

Using the Psion Organiser II as a portable RSS feed reader

James Fossey, 7 June 2020

This is a short and easy guide to downloading and reading RSS feeds on the Psion Organiser II, a classic British handheld computer from the late 1980s. Familiarity with the Organiser II and Comms Link is assumed, but you do not need to know how to program!

You will need

- Psion Organiser II, any model. The more memory the better!
- ‘Modern’ internet-connected computer, with Python & the *feedparser* library installed.
- Psion Comms Link, connected to your ‘modern’ computer
- My simple ‘RSSion’ Python script for processing RSS feeds.
- Software (e.g. CL.EXE/Psi2Win) for sending **files** from computer to Organiser
- (*CM/XP only*) Some method of downloading **programs** onto your Organiser (but see Note A)

Method

1. (*CM/XP only*) Transfer the program XFILES to your Organiser from <https://www.jaapsch.net/psion/progs.htm>. This program allows you to browse files other than MAIN with ease on your Organiser.
2. Download my *rssion.py* script into a new folder. Create a file called *urls.txt* in the same folder, containing the URLs of each RSS feed you wish to send to the Organiser – one URL per line of the file.
3. Run *rssion.py*. This will process your chosen feed(s), creating a single ‘Organiser-friendly’ file named *org.txt* in the same folder as *rssion.py* and *urls.txt*
4. Before proceeding, check that *org.txt* will fit in your Organiser’s memory, or on your RAMpack or flashpak if you are lucky enough to own one!
5. Use your favourite software (CL.EXE/Psi2Win/minicom) to transfer *org.txt* to your Organiser II via the Comms Link.
6. On your Organiser II, open XFILES. Go to OPEN and enter the name of the file you have just created.
7. Go to FIND and hit ENTER to start reading each feed in turn, pressing UP/DOWN to navigate between the fields as usual. You can search for text/posts as you would with a normal Organiser II data file.

Notes

- A. If you have no method of transferring programs to your Organiser II, it would be quite easy to write an OPL program to open and display the feed instead.
- B. Problems might arise if a post contains more than 255 characters.
- C. An ideal computer for this might be the Raspberry Pi. You will need an RS232/TTL converter to connect up a standard Comms Link with a 9-pin plug, or you could buy a USB Comms Link from Olivier Gossuin. CL.EXE works quite well in DOSBox, the Linux DOS emulator, but I have had less luck with Psi2Win.
- D. To save memory, the feed title is only printed to *org.txt* once per feed, before all the posts.