Chapter 5
Making Life Easier with
Templates and Styles

For most users, uniformity within and across documents is important. OpenOffice.org supports this need with styles that define a group of formatting characteristics and templates that combine styles with boilerplate text to form the basis for new documents.

Seasoned Microsoft Office users may be familiar with both templates and styles; in Office, they're a key to increased productivity. However, many Office users never touch them. In OOo, styles and templates are even more important than in Office, and wise users will become familiar with both the concepts and the details of using them.

What is a style?

A style is a group of formatting characteristics gathered together and given a name. Styles offer a number of advantages. First, they make it easy to apply the same formatting to different parts of a document; just use the same style. Second, they make it easy to change formatting uniformly; change the formatting of the style and everything using that style changes. Finally, because you can save styles in templates (discussed later in this chapter), it's easy to use the same formatting across a whole family of documents.

For example, you may decide to write a document using 10-point Arial for the text and 14-point Arial for headings. If you later decide to change to Times New Roman, with styles, you make the change in two places—the definitions of your body text and heading styles. Without styles, you have to go through and change each paragraph.

OpenOffice.org offers a variety of style types, varying with the application. **Table 1** shows the types of styles available in the various applications.

Table 1. Different types of styles apply to different objects. Each application offers a variety of style types.

Type of style	Applies to	Used in
Cell	Individual cells	Calc
Character	Blocks of text	Writer, HTML Editor
Frame	Inserted objects	Writer
Graphics	Drawn objects	Impress, Draw
Numbering	Bulleted and numbered lists	Writer, HTML Editor
Page	Entire pages	Writer, Calc
Paragraph	Paragraphs	Writer, HTML Editor
Presentation	Components of a presentation	Impress

Depending on the type of style and the application, a style's definition may include such things as font characteristics, paragraph formatting, tab definitions, colors, text wrapping, page size, margins, borders, columns, bullets and numbering, alignment, and more. In other words,

pretty much every kind of formatting can be applied to some type of style. (The chapters that cover the individual OOo applications explore many of the items that go into styles.)

OOo includes a large number of predefined styles, usable as is. You can modify the predefined styles to fit your needs. OOo also offers the ability to define new styles of the various types and use them. Defining custom styles is discussed later in this chapter.

For a number of the style types, there's a style named Default. This is the style used for objects of that type if you don't specify a different style. To change the overall appearance of a document, modify the Default style. (See "How do I change the existing styles and create new styles?" later in this chapter.)

What is the Stylist?

The name "Stylist" is a contraction of "style" and "list," no doubt chosen because of the implications of the word "stylist." The Stylist is available in every OOo application except Math.

Open the Stylist by choosing Format | Stylist from the menu, clicking the Stylist button on the Function toolbar, or pressing F11. (All of these actually toggle the Stylist on and off.) The Stylist can be docked. See "How do I dock the tools?" in Chapter 4, "The OpenOffice.org Interface," for details.

The Stylist provides easy access to all available styles, offering options for organizing them, as well as for defining new styles. **Figure 1** shows the Stylist in Writer, where it has the most options.
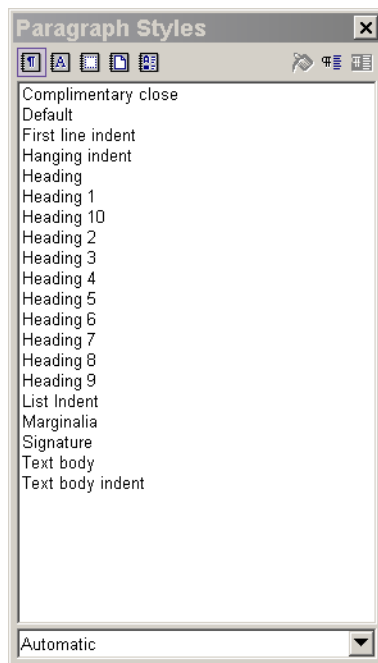

Figure 1. The Stylist shows defined styles of each type and allows you to apply them, as well as define new styles.

