

Using SubEthaEdit for Collaborative Writing

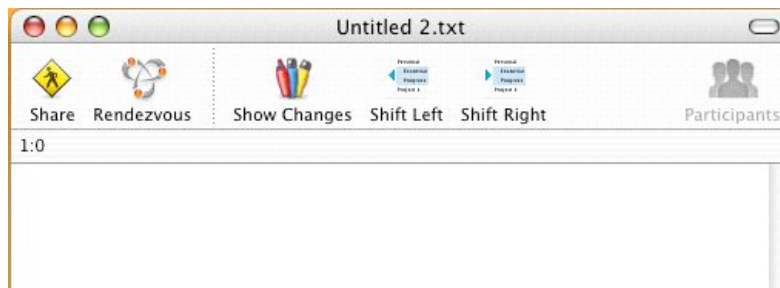
Josh Burkner | josh_burker@misd.wednet.edu
January 2004

SubEthaEdit (<http://codingmonkeys.de/subethaedit/>) is a word processor that allows for collaborative writing and editing. Unlike traditional text editors that do not allow two or more people to work simultaneously on a single document, SubEthaEdit allows for true collaborative writing since up to forty two individuals can be working on the same document at the same time! With an intuitive interface and an easy means of sharing one's work, SubEthaEdit opens many new collaborative opportunities, from group editing to group note taking.

Start by opening SubEthaEdit, which is located in the Applications folder:



Once opened, a new blank document is created. Across the top of the document are the majority of the controls that one uses to share out one's document.

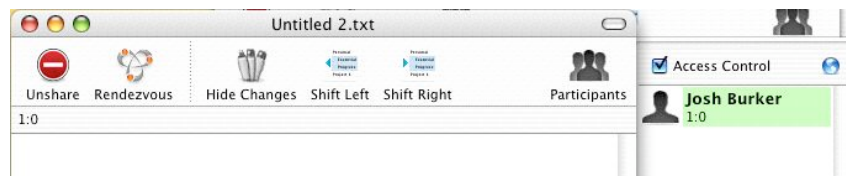


It is necessary to first **save the document** so that it has a name; this will facilitate finding the shared document on the network. Go to the File menu and **Save**, giving the document a name.

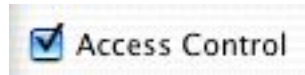
To **share** a saved document, click on the **Share** button at the top of the document:



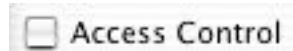
This will cause the document to be shared and will open a new pane off of the document that shows the participants in a shared document, as shown in the illustration below:



Note that when a document is shared, by default **Access Control** is turned on, indicated by the check in the **Access Control** box:



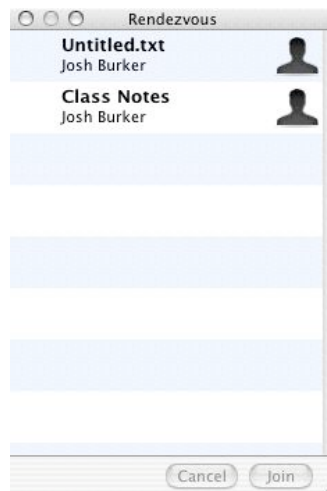
Uncheck the box so no passwords are required to join the shared document:



Once shared documents are available, one can use SubEthaEdit to join the shared documents. First, click on the **Rendezvous** button at the top of the document:

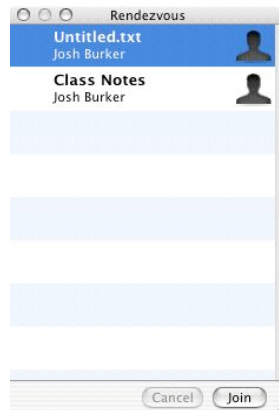


This opens another window that shows currently shared documents:

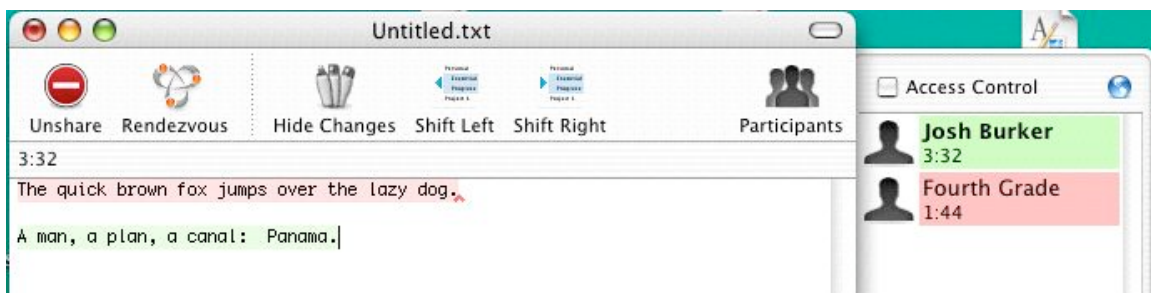


Notice that one of the shared documents is called **Untitled.txt**. This is the reason why it is imperative that the document be **saved** before it is shared; otherwise the list of shared documents will consist entirely of "Untitled.txt" documents.

