COLLABORATIVE EDITING

**WHAT IS COLLABORATIVE EDITING?**

- A writing process that is shared among various authors
- Includes 3 necessary components to make the writing process work:
  - Interaction between participants throughout the entire writing process
  - Whether it be brainstorming, writing a draft of the project, or reviewing
  - Shared power among participants
    - Everyone included in the project has the power to make decisions
    - No group member is in charge of all the text produced
  - The collaborative production of a single & specific text

**COLLABORATIVE EDITING EXAMPLES**

- A collection of independent articles like Wikipedia
- An article or report written by 2 or more people
- The manual for a program
- The evolving plan for a project
- The description of an event as it is occurring
- Students sharing lecture notes
- Students compiling a list of possible exam questions
- Students co-authoring a term paper or answering an essay question
- Grad students co-authoring scientific papers with their supervisors

**COMPILED VS. CO-AUTHORED DOCUMENTS**

**COMPILED DOCUMENTS**

- Collections of individual parts each written independently
- Each section or topic is created & edited by a single person
- The sections are assembled to make the compiled document
- The purpose & structure of the document is determined in advance

**CO-AUTHORED DOCUMENTS**

- A group of authors draft a document then improve it over time
- Co-authors are free to edit any portion of the document
- The goal is to improve the document with each edit
- Differences of opinion are resolved on a separate discussion

**OUTLINE**

- What is collaborative editing?
- Compiled vs. co-authored documents
- Benefits & challenges of co-authoring
- Planning for co-authoring
  - Task of review & revision
- Collaborative editing tools
  - Word, Latex, Google Docs

**BENEFITS OF CO-AUTHORING**

- You don’t have to complete the whole task alone
- Many minds are better than one
- Co-authors provide immediate feedback
- Co-authors play devil’s advocate for each other
- Co-authors help each other past the frustrations & stress of writing
- Co-authors write more confidently
- Co-authors develop greater tolerance of & respect for the opinions of others
**Benefits of Co-authoring (cont’d)**

- A group can possess a wide range of skills impossible to find in a single individual.
- Participants in group writing feel it was a good learning experience.
- The 2 most influential parts are peer reviewing & brainstorming.
- Attitudes in the academic world value co-authorship.
- Publish more collaboratively written articles than single-author ones.

**Challenges of Co-authoring**

- Can require much more time & energy.
- Requires increased tolerance, patience, & use of negotiation strategies.
- Conflicts arising from disagreements about content, organization, style, etc.
- Conflicts arising from group members’ contributions of time & energy, attitudes towards the project and team members, etc.
- Group members do not always contribute equally.
- The standards may vary among group members.
- Document can be inconsistent if not edited effectively.

**Planning for Co-authoring**

- Set guidelines to ensure all co-authors are working toward the same goal.
- List all research & writing tasks necessary for completing the project.
- Determine which tasks depend on the completion of other tasks.
- Establish a realistic schedule for completing the document.
- Includes due dates for drafts, for team reviews of drafts, & for revisions.

**Planning for Co-authoring (cont’d)**

- Be able to take critiques from partners.
- Be flexible; sacrifice some of your vision for the work to accommodate your partner.
- Develop a style guide to ensure consistent style, format, & citation.
- Assign some to be responsible for technical accuracy.
- Assign someone to be responsible for the paper’s production & submission.

**Task of Review & Revision**

**Minor Edits:**
- Fix typos & spelling errors.
- Fix grammatical errors.
- Add details, reference, or link.
- Revise awkward or ambiguous sentences.
- Reorganize or rearrange sentences, paragraphs, & sections.

**Major Comments:**
- Evaluate as a peer reviewer:
  - Check content, organization, style, & mechanics.
  - Review each section in terms of purpose, coherence, & technical accuracy.
- Request clarification & justification if needed.

**Conflict Resolution**

- Conflict is a natural part of collaboration.
- If handled well, it is often beneficial to the project.
- Focus on the writing, not on the writer.
- Do not be afraid to challenge issues in the writing.
- Use evidence to support your opinions.
- Be sensitive & tactful in your criticism.

- Respect all team members’ contributions, suggestions, & efforts.
- Do not get offended by others’ comments & consider each suggestion seriously.
- Identify the problem, brainstorm solutions, compromise on best solution.
- Meet deadlines, attend all meetings, listen, & voice your ideas & opinions.
COLLABORATIVE EDITING TOOLS

- **Local editor:**
  - Microsoft Word
  - Latex
- **Online editor:**
  - Google Docs

**Functionality you should look for:**
- Track or label edits
- Leave & reply comments
- Accept/reject changes

WORDS

- Provide functionality for automatic change tracking
- Once turned on, the edits you made are tracked
- These changes can be highlighted to make them easy to spot
- The changes can be reviewed by others
- Choice of either remove them (reject changes) or make them permanent (accept changes)

LATEX EDITING

- Latex does not have built-in tracking change feature
- One approach to manually highlight changes with colored text
  - Each author can choose his/her unique color
  - Differentiating major changes and minor edits is also helpful
- Define commands:
  - \usepackage{hyperref}
  - \newcommand{ml}[1]{\textcolor{BrickRed}{#1}}
  - \newcommand{mlc}[1]{\textcolor{Red}{[ML: #1]}}
- Use commands:
  - ml{minor changes}
  - mlc{major comments}

LATEX EDITING (CONT’D)

- Another option is to use the changes package
- Provides key=value system
- Highly customizable
- You can define different authors
- Changes are tracked depending on the id
- Use commands:
  - \added[id=ml]{new} text.
  - \deleted[id=ml]{unnecessary} text.
  - \replaced[id=ml]{nice}{bad} text.

GOOGLE DOCS

- Store a single copy of the document online
- No need to save & edit local copies
- Support real time collaboration
- Multiple authors can edit the document at the same time
- Every version is tracked & saved automatically
- You can compare & roll back to any earlier version you want