Looking Inside Documents

PagePlus X3 and later versions use an XML structured document format that makes documents backwardly compatible. Other recent Serif products use this same open document format.

The document is a zip archive with a *.ppp extension, containing several *.xml files and some image files. The contents can be extracted using any Zip utility, examined, edited if necessary, and zipped up again.

Extracting the Document Contents

Since a PagePlus document is already an archive, all you need to do is select it in Windows Explorer, right-click, and extract it to a folder. I use and recommend 7-zip which creates smaller archives. Or, rename it with a *.zip extension, right-click and Open it with Windows Explorer.

For PagePlus X3 documents, the file story.xml contains the document text for all stories so we can just open that in a text editor to edit the index.

For PagePlus X4 documents the folder named "story" contains an xml file for each story in the document.[1] Look for the largest file, which will contain the main text of the document. The smaller files are the text for the index, contents, footnotes, headers, and other text frames.
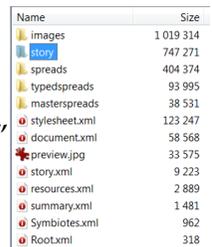
Editing the Document Contents

Open the XML documents in any text editor (I use Notepad2) to edit it. Here, you can see a section of a PagePlus X3 document showing the code used for the index entries that I wanted to edit.

If we open the original story in Write-Plus at the same place and show the field codes (from the View menu), we can see the index entries {Question (pañha):4 Ways to Answer}, which is the main index entry with the index sub-entry after the colon.

Using WritePlus the index code can be copied and pasted into other places in the document, but we cannot use a simple find and replace operation to duplicate index entries on other pages — we must

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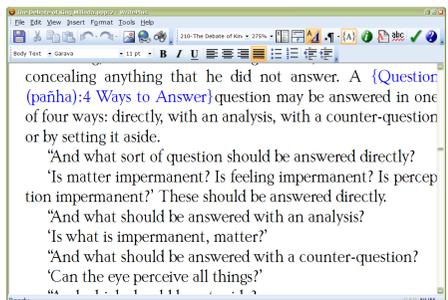
[1] The structure of WebPlus and DrawPlus documents is very similar.

use Find Next and Paste for each entry we wish to duplicate. In Notepad2, we can use find and replace to replace each occurrence of a word with the word plus its appropriate index code, correcting any typographical errors in the same way, or adding entirely new index entries in bulk.

Rebuilding the Document

After editing the contents we now need to convert the contents back into a PagePlus file. Select all of the folders and create a Zip archive. Rename it with a *.ppp extension and it will now be a valid PagePlus file. Open it in PagePlus and view the main story in WritePlus to see if the new index entries are present.

Always keep backups of your original document before using any hack like this, which you won't find in any Serif™ documentation, but once you're satisfied that your edited document can be opened and looks as expected, you can copy the new file over the original and delete the extracted folders.

This technique might help you to recover content from a corrupt document by copying the main story from a corrupted file to a blank new document.

Editing WebPlus Documents

The same technique can be useful for editing file paths in WebPlus documents that have changed by editing resources.xml.

Open summary.xml to check which version was originally used to create a document, and which other versions have been used to edit it later.

All of these edits can be done without actually extracting a document:

1. Open the *.ppp, *.wpp, or *.dpp file in 7-Zip from Windows Explorer, using Open Archive from the context menu, 7-Zip submenu.
2. Select the XML file that you wish to edit, right-click and select Edit to open the file in Notepad (or whichever program you have associated with XML files).
3. Close the text editor, saving the changes.
4. Close the archive, saving the changes.