

Home Teaching Helper Manual

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1 [-] Introduction

The Home Teaching Helper (HTH) is a program that is designed to help Ward Leaders work with MLS data.

As an Elders Quorum President, I found it frustrating to always have to try to make home teaching assignment changes on paper. I wanted to have an easy way to work with the assignments in a spread sheet. I saw that I could export Home Teaching data from MLS, but the format of the CSV file is basically unusable. It contains mostly redundant data. Also, in ward meetings, I was frequently asked questions like “Who home teaches so-and-so?” or “Who does so-and-so home teach?”. After flipping back and forth in my print-outs, I decided enough was enough and the HTH was born.

The HTH parses the HomeTeaching.csv and VisitingTeaching.csv files that are exported from MLS. Once the files have been parsed, they can be converted to all sorts of different useful formats. My starting output formats that I created included a simplified tree-like CSV file and HTML output.

The simplified CSV file can be imported into Excel or OpenOffice Calc. This proved to be very helpful because I could then make proposed changes on my laptop and easily share them with others, or display them on my T.V. during Presidency Meetings.

The HTML format was really designed to work well on my Palm TX using Plucker (an E-book reader). By using the Plucker distiller, I could quickly answer all those questions about home teaching assignments in just a few clicks. That has been immensely helpful.

Finally as I was looking around on the web for existing LDS tools, I found the ReturnAndReport.org website. After playing around with it for a bit, I decided to create a new output type that would create files that would work with the website.

If there are other formats that prove to be useful, then I'll add those as well.

Initially, the HTH was command line only (and still has that as an option). But, I added a GUI to make the program more accessible and then added the ability to not only import data, but also manually enter and modify data.

If you have an questions or comments, feel free to send me an e-mail.

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2 [B] Starting Home Teaching Helper

Once you have downloaded the Home Teaching Helper program (i.e. HVTHelper-1.1.1.zip), extract the zip file into a directory.

1. Make sure you have Java version 1.5 or greater. It can be downloaded from <http://java.sun.com>.
2. Launch the program.

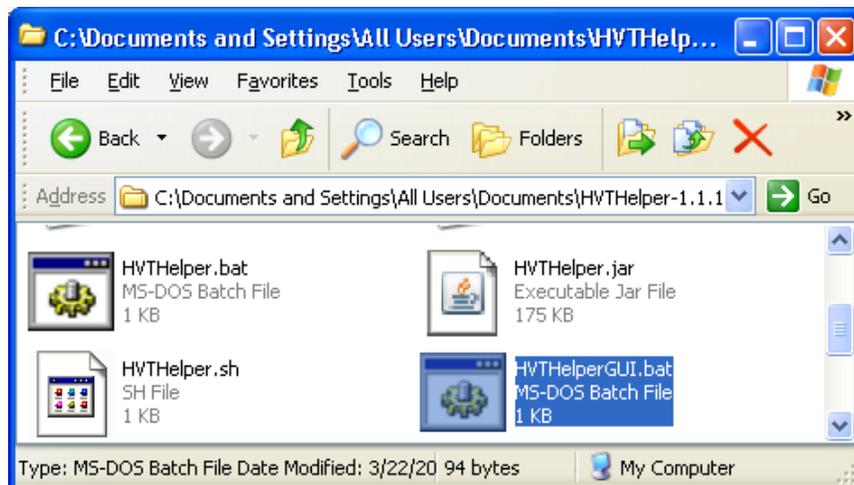


Figure 1: Home Teaching Helper Folder

- (a) If you are running Windows, double click on the **HVTHelperGUI.bat** file.
- (b) If you are using a Mac, double click the **HVTHelper.jar** file. I don't have a Mac, but so far,

every Mac user has been able to launch the program that way.

(c) If you are using Linux, run the ***HVTHelperGUI.sh*** script.

i. Note: When the HTH files are added to a zip file, the execute setting for the HVTHelperGUI.sh is lost. This means that double clicking the file will probably open it in a text editor. To change this you need to:

A. Open a terminal program.

B. Use the 'chmod' command to set the execute flag on the HVTHelperGUI.sh file. The exact command will depend on where you extracted the files, but assuming they were extracted into your home directory and you had version 1.3.0 you could type the following:

```
chmod +x HVTHelper-1.3.0/HVTHelperGUI.sh
```

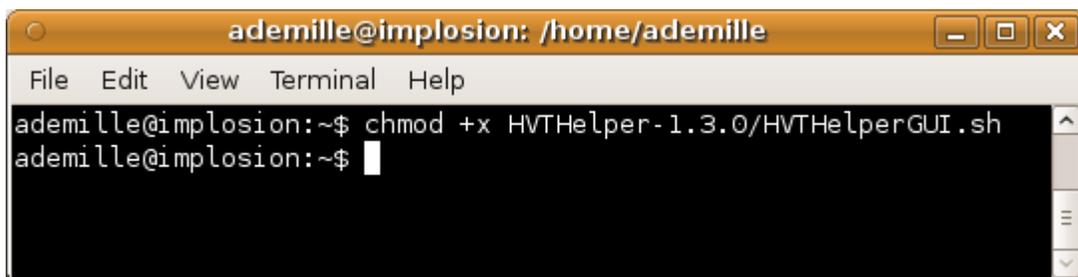


Figure 2: Linux and Mac OS - Setting the Execute Flag

C. Once you have set the execute flag you should be able to double click HVTHelperGUI.sh from your file browser to start HTH, or just run it from the command line.

When the HTH is first started, it will not contain any data.

