

Team Work

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In this issue, we focus on the powerful tools of ATLAS.ti that support your teamwork efforts.

Teamwork is common in qualitative analysis. Research teams working together with written, audio, graphic or video files in ATLAS.ti can share information and co-ordinate efforts. Copy bundle, merge, and output reports are three valuable ATLAS.ti functions that facilitate teamwork process and communication.

Copy bundle can be used to "migrate" or "restore" an ATLAS.ti hermeneutic unit (HU). A researcher can send, or "migrate" - the term you will see in the copy bundle screen, her HU and her primary documents to a colleague via copy bundle. This action allows her colleague to see the work she has done on the project. This type of interaction is especially valuable early in a project when different researchers want to see how each of their colleagues works with early project data. Later in a project, copy bundle is a pre-requisite to pulling together HUs that will be merged into a master project for the team. At any point, an ".acb file" (the result of a copy bundle) can be used to restore an ATLAS.ti HU and primary documents on a new computer or a computer that was repaired.

When teams divide labor among different researchers they typically use the merge function. Here are two example scenarios of how the merge function is used by research teams.

First, teams may divide responsibilities for coding and reviewing entire data sets by document. Two researchers may each code and review five documents and merge their work together to create an HU with 10 documents completed. For this task they would use the "add" function of merge to pull in all documents and quotations from those documents and the "unify" function to combine the coding to shared codes across all documents.

Second, team members may decide to each code the same documents but have different coders take responsibility for his or her own set of codes. One coder may code descriptive codes while another may code interpretive codes. Merge can be used to ensure that both types of codes are applied to each document. For this task they would use the "unify" function for documents and quotations and the "add" function for codes. As a result, the codes from both researchers will be added to the same documents.

However, if what you really need to do is share information, output and print functions may be all you need. Often someone on a research team may want to see what each team member coded to a specific category. If you have a code 'challenges' in your project, you can highlight it inside the code manager and output the quotations for the selected code. This output report can be saved as a file and emailed to colleagues. Similarly, network diagrams can be saved as graphic files and attached to emails.

If you only want a quick look at a small part of a project, use output reports. If you want to combine the work of different users, use merge. Copy bundle will let you look at an entire project or restore or transfer it to another computer.