

Atlas.ti Training Manual

Part 1: Data Management

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What is ATLAS.ti?

ATLAS.ti is an example of Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS). It can help you to analyse your qualitative data by:

- Increasing manageability of the project
- Increasing efficiency
- Increasing rigour

BUT ... it will not do the analysis for you!

PART 1: HERMENEUTIC UNITS AND PRIMARY DOCUMENTS

- What is a Hermeneutic Unit (HU)?
A **database** containing all that is associated with a research project
- What is a Primary Document (PD)?
A **data** file that can be assigned to a HU

How to start ATLAS.ti

- Click on START menu
- Click on ALL PROGRAMS
- Go to SCIENTIFIC SOFTWARE
- Click on ATLAS.ti 5.2

How to create a folder

1. Go to START MENU
 2. Select MY DOCUMENTS, *your project*
 3. Click on MAKE A NEW FOLDER
 4. Name the folder after the research project
 5. E.g. Education_For_All
- **ACTIVITY:** create folders for two or three sub-projects

How to create a Hermeneutic Unit

1. Open ATLAS.ti
 2. Go to FILE MENU
 3. Select NEW HERMENEUTIC UNIT
 4. Click on FILE and SAVE AS...
 5. Name the HU after the research project, e.g. Education_For_All, *any sub-projects*
 6. Save HU in the relevant folder
- **ACTIVITY:** create HUs for any sub-projects

How to name a Primary Document

- NB Always name PDs with objective features reflecting the content of the document, e.g.:
- Project title: e.g. Education_For_All
- Interviewee's number, name, initials or pseudonym
- Date of interview
- Schooled or Unschooled
- Male or Female interviewee
- Rural or Urban
- Name of site
- NB If you want features to appear in the Output, they must appear in the file name

Examples of Elements of a Project

- Interview transcripts (T)
- Field-notes (F)
- Observations (O)
- Government Reports (G)
- Newspaper items (N)

Elements of Disability project

- Interviews with Person With Disability (PWD)
- Interviews with Significant Other (SG) of a PWD
- Impairment type: Visual Impairment (VI) Physical Impairment (PI) or Hearing Impairment (HI)

QUESTION: what are the elements of your project?

How to prepare a textual PD

- ATLAS.ti is designed to handle text files saved in text format, Rich Text Format (RTF), Word, or HTML (from the internet).
- **NB ATLAS.ti cannot read Portable Document Format (PDF) files.**

Considerations about which type of text file to use

- Plain text files (.txt), are least likely to introduce complex character
- BUT they create 'paragraph returns' at the end of each line.
- Word files need to have line numbers added, but then you can print out hard copy which is very similar to what you will see on the screen

How to save Word files as plain text:

1. Go to FILE and SAVE AS...
2. Select SAVE AS TYPE: PLAIN TEXT
3. This opens a FILE CONVERSION box
4. Tick to select INSERT LINE BREAKS
5. Name the document
6. Save the document in the relevant folder

How to put line numbers into Word files:

- Go to **File** and click on **Page set-up**
- Click on **Layout**
- Click on the **Line Numbers** button (near the bottom of the page)
- Click on **Add line numbers** and then
- Click on **Continuous**
- Then check the document to see if the line numbers appear, and do not restart on each page

How to assign a PD to a HU

1. Click on the main menu option DOCUMENTS, then ASSIGN. A file dialogue window opens
2. Go to relevant project folder and select a primary document
3. Go to DOCUMENTS and click PRIMARY DOCUMENT MANAGER (or go to the PRIMARY DOCUMENTS drop-down menu) for a list of all the PDs assigned to the HU

How often should I click Save?

- **ATLAS.ti does not have an Undo button**
- Save your work every time you have made good progress without making a major mistake that you cannot Undo.
- Then if you make a major mistake that you cannot Undo, close ATLAS.ti **WITHOUT** saving your changes, which will take you back to when you last clicked Save.
- If you have been clicking Save regularly as you work, hopefully you will not lose too much work!

What is a Comment?

A Comment is like a post-it note that allows you to record additional useful information about the PD, e.g.:

- Date of interview
- Name of interviewer and name of note taker
- Language of interview
- Name of translator and name or transcriber
- Type of document: Transcript, Fieldnotes, or Observation

Assign a Comment to an HU

1. Go to FILE menu
2. Select EDIT COMMENT
3. Type text and SAVE

NB The Comment button on the menu along the top is for Comments on the HU. (It looks like a post-it note.)

Assign a Comment to a PD

1. Go to DOCUMENT menu
2. Select EDIT COMMENT
3. Type text and SAVE

NB The Comment button on the menu down the left-hand side is for Comments on the PD. (It looks like a post-it note.)

What to do if PDs disappear?

- Go to DOCUMENTS and click PRIMARY DOCUMENT MANAGER
- If it shows that the PDs are not USABLE, you need to tell the HU where the PDs are located
- Go to DOCUMENT, DATA SOURCE MANAGEMENT, and click CHANGE PATH
- Select <HUPATH>, click BROWSE, browse for the folder where the PD is located, click OK
- The PD should then appear as USABLE