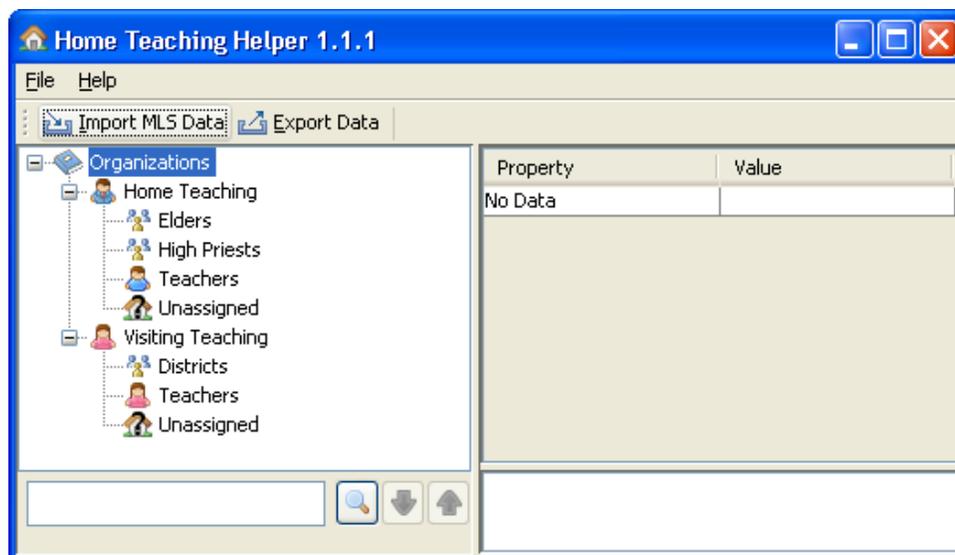


Figure 3: Home Teaching Helper

3 [-] Adding Data to Home Teaching Helper

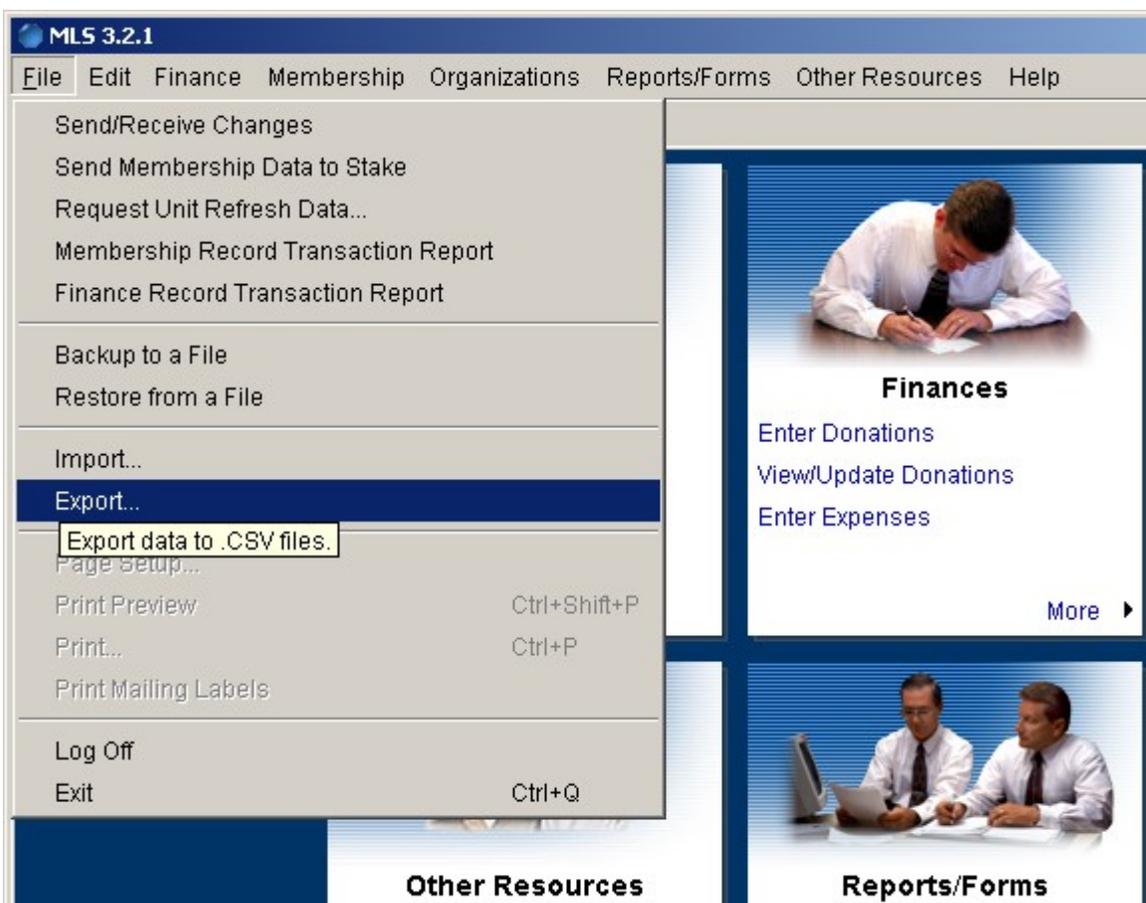
There are two ways to add the initial data to the HTH. You can either use data that has been exported from MLS or you can enter the information manually.

3.1 [B] Importing MLS Data

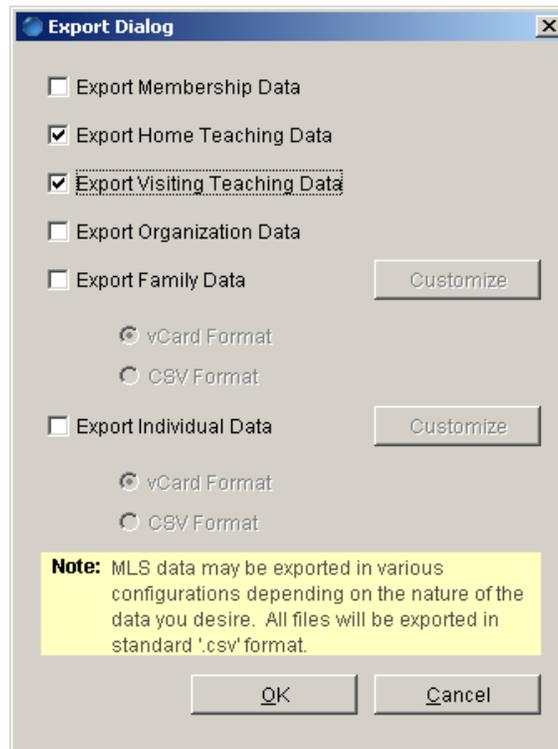
The easiest way to work with Home Teaching and Visiting Teaching data is to use the “Import MLS Data” feature. This feature allows you to directly import the *HomeTeaching.csv* and *VisitingTeaching.csv* files that are exported from MLS. This process involves exporting data from the church MLS program and then importing that data into Home Teaching Helper. This section will detail the process.

