to check the cross-references of the ebook you'll generate using **Ebook > Check Ebook**.

The content of the ebook you'll generate may be customized the usual ways, for example by specifying a number of XSLT stylesheet parameters. These XSLT stylesheet parameters are all documented in "*XMLmind Ebook Compiler Manual, XSLT stylesheets parameters*".



In the above screenshot (see *The "Document conversion parameters" panel*), the user specifies that she/he prefers a simple layout rather than the classic layout for the Web Help she/he is generating.

However it's also possible to customize the content of the ebook you'll generate by setting a number of attributes of the root `book` element of your ebook specification. For example, `parttocdepth="100"` instructs ebookc to automatically generate a Table of Contents at the beginning of each part of the book.