

# Atlas/ti 5 - software for qualitative data analysis

Atlas/ti is a computer-based package designed to aid users in managing, organising and supporting research with qualitative data. This document describes how to start using the software at LSE and also describes the general approach of Atlas/ti to the qualitative research process. Information is also given about various websites and discussion groups which are a valuable source of additional information and help in using qualitative software.

Existing users may also be interested in the summary of new Atlas/ti 5 features shown at the end of this document.

## Qualitative data and its analysis with Atlas/ti

Thomas Muhr, the software developer describes the process of working with ATLAS/ti as follows:

1. You create a project, an "idea container", which is meant to enclose your data, all your findings, codes, memos, structures under a single name. In Atlas/ti this container is called a "Hermeneutic Unit" (HU).
2. You associate your data files, your Primary Documents (text, graphics, audio) located anywhere on your computer or network, with your Hermeneutic Unit (HU). By doing this you have already created something worthwhile: a data corpus that concentrates many documents around a theme. This can also be very practical as a single file gives you meaningful, immediate and easy access to hundreds or thousands of other files.
3. By reading and selecting text passages (or examining your graphics or audio material) you can assign code words or memos to your Primary Documents (your textual working phase).
4. You can build semantic, propositional or terminological networks from the codes you created in the first phase. In ATLAS/ti terminology these networks are a graphical way of viewing and relating the various parts of your HU. Together with your codes, super codes and memos, networks are cornerstones of the emerging theory (your conceptual working phase).
5. Finally you compile a written report or you decide to publish your project as a World Wide Web document.

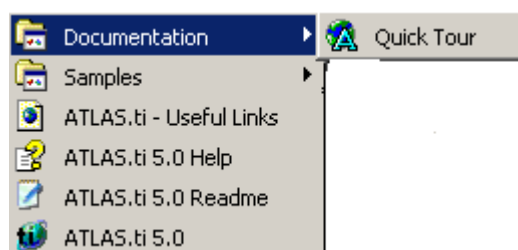
These steps are not mandatory, but they depict a common path in the process of qualitative analysis under Atlas/ti.

## ATLAS/ti concepts and terminology

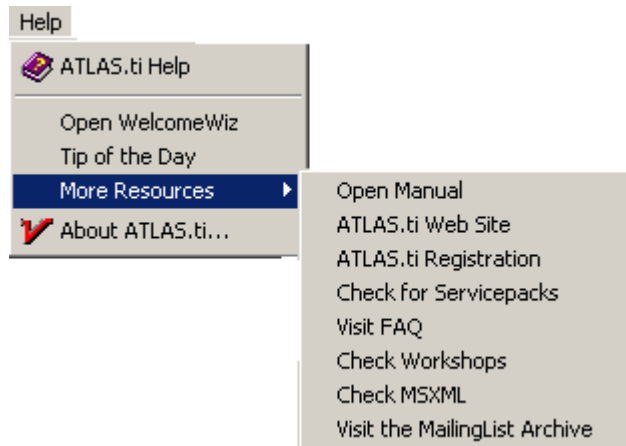
<b>Hermeneutic Unit</b>	Everything that is of relevance to one project is collected and retained within the HU.
<b>Primary Documents</b>	<p>Your original source material, also known as 'field notes' or 'raw data'. In Atlas/ti this can be textual data, graphical files or audio data.</p> <p>Atlasti 5 can handle documents which are saved in Rich Text Format (RTF) as well as Word documents (.DOC extension), plain text, or HTML documents.</p>
<b>Quotations</b>	Segments of the primary documents which you consider as interesting or important and wish to make special note of.
<b>Codes</b>	Sections of text (in Atlas/ti this can be from one word to whole pages) which you decide are significant and capture some meaning in the data.
<b>Super Codes</b>	While a code is a fixed reference to a piece of text, a super code is similar to a query in a database. Super codes will recalculate a query on demand producing different results as your project develops.
<b>Families</b>	Special collections of primary documents, quotations and codes.
<b>Networks</b>	More sophisticated than families, networks are a graphical tool for constructing theoretical models.
<b>Memos</b>	A place for the researcher to write his/her thoughts concerning emerging theories.

## Atlas/ti online help, manual and tutorial

**Programs | Qualitative Analysis | Atlasti5 | Documentation | Quick Tour.** gives a PDF file that allows you to have a quick tour of the Atlasti5 software.



Within the Atlasti 5 program, a PDF file of the **Atlasti 5 manual** is available via the **Help menu | More Resources**. At this location you will also find a number of other useful resources:



## Further help and training

Like other quantitative and qualitative analysis packages, Atlas/ti assumes a grounding in research skills. Users are strongly advised to attend a techniques training session before attempting to set up their own project.

Due to the complex and individual nature of most qualitative research projects only a limited amount of training and support is available within the LSE. Introductory courses are organised from time to time by the Methodology Institute; contact the Institute's Administrator on ext. 7639 for availability.

Further training and support is available from the worldwide academic community via the Web and email lists. Users embarking on long-term projects are strongly recommended to subscribe to the CAQDAS Project described below.



## Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) Networking Project

The project is funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council and has no commercial links to any software developer or supplier. It aims to disseminate an understanding of the practical skills needed to use software which has been designed to assist qualitative data analysis, such as field research, ethnography, text analysis.

The project also provides a variety of media, where the debate surrounding associated methodological and epistemological issues can take place. Resources include:

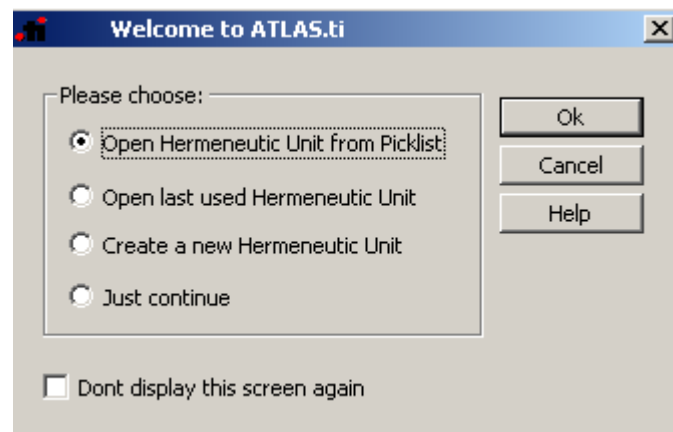
- a Web page at <http://caqdas.soc.surrey.ac.uk/index.htm> which includes articles; bibliography; downloadable demo versions of various packages.
- an Internet discussion group called qual-software at [jiscmail@jiscmail.ac.uk](mailto:jiscmail@jiscmail.ac.uk) (follow the links on the Caqdas web page on how to subscribe to this).
- a programme of one- and two- day training courses, often free to research students and based at the University of Surrey, Guildford.
- Advisory Support Line, contact Ann Lewins  
email [a.lewins@soc.surrey.ac.uk](mailto:a.lewins@soc.surrey.ac.uk) or [caqdas@soc.surrey.ac.uk](mailto:caqdas@soc.surrey.ac.uk) .

## Starting Atlas/ti

TO START ATLAS/ti:

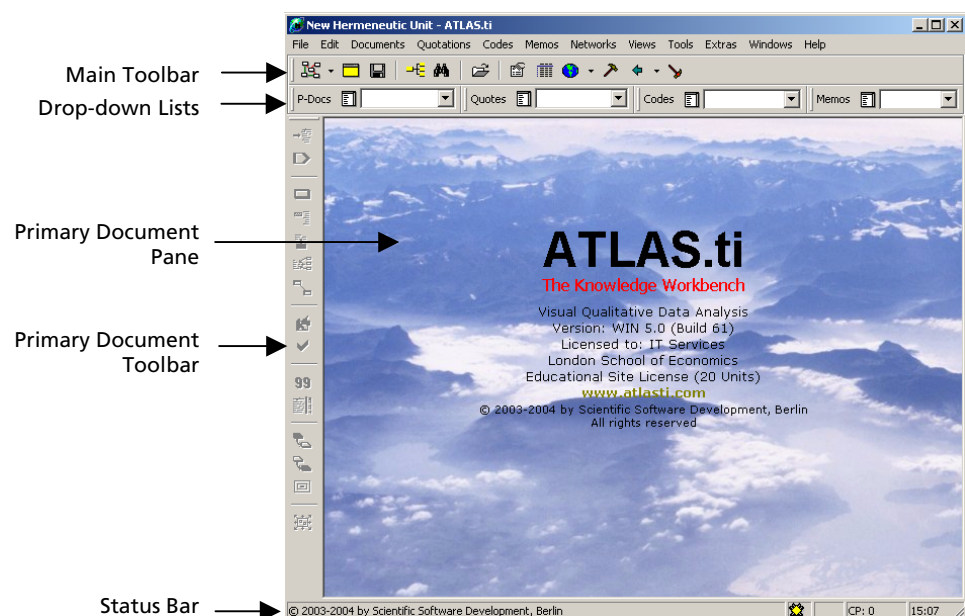
1. On the taskbar, click on **Start**, point to **Programs | Qualitative Analysis | Atlasti5**
2. In the Atlas menu, click on **ATLAS.ti 5.0**

When you first start Atlas/ti, the Welcome to ATLAS/ti dialog box is displayed.



3. Click on the first option "**Open Hermeneutic Unit from Picklist**" to bring up a list of sample HUs which you can use to experiment with. Previously accessed HU's may also be listed here. Alternatively, to create your own Hermeneutic Unit, select "**Create a new Hermeneutic Unit**".

## Main ATLAS/ti Workspace - The HU Editor



**Main toolbar**

as you point to each button a description is displayed in the Status Window at the bottom of the screen.

**Four drop-down lists**

form the main part of the HU. From left to right: primary documents; quotations; codes and memos. Click on the down arrow to display full list and select one to view in the 'primary document pane', i.e. the main window.

**Primary Document Pane**

is shown on the previous page as it first appears before a document has been loaded.