To join a shared document, simply click on the document one wishes to join and click the **Join** button at the bottom of the Rendezvous window:



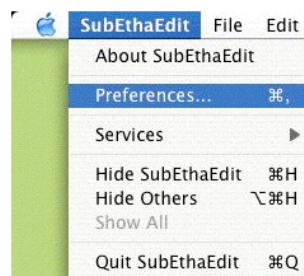
Once one has joined a shared document, he or she is added to the **Participants** list and is free to begin adding to the document. Note that the participants are color coded, and that their text is highlighted accordingly:



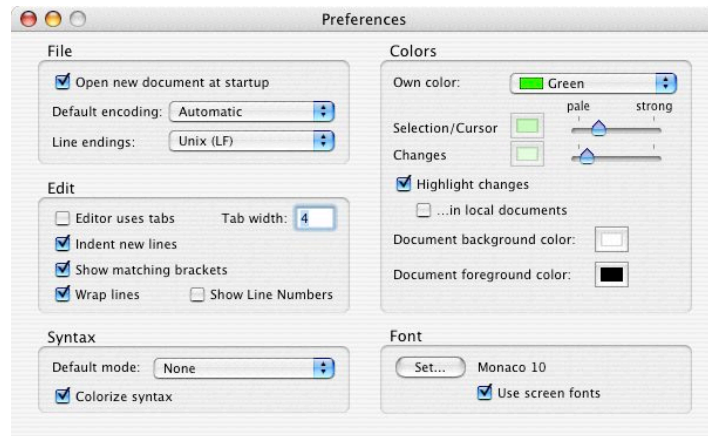
In the example above, **Josh Burkner's** text is highlighted green, while the **Fourth Grade** text is highlighted red. Clicking on the **Hide Changes** button removes the highlighting, while clicking on it again will bring back the highlighting.

The person who created the original document should take responsibility for **saving often**; the people who have joined a shared document will be **unable to save** the shared document. **Only the individual who originally shared the document is able to save the document.**

SubEthaEdit allows for a user to modify the color with which his or her text is highlighted. First, open the SubEthaEdit preferences from the **SubEthaEdit** menu:

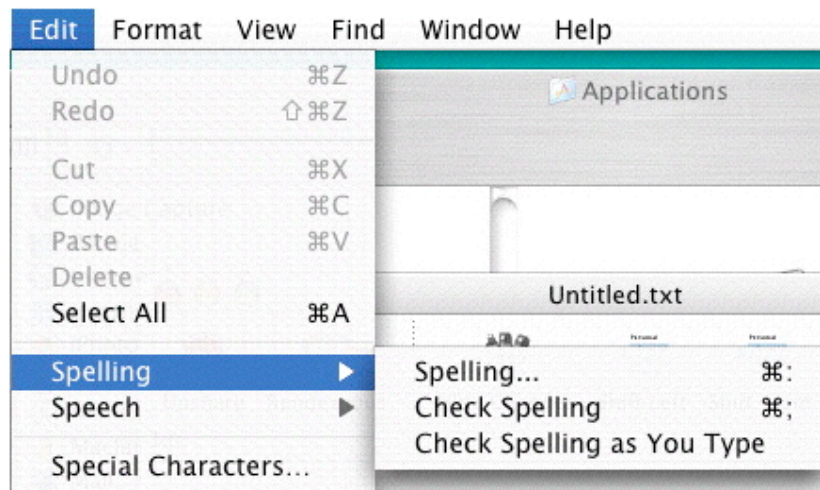


With the Preferences open, one can easily change their identifying color by selecting it from the palette in the upper-right hand corner of the Preferences window:



The other preferences should be left as they are currently configured.

SubEthaEdit would not be a proper text editor without **Spelling Tools**. The spelling tools are accessed from the **Edit** menu:



Finally, you might be curious why this software has such a strange name. After facing legal troubles for the original name, the authors chose to honor “one of the greatest visionaries of computer supported collaborative writing, Douglas Adams.” This explanation was taken from the SubEthaEdit web site:

*The Guide was compiled by researchers roaming round the galaxy, beaming their copy in, which was then instantly available to anybody to read. Over, believe it or not, something called the **SubEthaNet**. [...] I really didn't foresee the Internet. But then, neither did the computer industry. Not that that tells us very much of course - the computer industry didn't even foresee that the century was going to end. But I did have the inkling of an idea that a collaborative guide, one that was written and kept up to date by the people who used it, in real time, might be a neat idea.*

-- Douglas Adams