To export the data from MLS, do the following on the Ward Computer:

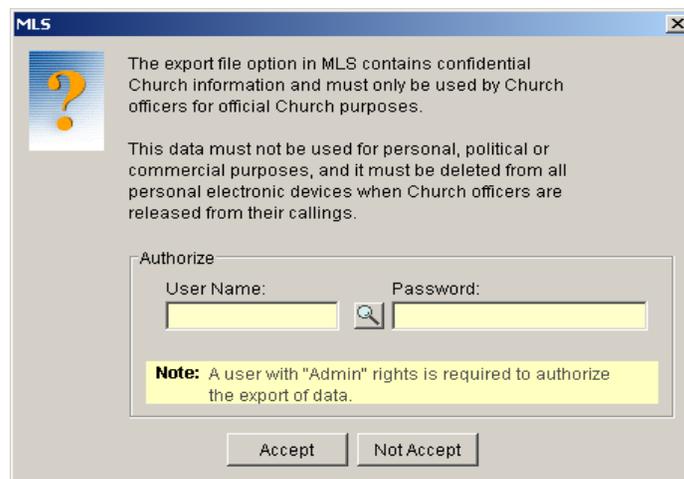
1. Select the Export option from the menu.



2. Select the **Export Home Teaching Data** and/or **Export Visiting Teaching Data** boxes. The other information is not needed.



3. Because the exported files can contain sensitive information, the export feature requires authorization by someone with administrative privileges in MLS. This is typically a member of the Bishopric or ward clerk. Regardless of whose account is used to authorize the export, be sure to get permission from your Bishop.



4. Once the export has been authorized, you will be prompted to select where to save the exported data. Save the files to a floppy or USB drive in a directory of your choosing. I usually create a new folder with the date in the name, such as **ht_export_9_4_2010**. That way I always know

when the data was exported. But, you can use whatever directory name you want. Depending on which export option you chose, you will have a **HomeTeaching.csv** and/or a **VisitingTeaching.csv** file in your selected export directory. These files can be imported into Home Teaching Helper.

If you want to try importing some data before you get your own data from MLS, the HTH program comes with sample MLS export data that you can use. The sample data is in the “sample_mls_data” folder. The folder is part of the HTH zip file. The following instructions will use the “sample_mls_data” directory. You can just point to the directory on your USB stick or floppy disk containing the data exported from MLS, if you have it available.

To import MLS data into HTH, do the following:

1. Click the **Import MLS Data** button (see Figure 4).
2. Select the folder containing the HomeTeaching.csv and/or VisitingTeaching.csv files and click **Import**. Note: The Import File Chooser will only display folders, not files, so just select the appropriate folder.

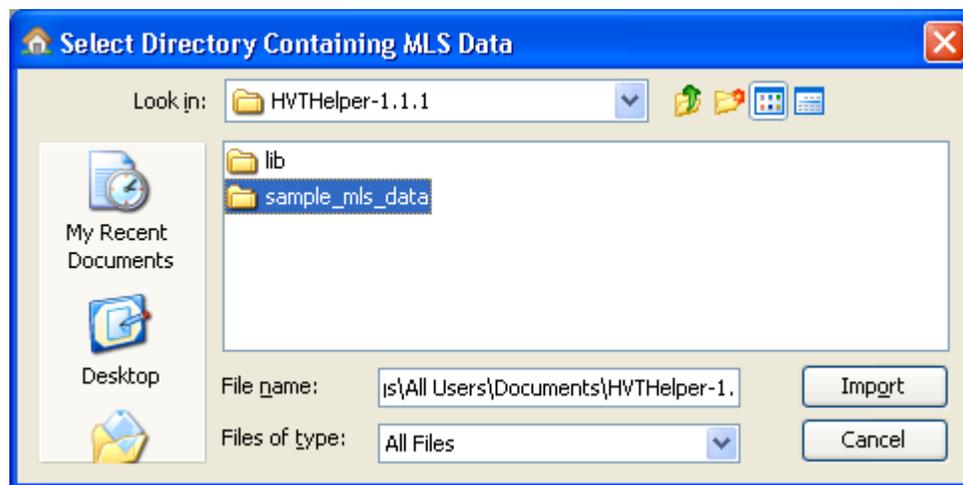


Figure 4: MLS Import

3. The data is now imported and can be modified or exported to different formats such as Return and Report files.

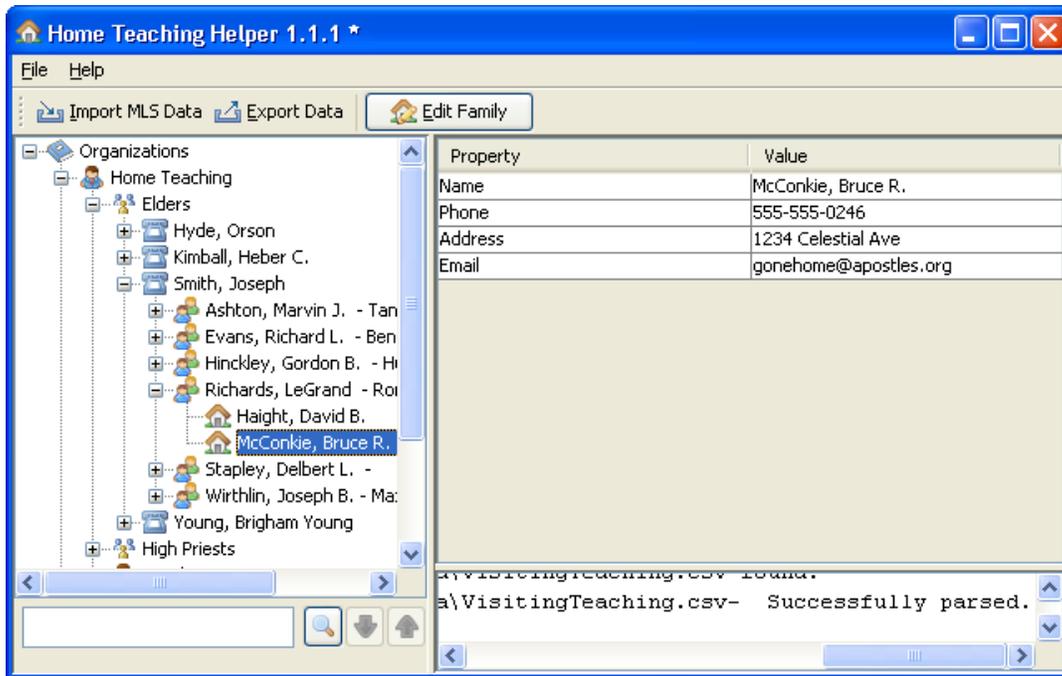


Figure 5: Imported Data

3.2 [-] Manually Adding Data

The second option for adding data is to manually enter the information. This method is obviously slower than importing, but is fairly easy and can be done with only a printout of Home Teaching and Visiting Teaching assignments. Also, once the data has been entered, it is easy to make modifications to keep the information up to date. This is also true of data that has been imported. As you enter your data, be sure to save every once in a while.