The left section of the button bar at the top of the Stylist shows the different types of styles available in the application (from the list in Table 1). In Writer, five types of styles are available (paragraph, character, frame, page, and numbering), so there are five option buttons in Figure 1. (The buttons have tooltips to identify the style types.)

The main section of the Stylist is a list of styles of the chosen type. In Figure 1, the list shows paragraph styles. The dropdown list beneath the list of styles lets you limit the list to a particular subset. In addition to "Automatic" shown in Figure 1, the drop-down list includes options such as "All Styles" to show everything of that type, "Applied Styles" to show only those styles in use in the current document, "Custom Styles" to show only user-defined styles, and a variety of others. The items in this drop-down list vary with the application and with the type of Style currently chosen in the button bar.

The buttons on the right end of the button bar provide easy ways to change formatting; they're discussed later in this chapter.

How do I use the styles provided?

There are several ways to apply styles to text and objects, with some variation from application to application. For text, you can generally apply styles either before or after typing. For other kinds of objects (such as graphics and drawings), it's easier to add the object, and then set its style.

You set the style using the Stylist. In Writer, HTML Editor, and Calc, make sure the cursor is positioned where you want the new style, double-click the desired style in the Stylist, and then begin typing. In Writer and HTML Editor, the Text Object toolbar also contains a drop-down list showing all the styles already in use in the current document. You can choose a style from the list (shown in **Figure 2**). Unfortunately, there's no keyboard shortcut to get to the drop-down list quickly as in Microsoft Word. (See "How do I apply a style using the keyboard?" later in this chapter for an alternative.)
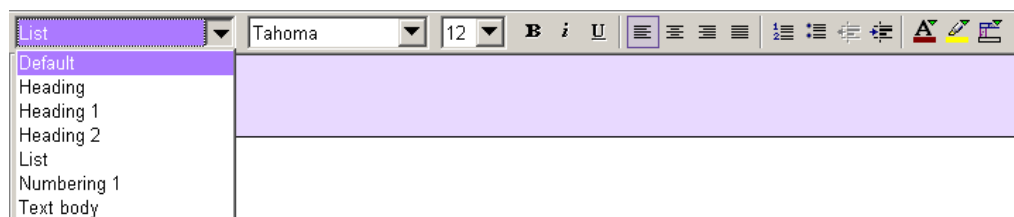

Figure 2. *The styles drop-down list in the Text Object toolbar includes all the styles in use in the document.*

The Format menu provides another way to get to the list of styles. Choose Format | Styles | Catalog to open the Style Catalog dialog (**Figure 3**). Choose a style from the catalog to apply at the insertion point.
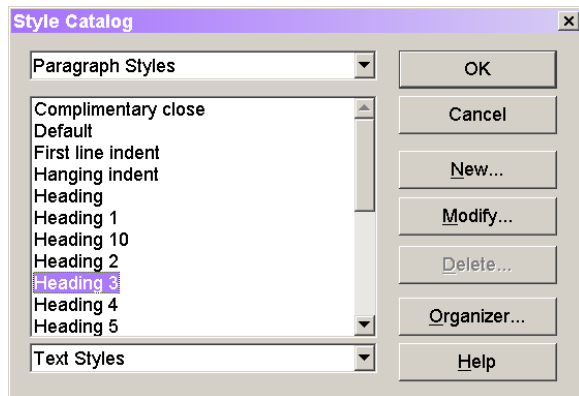
Figure 3*. The Style Catalog provides a third way to access the list of styles.*

You can also change the style once you enter text. Highlight the text or cells you want to change and choose the desired style from the Stylist, styles drop-down list, or Style Catalog.

When working with objects other than text, and in Draw, you apply styles by selecting the object and then choosing the appropriate style from the Stylist, drop-down list, or Style Catalog.

