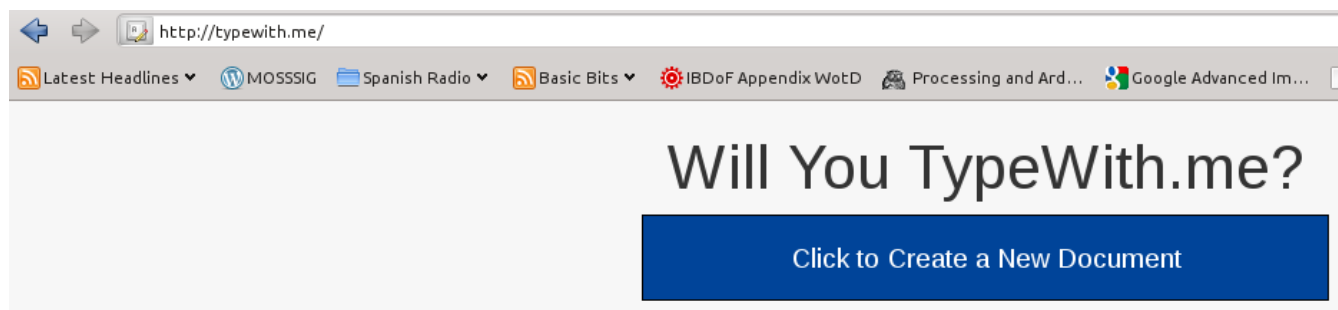## *Collaborative Editing – Etherpad – Gobby*

Although recent changes to Google Docs have added the ability to work concurrently in Google online word processing, they did so by incorporating a tool called Etherpad. Google bought the Etherpad company and simultaneously allowed the developers to release the programming code using the liberal GPL code license. That means it is open and can be developed further by others, in addition to being used by Google.

What makes Etherpad significant is its ability to have more than one person making changes to a document at the same time. Usually two or more people need to send a document back and forth, one person working at a time. Then the changes proposed by each person get evaluated and incorporated into the main document.

Etherpad avoids the need for exchange. It is great for simultaneous editing, and maybe most effective as a note-taking tool. Etherpad also provides a very easy method to take a document back to an earlier version. Every typing change, whether an insert or a delete, gets recorded. So you never really lose a deleted paragraph and can go back to get it, all within the same document. There is no need to create version after version.
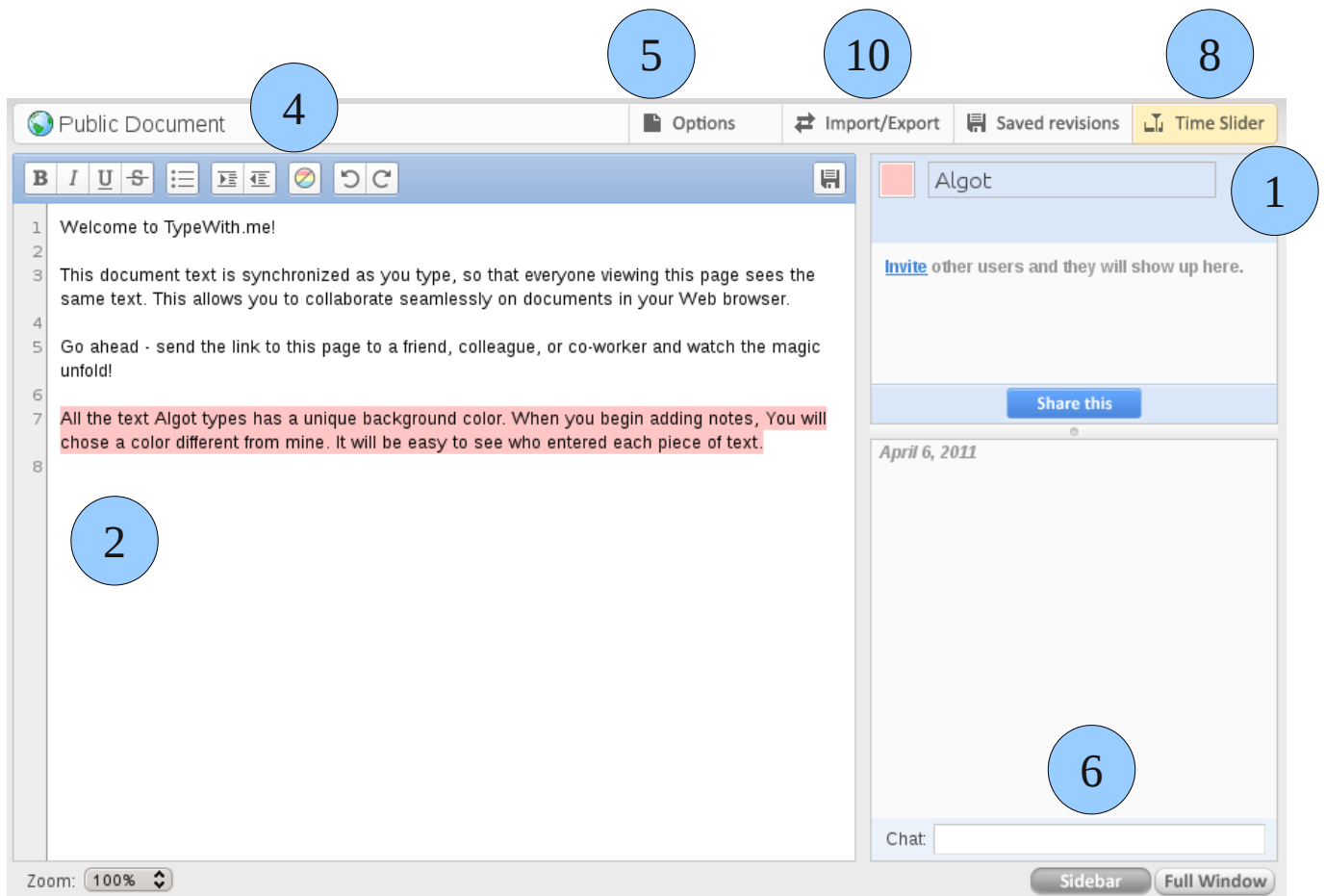
There are several groups offering Etherpad "instances" on the Web.
A visit to http://etherpad.com shows some recommendations.

