**Editing Sorted SSM Documents: a tip sheet**

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<http://syssci.renci.org/sort> has recently been upgraded. You can now reopen unsorted, sorted, or partially sorted SSM files. The output from the *sort* website needs to be processed by software and as a consequence there are stringent requirements on formatting. If you use the output as it comes out of *sort* there shouldn’t be any problems. However, if you must edit by hand, it’s necessary to follow these rules:

1. Every character counts to a computer program, whether you can see it or not, and what appear to be insignificant differences from the human viewpoint are crucial to a machine. For example, to a computer “red” and “Red” are different character sequences and will not match; that’s also true for “highlight” vs. “high light” and for “first hand” vs. “first-hand”.
2. Fully sorted files and completely unsorted files can be .txt or .json, and it would be nice if you saved your work in both formats, just for safety. Partially sorted files must be saved as .json because there’s no simple machine-processable way of storing a mix of the two in plain text.
3. Please don’t save or store sorted files in Word (.doc or .docx) or Excel (.xlsx) formats: those file types have tons of extra formatting stuff in them that's gibberish to our software (and to you, too, if you try to look at it in a text editor that doesn't handle them). They may also may put in page numbers, headers and footers, and the like, which we can't use. If you just leave it in the format it comes out in when you save it as text on the sort website, it should be ok. You can open it and look at it in Word, but if you save it in Word, save it as plain text (.txt), which Word also supports, and, if the opportunity arises, make sure you reject the added formatting that Word "helpfully" offers to put in.
4. Please don't modify the existing text items in the sorted output. For example, someone added ":  (CAN WE CHANGE THIS TO PLACEHOLDER BLANK?)​" to a recent item. The problem with this is that we use software to match what's in the original maps (and derived data files) to items in the output from the sorted output, and when you change the text on any of those items, it no longer matches. The software isn't smart enough to say, "Oh, someone made a note to herself here": it just responds with "no match found" even though the item (and then some) is in there. Feel free to make notes about improving the text, but not in the sorted output.
5. Similarly, please don't add titles and extra blank lines to the sorted output files. We know it's Roles if you name the output file "Roles.txt" or "ROLES.txt" or the like (and the same with .json), but the software will treat the added titles inside the files as text items from the system support maps, which they aren't. Just leave the innards of the sorted output as they are, as much as possible.
6. Avoid trailing whitespace (invisible spaces and tabs at the end of a line) unless it’s part of an original text item. You won’t see it, but the software does.
7. Note that every code is expected to have a colon after it. Make sure there are no spaces after the code and before the “:” colon.
8. All codes must be unique, and this is necessary even when the sorting has been split by ring for convenience, i.e., into separate files for Roles, Responsibilities, Needs, Resources, Wishes, and Texts. After sorting, the separately sorted files are all assembled into a single file for further processing. So please make sure that, for example, you don’t inadvertently have a “Data” code under Needs and another identical “Data” code under Resources. To differentiate, try renaming them something like “Data Needs” and “Data Resources”, respectively.
9. Don’t use embedded double quotes in codes. The processing software puts quotes around text elements, and if there are quotes inside the quotes it gets confused. For example: “When Bob said “Stop!””. It’s ok to use single quotes: “When Bob said ‘Stop!’” just like we do with embedded quotes in English.