ATLAS.ti 5.5: A Qualitative Data Analysis Tool

Part VI: How ATLAS.ti Handles Documents

As a new user, it is important understand how the program actually uses the documents you assign to your project. When you create an HU, ATLAS.ti does not store your text, audio, video, etc. in the project, rather it creates links to those documents, much like the links on a web site. If you've ever gotten an "error 404" when attempting to use a link on a web site, this is a similar logic that ATLAS.ti employs when you move or rename a file you've linked to your project. Moreover, once you begin analyzing documents, assigning them quotations and codes, ATLAS.ti uses a coordinate system to locate those references in your PDs.

Therefore, the makers of ATLAS.ti suggest that you do not use Windows Explorer to copy and/or back-up your project. ATLAS.ti has a built-in feature to help make your project portable: Copy Bundle. The Copy Bundle feature serves two purposes: to migrate projects from one location to another and to provide security to back-up and restore projects.
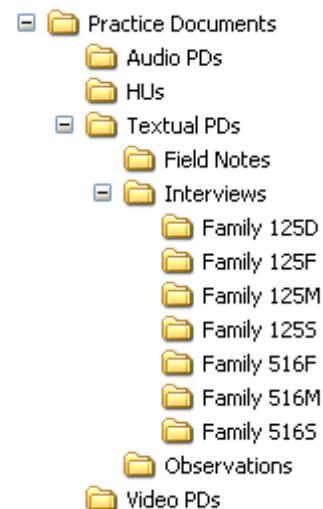
While the Copy Bundle feature is powerful, it will be most useful if you have set up a simple file structure. Makers of ATLAS.ti suggest you use one folder to store the project and its data.

Example file structure:

The following file structure could easily be moved/backed-up to several sources using the Copy Bundle.

The base folder, **Practice Documents**, holds all subsequent folders related to the project, including the HU itself and all data (see picture right).

If you choose to set up a project this way, the subfolders, **Audio PDs, HUs, Textual PDs, and Video PDs**, should never be moved without moving the base folder, **Practice Documents**.

ATLAS.ti 5.5: A Qualitative Data Analysis Tool

Using Copy Bundle

The **Copy Bundle** feature can only be used once you've created your HU, assigned your PDs, and saved it. Copy Bundle involves two steps: creating and unpacking. When you create a bundle, a single compressed archive is created. This single file is then unpacked by ATLAS.ti. Again, if all folders reside in a single base folder, the program can unpack it easily.

To create a Copy Bundle:

1. Make sure the latest version of your HU is saved.

2. Go to **Tools – Copy Bundle - Create**.

3. The following window will appear.

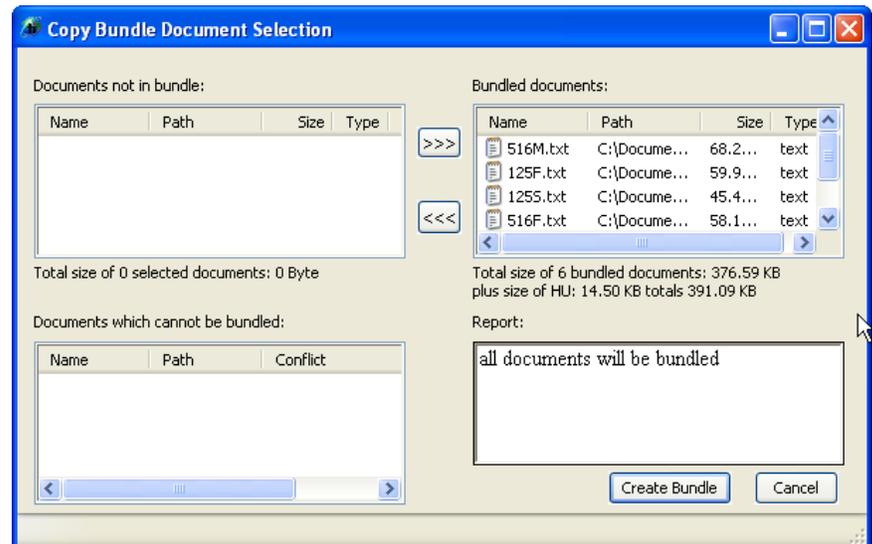   All files that can be bundled will appear in the top-right pane.

    If a file cannot be bundled, the Report window will explain the reason for the problem.

    Possible reasons a file *cannot* be bundled:

⇒ The document no longer exists.
⇒ The document was copied without its existing LOG file (see page 13).
⇒ Document was replaced by another file.

4. When all files you want in the bundle are listed, select the **Create Bundle** button.

5. You will be prompted to select a location for the bundle; by default ATLAS.ti will select the folder where you HU is saved. It will also use your project name as the default title of the bundle, with the file extension .acb (ATLAS.ti Copy Bundle).

    You may accept the default name/location or change it. Then select **Save**.

ATLAS.ti 5.5: A Qualitative Data Analysis Tool

Unbundle (install) your project:

The installation of the bundle (compressed files) can be accomplished using two slightly different strategies: **Migrate and Restore**.

Migrate

This particular strategy operates under the assumption that you are "migrating" your project to another location to resume working on the project. Choose this option when you are moving your project, HU and associated files, between two different work locations. If a PD in the bundle is *older* than one at the new location, it will not be unbundled, protecting you from overwriting a newer version of your PD.

Restore

This strategy is used to replace a back-up of your project. Unlike migrate, using this option will not protect you from overwriting files; all files will be "restored." Use this option when installing a project that was created as a back-up.

To unbundle your project:

1. Open your compressed copy bundle (.acb). You will be prompted to choose the program to open it with.

2. Choose the radio button, **Select the program from a list**.
   Browse to find ATLAS.ti.

3. The program will launch, and the **Install Bundle** window will appear.

4. In the example, pictured right, the **Status Report** informs the user what action will be taken in the install process.

   As a basic user, you will likely encounter no conflicts (see color code in window), but the more complex your project becomes the more likely you may experience conflicts in migrating from one location to another.

   Remember, the **Install Bundle** feature is unpacking everything, including your HU. If the HU has been updated, then it will replace the HU in the location in which you are unbundling. You can prevent this by selecting **Exclude HU**.

Andrea Harvey
garciaa@unm.edu