**Primary Document Toolbar**

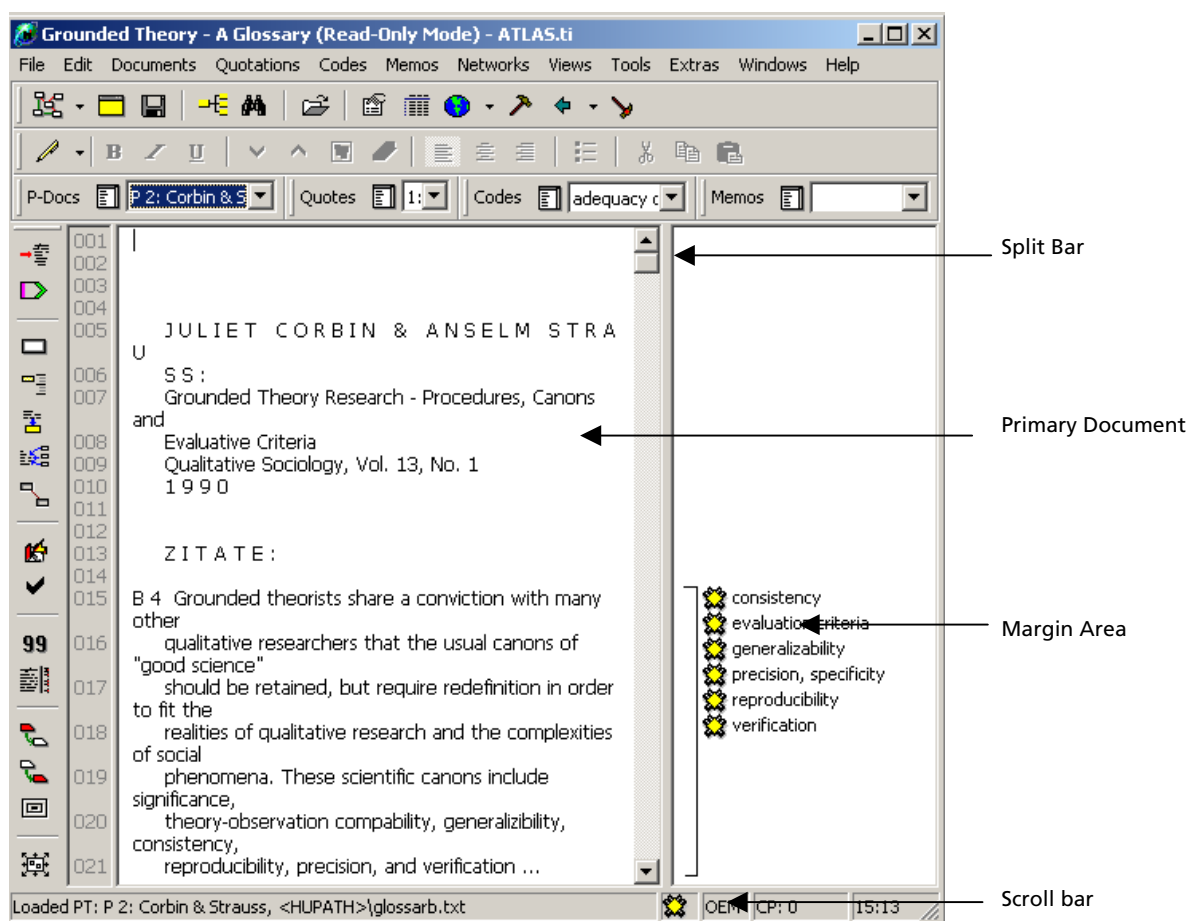
remains disabled until a document is loaded.

**Status bar**

displays name and path of current open HU and description of buttons on the Main toolbar.

## Main ATLAS/ti Workspace - The HU Editor with Primary Document loaded

To load documents into Atlasti5, go to the **Documents** menu and choose **Assign**. To load several documents, hold down the **[Ctrl]** key and at the same time click on the documents you wish to assign to the Hermeneutic Unit.



<b>Split bar</b>	can be re-sized to show more or less codes versus text.
<b>Primary document</b>	is loaded into Primary Document Area.
<b>Margin area</b>	shows the 'serpents' and codes assigned to parts of the text.
<b>Scroll bar</b>	is used to scroll through the document. <b>Note:</b> As you scroll through, the <i>margin area text</i> moves with the text to display relevant codes.

## New Features in Atlas/ti version 5

Atlasti5 has a number of new and greatly enhanced features. These include:

- Improved “Rich” text support with embedded objects (Excel, PowerPoint, videos and also live links to other external resources).
- A new WordPad editor which converts documents from Word, WordPerfect, Works, HTML and allows these documents to be assigned directly into Atlasti 5.
- “Live” editable documents and the ability to update editing and synchronise these with shared projects.
- A fully interactive margin area with drag & drop linking, coding and merging.
- Password protection of projects.
- Full XML project export and the ability to create impressive presentations with an XML/XSLT converter.
- Single file backup and easier movement of projects to other machines. (Atlasti5 projects are saved with the file extension **.hpr5**)
- More powerful filters with ‘Super’ families.
- Improved East Asian and Middle East language support.