Creating Layer Files to quickly apply standard symbology

A layer file (.lyr) is a file that stores information (properties) about an individual shapefile, including symbology. It is a link, not an actual dataset. You can use a layer file to quickly and easily apply the same symbology from one shapefile to another- all you need is a column in each shapefile that contains the same symbolized features (school, church, etc.).

1. In the map template, symbolize the points of interest layer as necessary.
2. Right-click on the layer name and go to ‘Save as Layer File’
3. Save this layer file with a name that reflects which template type the layer file belongs to.
4. To apply the saved symbology to a new shapefile, open a new map (of the same template type- Type 2, Type 3, etc.).
5. Find the POI layer, and open the symbology.
6. Click the ‘import’ tab in the upper right corner, then click the folder to navigate to where you’ve saved the .lyr file.
7. Import the complete symbology definition.
8. In the ‘Value’ Field, make sure that you are applying the symbology to the correct field in the attribute table (this should always be ‘Type.’)
9. Click OK, and all the symbols should appear.
10. Repeat this process for every template shapefile that has complex symbology (i.e. roads).

Using Definition Queries

Definition Queries provide you with a way to determine which feature (or features) appear on a map. Instead of searching the district shapefile for a particular EA, exporting that EA to a new shapefile, and then using the new shapefile to create a map, you can simply use a definition query to reduce those steps.

1. On the map template, right-click on the district EA file and open the properties.
2. On the top tab, click ‘Definition Queries’ and then click the ‘Query Builder’ button.
3. Use the SQL box to build and expression that says ‘Name’ = ‘XXXXXX’ (the name of the EA which will be the focus of the map).
4. Click OK, and all the other EAs will disappear, except the one you have defined.
5. Zoom to the layer to center this EA in the map display.
6. To move on to the next map, simply adjust the query builder expression so that it finds the next EA on your list, and then zoom to that one.

Labels

Standard labels can be created for any layer, without going through the process of creating text boxes for each feature that needs identified. To add layers to the points of interest file:

1. Right click on the points of interest layer and open the properties.
2. Click on the ‘Labels’ tab.
3. Check the box that says ‘label features in this layer.’
4. In the label field drop down, select ‘comment’ or whatever column is appropriate to label the points of interest.
5. Adjust the symbol text so that it uses the correct size and font.
6. Click OK to see how the labels look on the map.
7. If necessary, go back into the label properties and click on the ‘label placement’ button to adjust where the labels are drawn around each point of interest.