The basic steps for manually adding data are as follows:

1. Add all teachers to the teachers list.
2. Add all families to the “Unassigned List” for either the Home Teaching or Visiting Teaching section.
3. Create districts.
4. Create companionships.
5. Assign families to the companionships.

3.2.1 [-] Add Teachers to the Teachers List

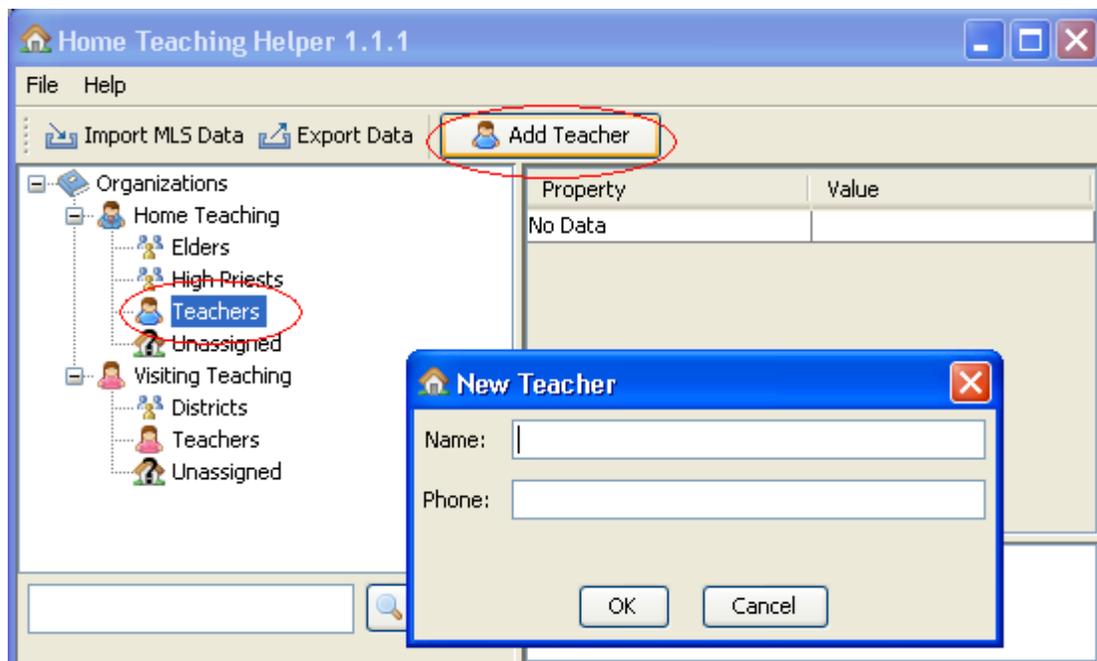


Figure 6: Teachers List

Before teachers can be assigned to a companionship, they must be added to the teachers list.

1. Add teachers by clicking on the **Teachers** node, then by clicking the **Add Teacher** button.
2. Enter the Name and Phone Number for each teacher
3. Repeat for all Home or Visiting Teachers that will be part of a companionship.

When you have finished entering all the Teachers, you should have a list like the one in Figure 8.

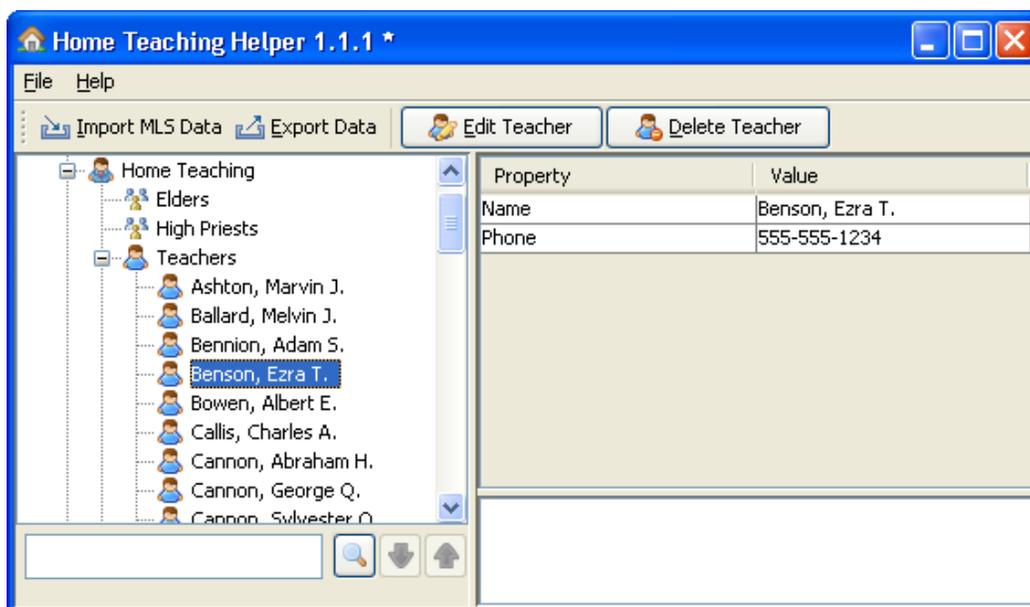


Figure 7: Teachers List

3.2.2 [-] Add All Families

Before families can be assigned to companionships, their information must be entered. This is done in by adding all the families to the **Unassigned** list. Don't worry, they won't be unassigned for very long. See Figure 9.