You can quickly change the style of multiple items using the Stylist. The paint can icon on the right side of the button bar controls "Fill Format Mode"—choose a style, click this button, and then, depending on the application, either select all the objects you want to apply the specified style to or click the objects to be changed. When you're done, click the button again to turn off this mode.

How do I apply a style using the keyboard?

Microsoft Word power users may be accustomed to changing styles using only keystrokes. Word provides a keyboard shortcut (Ctrl-Shift-S) to jump to the Styles list in the toolbar, and allows you to assign keyboard shortcuts to individual styles.

It's not as easy in OOo. There's no keyboard shortcut for the Styles drop-down list, and the Stylist's shortcut turns it on and off, but doesn't land focus there; at a minimum, you have to click in the Stylist before you can use the keyboard there. In addition, you can't assign keyboard shortcuts to styles.

However, all is not lost. You can assign a shortcut to the Style Catalog. (See "How do I set up custom keystrokes?" in Chapter 4, "The OpenOffice.org Interface." The command you want is Templates | Style Catalog.) Once you open the Style Catalog, you can navigate solely with the keyboard.

You can also create a macro that applies a particular style to a paragraph or other selection, and then assign a keystroke to that macro. See Chapter 18, "Forms, Macros and Automation," for details.

How do I change the existing styles and create new styles?

There are several ways to create and edit styles. You can do so directly, defining exactly what you want or you can tell OOo to create or change a style based on formatting in your document.

Editing styles directly

To edit an existing style directly, select it in the Stylist or the Style Catalog, right-click, and choose Modify. (In the Style Catalog, you can click the Modify button, instead.) A dialog displays showing the definition for that style. The exact appearance of the dialog varies with the type of style. **Figure 4** shows the Paragraph Style dialog.
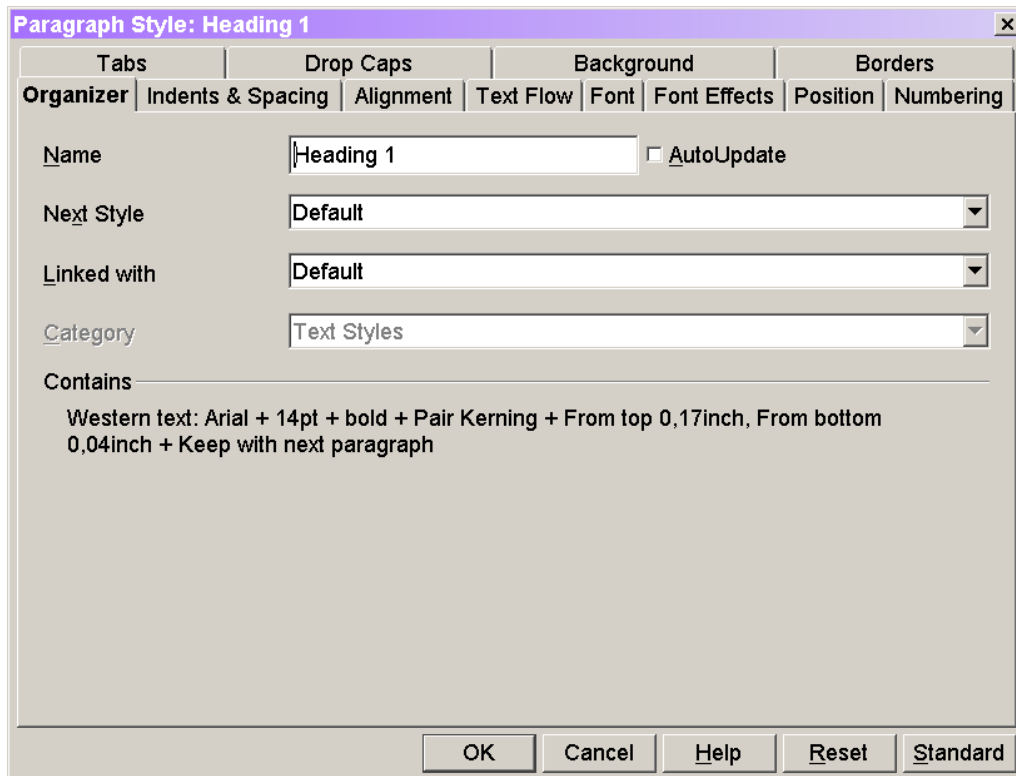

