Editing Primary Documents (TXT And RTF Files) Using The ATLAS.ti Editing Function

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As explained in the instructional memo on project setup, the ATLAS.ti project file (the "HU") does not contain your data itself, but only references to your source documents. The same is true for your coded segments. The HU only stores start and end points, and not the full content of the quotations. You might visualize these objects as analytical layer superimposed over your data. However, if you modify the foundation of this layer, i.e., if you edit your data outside of ATLAS.ti, its references may no longer be accurate.

Given this information, imagine what happens if you open a previously coded document in Word (outside of ATLAS.ti), make changes in Word, save your changes and reload the document in ATLAS.ti.

You might have guessed it: some or all of the references the HU stored for your quotation boundaries will no longer match up and your codings may have shifted. However, ATLAS.ti is "smart enough" to notice when a document was modified within a different program and will prevent the document from being loaded in this case (see below "Potential problem: Synchronization failure).

If you follow the correct approach and make any necessary changes to your documents while working within ATLAS.ti (Edit / Document Access / Enter Edit Mode), ATLAS.ti will create a small auxilliary file. This file provides the information needed by the HU to adjust quotation boundaries.

The following naming convention is used for these auxilliary files:

Original source file:	interview.rtf
LOG file: :	interview.rtf.log:

LOG files are stored in the same folder as the original source file.

If you have not activated the option to display commonly known file extensions, then you only see the following names:

Original source file:	interview:	(file type RTF)
LOG file: :	interview. :	(file type TXT)

IMPORTANT: !!!! NEVER EVER DELETE . LOG FILES !!!!

LOG And LOK Files

LOG and LOK files are often confused. LOK files are temporary files and usually are deleted when you close ATLAS.ti. Sometimes, however, these files might not be deleted (e.g. your computer crashes). If there is still a LOK file for the Hermeneutic Unit when you start a new session, then ATLAS.ti assumes that the HU is still open and asks you whether it should open the HU in "read only mode". Select no and take a look in your project files to locate the LOK file for your HU. The naming convention is as follows:

HU file: :	Name of HU.hpr6
LOK file: :	Name of HU.hpr6.lok

Delete the LOK file if you find one. Now you can start ATLAS.ti and open your HU in read/write mode.

LOG files, in comparison, always indicate that a primary document has been edited. If you delete the log file, the HU has no way of knowing where your codes should be located. Thus, the coded primary document is no longer retrievable and you must start from scratch. As such, when it comes to LOG files, please be very cautious: do not touch, rename, or move these files and NEVER delete them!

Potential Problem: Missing LOG File

If you moved or renamed the LOG file, move it back or change the name to the original name. If you have deleted the LOG file, check your recycle bin. With some luck, there might still be a chance of "rescuing" it. However, if the LOG file was permanently deleted, you should disconnect the primary document from your HU,

reassign the document and start again.

Potential Problem: Document Not Syncable

If you have modified a document outside of ATLAS.ti, the HU will not load the document. The document information in the primary document manager is shown in red and at the bottom of the screen in the status bar, you will see the message: "not syncable."

What can you do in this case?

You can "force" ATLAS.ti to load the document by selecting "Documents / Data Source Management / Reset Last Access Information." However, this does not mean that all of your work is fixed. From the point at which you made changes to the documents, all codings will be shifted. Thus, you need to go through your data carefully and adjust all codings manually. This option is sometimes preferrable to starting from scratch.

As this option should not be used as a standard option and it is better if you never need to use it at all, a number of warning messages appear when it is selected. Accept the warning messages and you should be able to load your document.