We will use the http://TypeWith.me site. Starting a new pad is dead simple (UK term).

BUT...For the initial exercises, we will use a pad I created ahead of time:
http://typewith.me/93cnVVZcD3 (letter case matters. If you have trouble, I'll send you an email.)

The file is "named" automatically and randomly. Some implementations of Etherpad do allow you to choose a less random name.

Public Document

Options   Import/Export   Saved revisions   Time Slider

B *I* U S̶ ≡ ⇥ ⇤ ⊘ ↺ ↻   💾

1 Welcome to TypeWith.me!
2
3 This document text is synchronized as you type, so that everyone viewing this page sees the same text. This allows you to collaborate seamlessly on documents in your Web browser.
4
5 Go ahead - send the link to this page to a friend, colleague, or co-worker and watch the magic unfold!
6
7 All the text Algot types has a unique background color. When you begin adding notes, You will chose a color different from mine. It will be easy to see who entered each piece of text.
8

Zoom: 100%

Algot

Invite other users and they will show up here.

Share this

April 6, 2011

Chat:

Sidebar   Full Window

Activities:

[Look at the illustration above for numbers indicating a connection to an activity.]

1. Add your name – it will be listed with your color when you tap the Enter key.
2. Type some new note as a new paragraph. Watch what happens if somebody else in the Collaborative Editing study group starts typing their new paragraph at the same time. Don't panic!
3. Discuss the conventions you will use with the others in the group. What will you do about deletions? Will you prefer to use strikeout by selecting the text and applying the strikeout, or do actual deletions?
4. Explore each of the available text enhancements...though they may be too obvious.
5. Examine the other tools (while talking with others in your group)
6. Try looking away (or just don't look up) from the others in the group and discuss your actions by using the chat box at the bottom right of the pad Web page. Think about the process of working on the same document while not in the same room, perhaps hundreds of miles apart. Imagine working with a team of students spread out around your school community. What about thinking of a group of department members from several schools working on follow-up sessions from a face-to-face planning meeting. Think curriculum planning, common test development, etc.

7. At some agreed point, do an official "save" of the document in progress. That will provide a marked point in the work.
8. Check what happens when you look at the document using the "Time Slider."
9. Explore...When you are ready, start your own pad. Invite others to join you in editing. Try working with someone who is actually in a different location. Test the limits of the tool.
10. Look at the export options. Try one (or more).

The web site running Etherpad keeps track of your return by leaving a cookie on your computer. When you use the same computer to reconnect to the document, you'll still have the same name and color. If you connect from a different computer, it won't know who you are. You'll need to reestablish your identity.

If you have time, ask about Gobby. It is a similar tool which you can run off your own computer and provide a shared collaborative editing experience within a classroom environment with almost no setup issues beyond getting the Gobby program onto each student's computer.

Gobby runs on Windows, Macintosh and Linux, making it versatile.

Fortunately Gobby is another GPL licensed tool. You have the freedom to use it for whatever purpose you want. You may install it over and over again without copy restrictions. It is free of cost.

Gobby Web site: http://gobby.0x539.de/trac/