Figure 4. *The dialog that appears to edit a style varies with the style type. This dialog is for editing paragraph styles.*

Most of the items in the dialog are analogous to things you can change directly through the Format menu. That makes sense because styles encapsulate formatting choices.

Change whatever aspects of the style you want, and then click OK to save the modified style. The changes you make here apply only within the current document. To affect styles

across documents, you need to change the style definitions in a template. (See "What is a template?" later in this chapter.)

Creating new styles directly

Creating a new style isn't much different than editing an existing style. Right-click in the Stylist or Style Catalog and choose New or, in the Style Catalog, click the New button. The Style dialog appears as when you modify a style, but the Organizer page is different. In this case, the Name field shows "Untitled1," as does the Next Style drop-down list, if it's present.

For many of the style types, every style (except the Default style) is based on another style and inherits its characteristics from that style. The Linked With drop-down list indicates which style a style is based on. When you create a new style, it's automatically set to inherit from the style selected when you chose New, but you can change that if you wish. (It's actually easiest to first click the style you want to base the new style on, and then choose New.) The important thing to keep in mind is that a style has all the characteristics of the style it's linked to, except those you change explicitly. If you modify a style, any styles linked to it are modified as well.

Assign a name to the style. If the new style should always be followed by a different style, choose the appropriate style in the Next Style drop-down list, if it's available. For example, in this book, heading styles are always followed by a paragraph using a style called "_first paragraph," which isn't indented. Paragraphs using "_first paragraph" are always followed by an indented paragraph that uses a style called "_body text." Setting the next paragraph style as part of the style definition ensures that when you hit Enter at the end of a paragraph, the next paragraph is already set to the appropriate style. (This works the same way in Microsoft Word.)

The Organizer page also lets you choose the category where the new style belongs. That choice affects both the Stylist and the Style Catalog.

Once you set all this up, use the remaining pages of the dialog to set up the formatting of the new style exactly as you want it. When you finish, click OK.

Using the Stylist to create and edit styles

The Stylist offers shortcuts for creating and editing styles.

The middle button on the right side of the Stylist's button bar (with a tooltip of "New Style from Selection") lets you define new styles on the fly. Highlight some text or choose an object, and then click the button. The Create Style dialog (**Figure 5**) appears. Type a name, and then hit OK to save the new style, based on the formatting of the selected item.
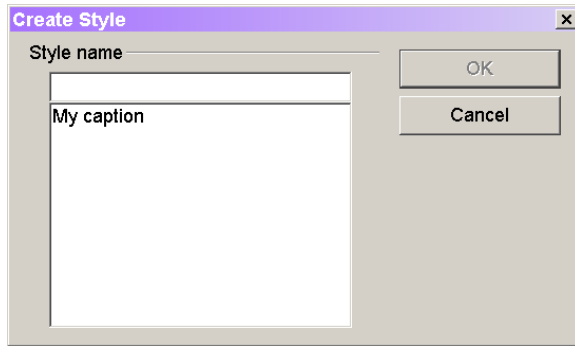
Figure 5. *This dialog displays when you create a new style based on a selected object.*

The rightmost button on the button bar (with a tooltip of "Update Style") lets you change the definition of a style. Select some text or an object, and then click Update Style. The definition of the style the selected text or object is based on updates to match the current formatting of that item. For example, suppose you use the style "Heading 1" for all the headings in a document, and then you decide to make them dark blue instead of the default black. Change the color of one of the headings, highlight the heading, and click Update Style in the Stylist. That changes the definition for Heading 1, which affects all the uses of Heading 1 already in the document, as well as those you add afterward.