1. Click on the **Unassigned** node for Home Teaching or Visiting Teaching.
2. Click on the **Add Family** button.
3. Enter the family information. Only a name is required.
4. Repeat for all families that will be assigned to a companionship.

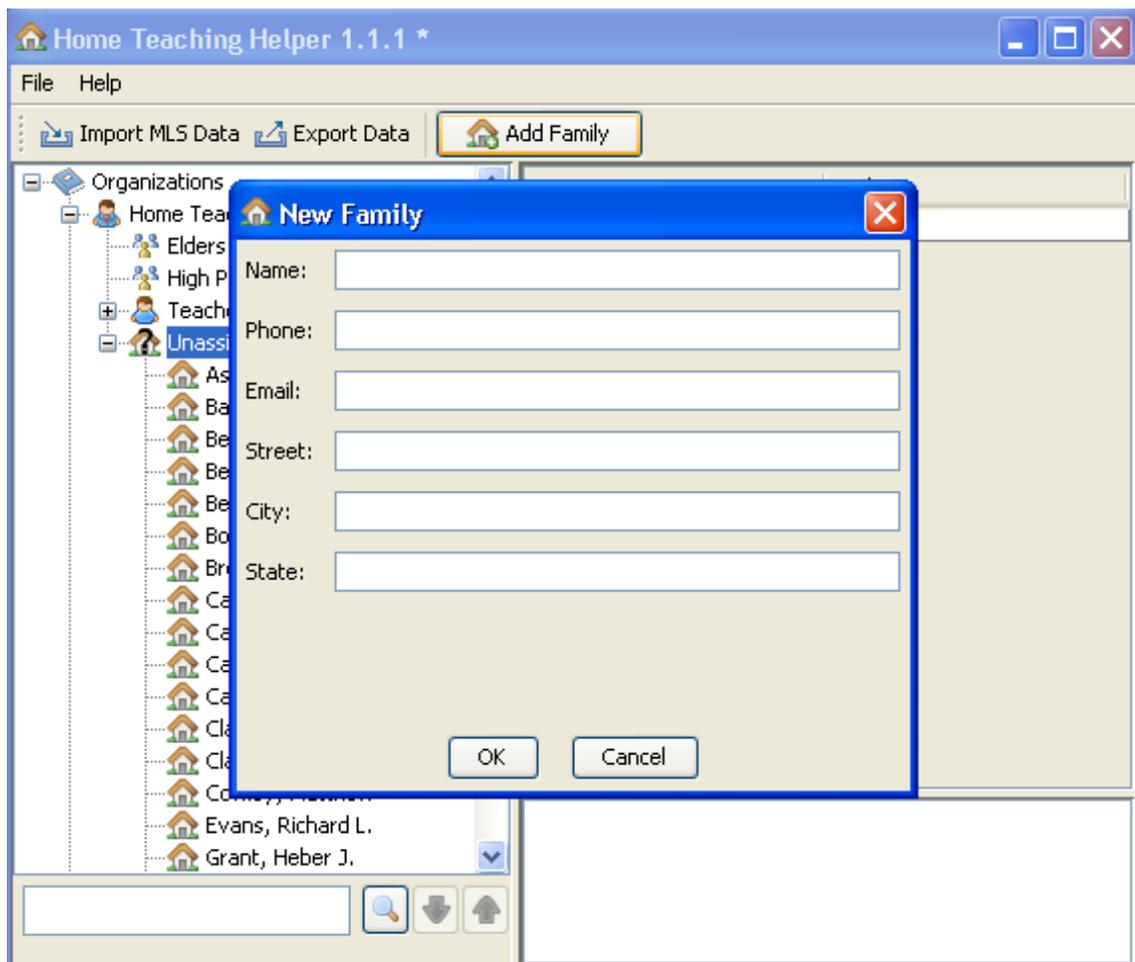


Figure 8: Add Families

3.2.3 [-] Create Districts

Now that we have teachers and families, we can create districts. A district simply needs a district supervisor.

1. Click on the Elder, High Priests, or Districts (for Visiting Teaching) node.
2. Click the **Add District** button.
3. Enter the supervisor name and phone number.
4. Repeat for each supervisor.

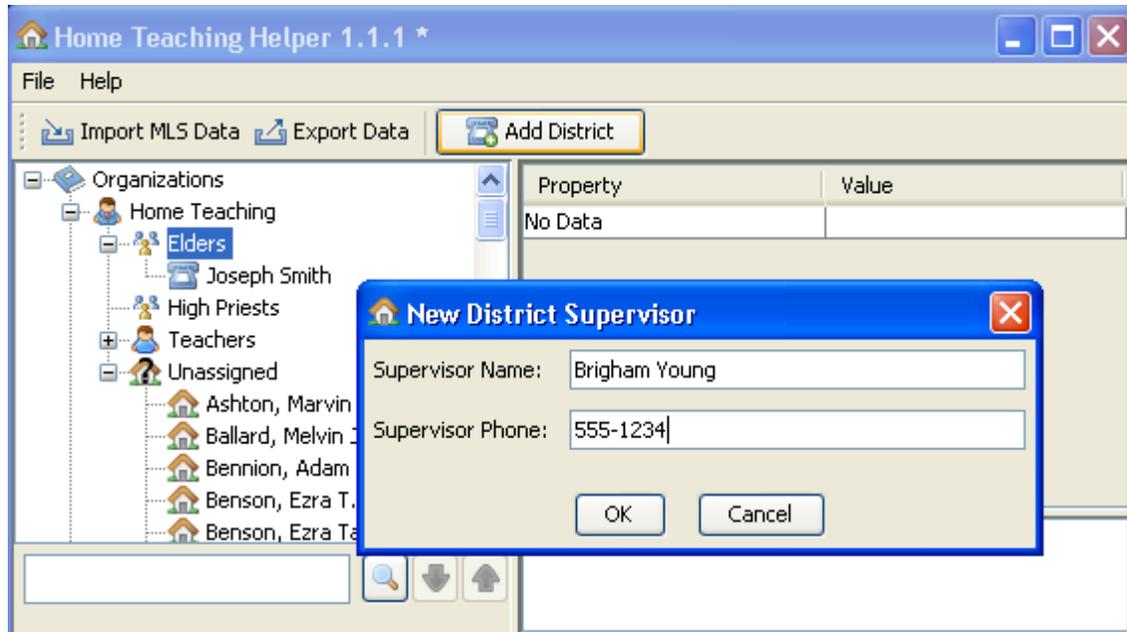


Figure 9: Adding Districts

3.2.4 [-] Create Companionships

Each district can have multiple companionships. To create a new companionship:

1. Click on a District node.
2. Click the **Add Companionship** button.
3. Select the teachers from the drop down lists. The list comes from all the teachers in the Teachers list. Teachers that have already been assigned to a companionship will have a '*' next to their name.
4. Repeat for each companionship in the district.