As with modified styles, new styles apply only to the current document. You need to define styles in a template to make them available to multiple documents.

What is a template?

A template is a model for a document. It contains basic structure, styles, and macros. Templates make it easy to create multiple documents with the same structure and format.

Every document you create in OpenOffice.org is based on a template. If you don't specify one, it uses the default template for that application. (By analogy, Microsoft Word bases new documents on the Normal.DOT template, if you don't specify otherwise.) The default template is normally an empty document of the appropriate type. (See "How do I change the template used for new documents?" later in this chapter for more on the default template.)

You can download a variety of templates from **http://documentation.openoffice.org/Samples_Templates/index.html**. The templates available provide the framework for such things as a balance sheet (Calc), an invoice (Writer), flowcharts (Draw), and more. There are also templates available at **http://ooextras.sourceforge.net/**.

How do I use a template?

To create a document based on a particular template, choose File | New | Templates and Documents from the menu in an OOo application, or choose From Template in the QuickStarter. The Template and Documents dialog (**Figure 6**) displays. Double-click a folder to open it and see the templates within. Choose the template you want and click OK to create a new document based on that template. (See "Where does OpenOffice.org store my files?" in Chapter 3, "OpenOffice.org File Storage," for an explanation of where templates are stored.)
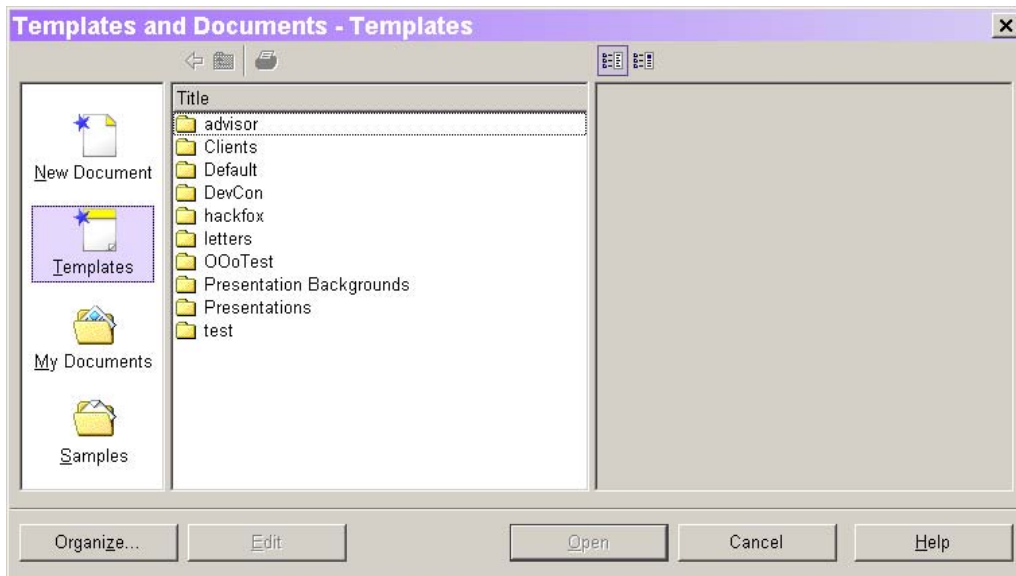
Figure 6. *Choose a template from this dialog to create a new document based on the template.*

You can also create a new Impress presentation based on a template by choosing File | AutoPilot | Presentation. In fact, by default, the Presentation AutoPilot runs when you open Impress, so you can always start an Impress session by creating a new presentation from a template.

The various AutoPilots for Writer documents work by creating a new template, and then creating a document based on that template. Once you run a particular AutoPilot once, you may find it easier to simply use the template for future documents of that type.