Figure 10: Add Companionships

3.2.5 [-] Assign Families

Finally, you can assign families to the companionship.

1. Click on a companionship node.
2. Click the **Edit Assignments** button.
3. Add Families from the **Unassigned** box to the **Assigned** box.
 1. Highlight families and use the arrows to assign/unassign families.
4. Repeat for each companionship.

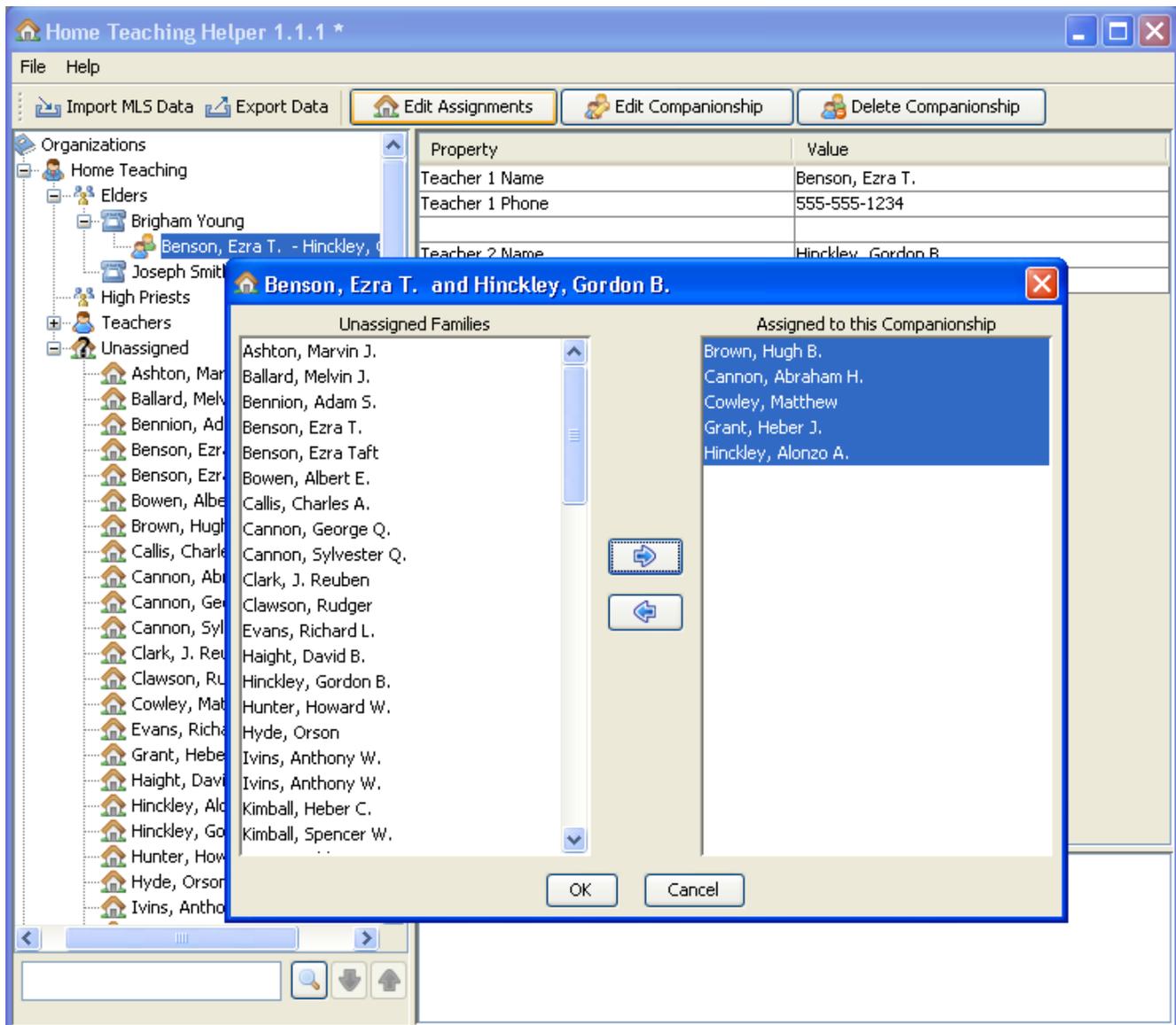


Figure 11: Assign Families

4 [-] Exporting Data from Home Teaching Helper

Once the data has been imported or manually added, it can be exported to other formats. The current choices include CSV, HTML (plucker) and Return and Report format.

The Return and Report format will be used as an example of how to export data, but the process is very similar for other formats.

4.1 [-] Return and Report

Return and Report (<http://www.returnandreport.org/>) is a website that provides on-line tracking of

Home Teaching and Visiting teaching plus a number of other features. In order to upload assignments, a specific file format must be used. The format is a little difficult to get right by hand, so it helps to have another tool such as the HTH to format everything correctly.

To export Return and Report files:

1. Click on the **Export Data** button on the tool bar. It doesn't matter which node in the tree you currently have selected. All the data will be exported.