When it comes to applying a template to an existing application, OOo differs from Microsoft Office. In most Office applications, you can open an existing document and apply a different template to it to change its appearance. OOo doesn't support this behavior. To change the template for an existing document, you need to create a new document based on the desired template, and then either cut and paste the contents of the original document into the new document, or in those applications that offer it, use Insert | File to put the original contents into the new document.

Can I use Office templates?

Yes and no. Templates created in Office don't show up in the Templates and Documents dialog. However, you can double-click a template in the Open dialog (File | Open) or in a tool like Windows Explorer and a new document is created based on that template.

To use this solution, you have to know where the template is located. If you don't already know, the easiest solution is to search for the appropriate extension (DOT for Word templates, XLT for Excel templates, POT for PowerPoint templates). Once you find the template, if you made OOo the default application for Word files, simply double-click the file name to create a new file based on the template. If not, use Open With from the file's shortcut menu and choose OOo from the list.

How do I create a new template?

Creating templates isn't much harder than creating documents. First, create a new document in the appropriate application. Create and modify the styles you want for the template. Add any boilerplate text or objects you want in the template. (For example, if you're creating letterhead for a company, you might add a header with the company name and address, and set the company's logo as a watermark.) Make sure to position the cursor where you want it to appear when you create a new document based on the template.

When the document looks exactly as you want your template to appear, choose File | Templates | Save from the menu. (Note that this works differently from Microsoft Office, where you use File | Save As and choose template as the type of file.) The Templates dialog (**Figure 7**) displays. Type a name for the new template, and choose a category in which to store it. This list of categories here is the same as in the Templates and Documents dialog.
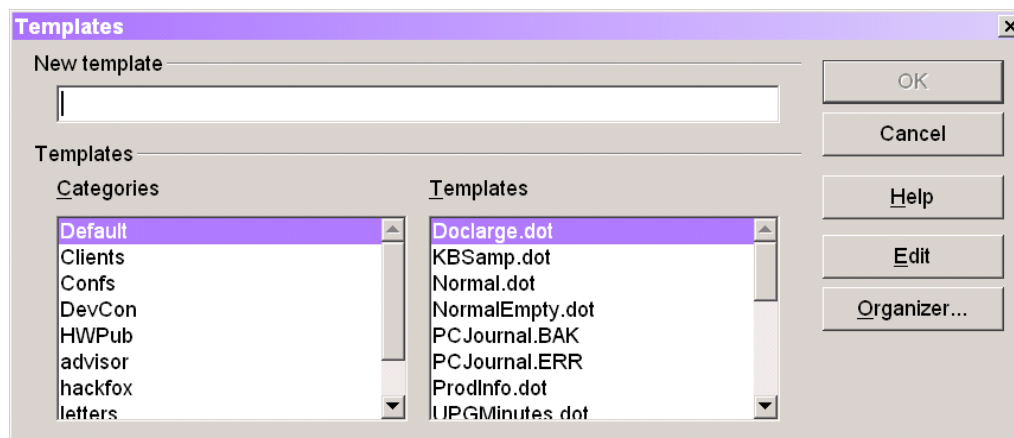

Figure 7. This dialog lets you save a new template. Choose a category on the left to keep your templates organized.

How do I change the template used for new documents?

When you choose File | New and pick a document type, or click the New button on the Function toolbar, or create a new document using QuickStarter, OOo bases the new document on the default template for the specified application. This is analogous to Microsoft Word's behavior where new documents are based on the Normal.DOT template unless you choose another. However, unlike Word, OOo doesn't make the default templates available as files you can edit. So, changing the default template isn't as easy as opening the right file and modifying it.

If you want to make changes that carry over to all new documents of a particular type, you need to create a template with the desired settings, and then make that template the default. Create the template as you would any other (see the previous section, "How do I create a new template?"). Once you save the new template, make it the default for the appropriate application using the Template Management dialog (**Figure 8**). You open this dialog by clicking the Organizer button on the Templates dialog (File | Templates | Save, shown in Figure 7), the Organize button on the Templates and Documents dialog (File | New |Templates and Documents), or by choosing File | Templates | Organize from the menu.
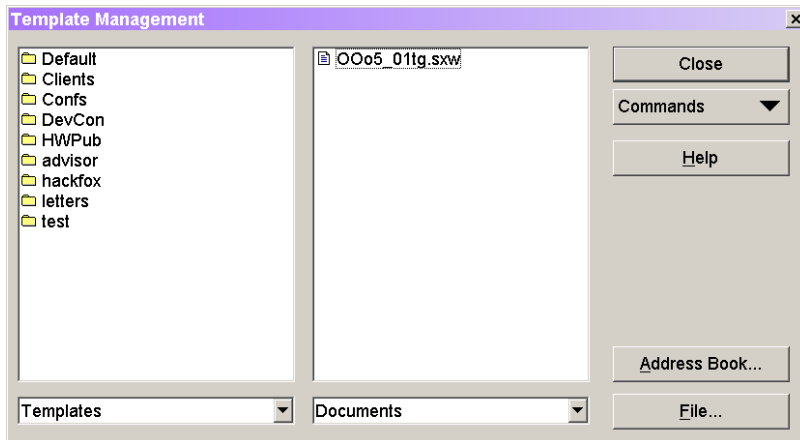
Figure 8. The Template Management dialog lets you set up default templates and much more.

In the left column, navigate to the template you want to make the default. (Double-click a folder to expand it and show the templates within.) With the desired template highlighted in the left column, open the Commands list and choose Set as Default Template. From that point on, all new documents of the appropriate type created without specifying a template are based on the template you set as the default.

If you want to return to the built-in default, open the Commands list and choose Reset Default Template. Choose the appropriate file type from the list.

How do I open a template for editing?

To open a template so you can make changes to it, choose File | Templates | Edit from the menu, and then choose the template you want to edit. Make whatever changes you need to the boilerplate text, the styles, or the macros, and then save it as you would any other document.

You can also open a template, modify it, and save the modified template as a new template. In that case, when you're done editing, use File | Templates | Save to give the modified template a new name.

How do I manage templates and styles?

The Template Management dialog (File | Templates | Organize on the menu) provides a lot more options than just setting default templates. For example, it lets you move styles between templates and documents and move templates from one folder to another.

Each of the lists in the dialog shows either templates OOo knows about or the list of open documents. You can work with the items in those lists to move both templates and styles around.

Copying styles

Sometimes, you have a style in one template you want to make available in another. To do so, find the template that contains the style in one list. Double-click the template name and a Styles item appears. Double-click the Styles item and a list of styles displays.

In the other list, find the template to which you want to copy the style. Again, double-click the template name to show the Styles item; double-click the Styles item to display the list of styles.

Now, you can drag (to move) or Ctrl-drag (to copy) a style from one template to the other. If the target template or document already has a style by that name, you're prompted about overwriting it.

Moving templates

The dialog also lets you move templates from one folder to another. Set both lists up to show folders, and then drag the template from one list to a folder in the other list.

The New button in the Commands drop-down list lets you add a folder for templates. Focus must be on a list of templates for New to be enabled. When you click it, it adds a folder called "Untitled". Type the name for the new folder.

The dialog offers a variety of other options, including the ability to print a list of the styles in a template or document with their descriptions.

Summary

Investing some time developing your own styles and templates will pay off in both the short run and the long run. As you create documents, having appropriate styles defined minimizes the amount of time you spend on formatting. Instead of needing to set a variety of options, you can just choose the right style and keep going. Over the long haul, templates and styles provide uniformity both within and across documents, making your work look more professional and making it easier to apply global changes.

> Updates and corrections to this chapter can be found on Hentzenwerke's web site, **www.hentzenwerke.com**. Click "Catalog" and navigate to the page for this book.