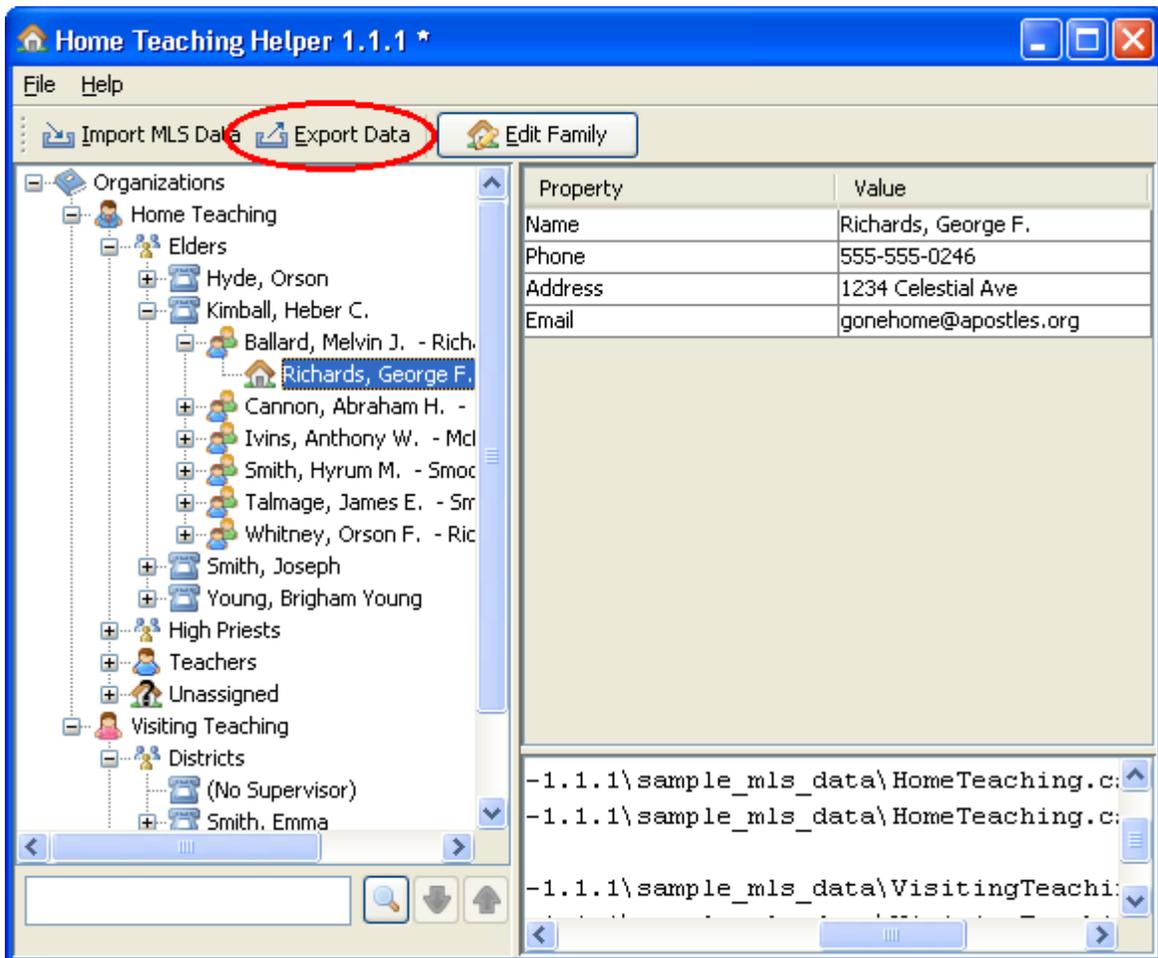


Figure 12: Exporting Data

2. From the Wizard Output Format Screen, select **Return and Report** and then Next.

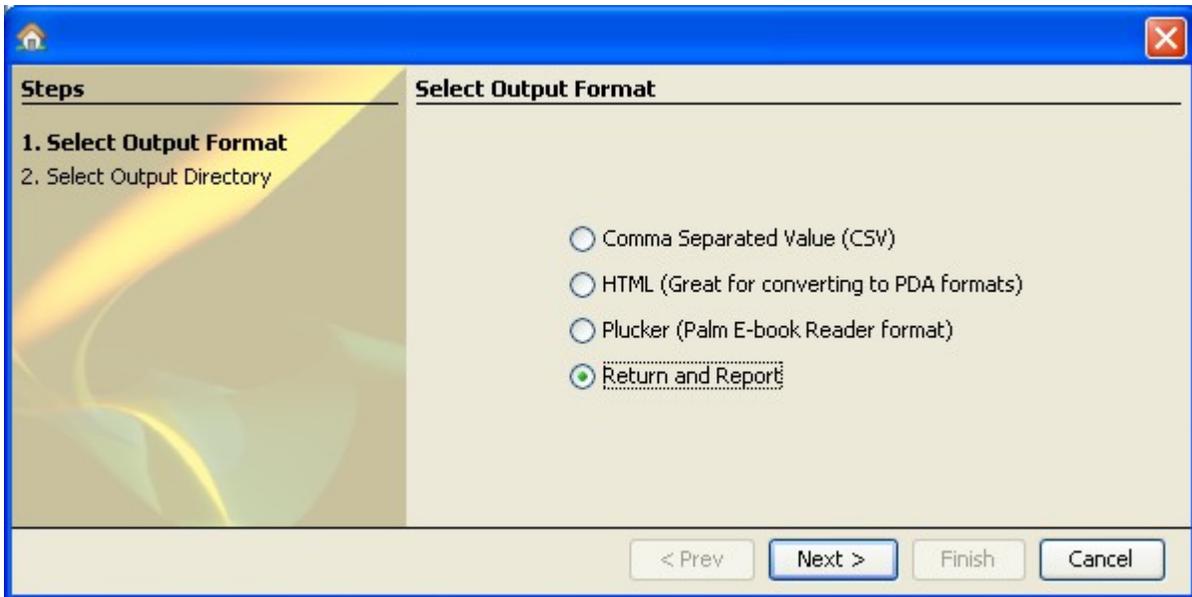


Figure 13: Output Format Wizard

3. Select an output directory for the file and click **Finish**.
 1. The directory you select must exist. You can create it by selecting the Browse button and using the Directory Selection Dialog. **Note:** There is a bug in Java that prevents directory creation in the "My Documents" folder. If you'd like to place the output in the "My Documents" folder, you'll need to create the directory first using Windows Explorer.



Figure 14: Select Output Directory

4. The Summary Page will show you where the output has been stored.

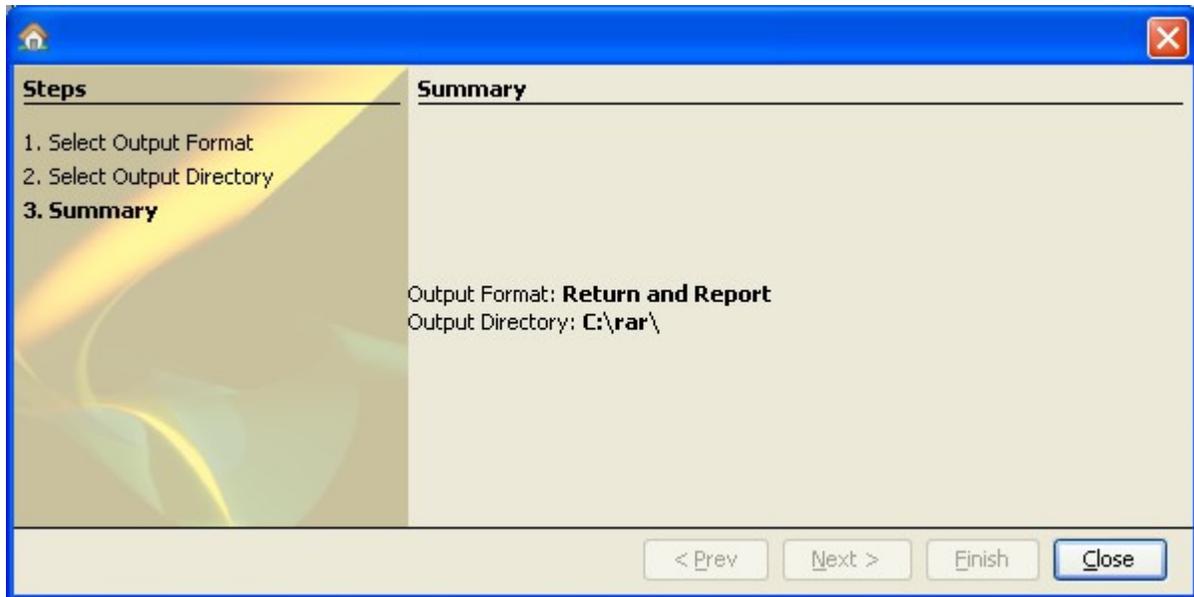


Figure 15: Wizard Summary

5. Finally you can upload the created files to the ReturnAndReport.org website. A separate file will be created for each district. Files will be created for Elders Quorum, High Priests and Relief Society. If desired, you can rename the files to be more descriptive. The files are just text, so you can open them in a text editor if you like.

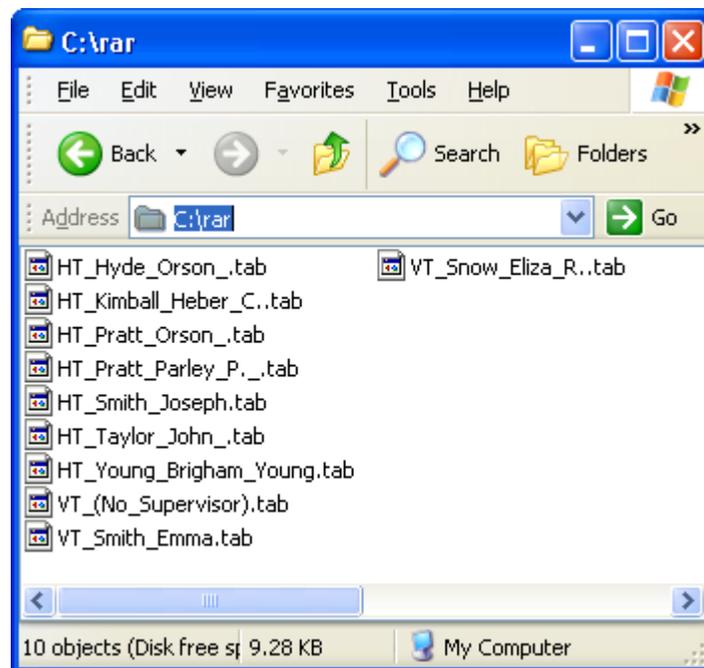


Figure 16: Generated Return and Report Files

6. And you're done.

5 [A] Reports

Reports are similar in some respects to exporting data. Reports take the information in HTH and display it in a user-friendly format in a window that allows the report to be printed. This can be very helpful if you organize your assignments in HTH and then need to print a hard copy to use to enter the information in MLS. Or you can use a report as a quick way to create a list of assignments.

6 [B] Command Line Execution (Advanced)

For advanced users that would like to automate conversion of MLS exported data, there is a command line version of Home Teaching Helper. Typical users will use the GUI version as documented in previous sections and can ignore this section.

The command line version of the program can be started in Windows using **HVTHelper.bat**. Linux and Mac systems can use the **HVTHelper.sh** script.

```

Aaron@IMPLOSION: /home/Aaron/Aaron/Code/workspaces/church/HVTHelper/HVTHelper-1.4.1
Aaron@IMPLOSION:~/Aaron/Code/workspaces/church/HVTHelper/HVTHelper-1.4.1$ ls
3RD_PARTY_LICENSES.txt  HVTHelperGUI.bat      lib
CHANGELOG.txt          HVTHelperGUI.sh       log4jconfig.xml
HVTHelper.bat          HomeTeachingHelperManual.pdf  sample_mls_data
HVTHelper.jar          LICENSE.txt
HVTHelper.sh          README.txt
Aaron@IMPLOSION:~/Aaron/Code/workspaces/church/HVTHelper/HVTHelper-1.4.1$ ./HVTHelper.sh
Invalid Command Line parameters. Missing required options: idirformat
HVTHelper by Aaron DeMille (Copyright 2008)
Version: 1.3.3 - 09/04/2010
usage: HVTHelperCmd
  -format <csv,html,plucker,rar>  output format. The desired output
                                  format.
  -help                            Print this message.
  -idir <directory>               Input Directory. The directory
                                  containing the files exported from MLS
  -odir <directory>              Output Directory. Defaults to current
                                  working directory.
Aaron@IMPLOSION:~/Aaron/Code/workspaces/church/HVTHelper/HVTHelper-1.4.1$ _

```

7 Change Log

Document Revision	Software Revision	Date	Description
-	1.1.1 - 1.2.1	03/23/09	Initial Release
A	1.3	11/23/09	Updated for reporting feature and release 1.3.
B	1.4	09/04/10	Updated section on starting HTH on Mac and Linux. Added more details and screen shots for MLS export. Added section on command line execution.

Table 1: Document Revision History