

Sharing plain text files between the HP 100LX / 200LX Palmtop and a Windows (XP) system

2012-03-06 by Daniel Hertrich, hermocom

Description of the problem

This article provides a solution for issues with special characters, when you need to work on plain text files (*.txt) using the HP Palmtops and using Windows (XP, in this case, but it should work as well with Windows Vista and Windows 7 too).

Usually, if you write text with special characters on the HP, when loading the file into a Windows editor, the special characters are garbled:

If you write on the Palmtop:

Accented u: ú
Circumflex a: â
C-cedille: ç
o-Slash (oe): ø
German Umlauts: öäüÜÖÄß

And load the file into a Windows-based text editor, it will look like this:

Accented u: £
Circumflex a: f
C-cedille: ‡
o-Slash (oe): >
German Umlauts: „,□š™Žá

You need a tool to convert the text written on the Palmtop to using the Windows codepage. Usually, this kind of conversion is called “DOS to Windows”, “ASCII to ANSI”, also converting to UTF-8 could be a solution.

Smoothing the workflow

If you like to share files between the Palmtop and a Windows system and use both systems to work on those files, the smoothest workflow I could work out is this:

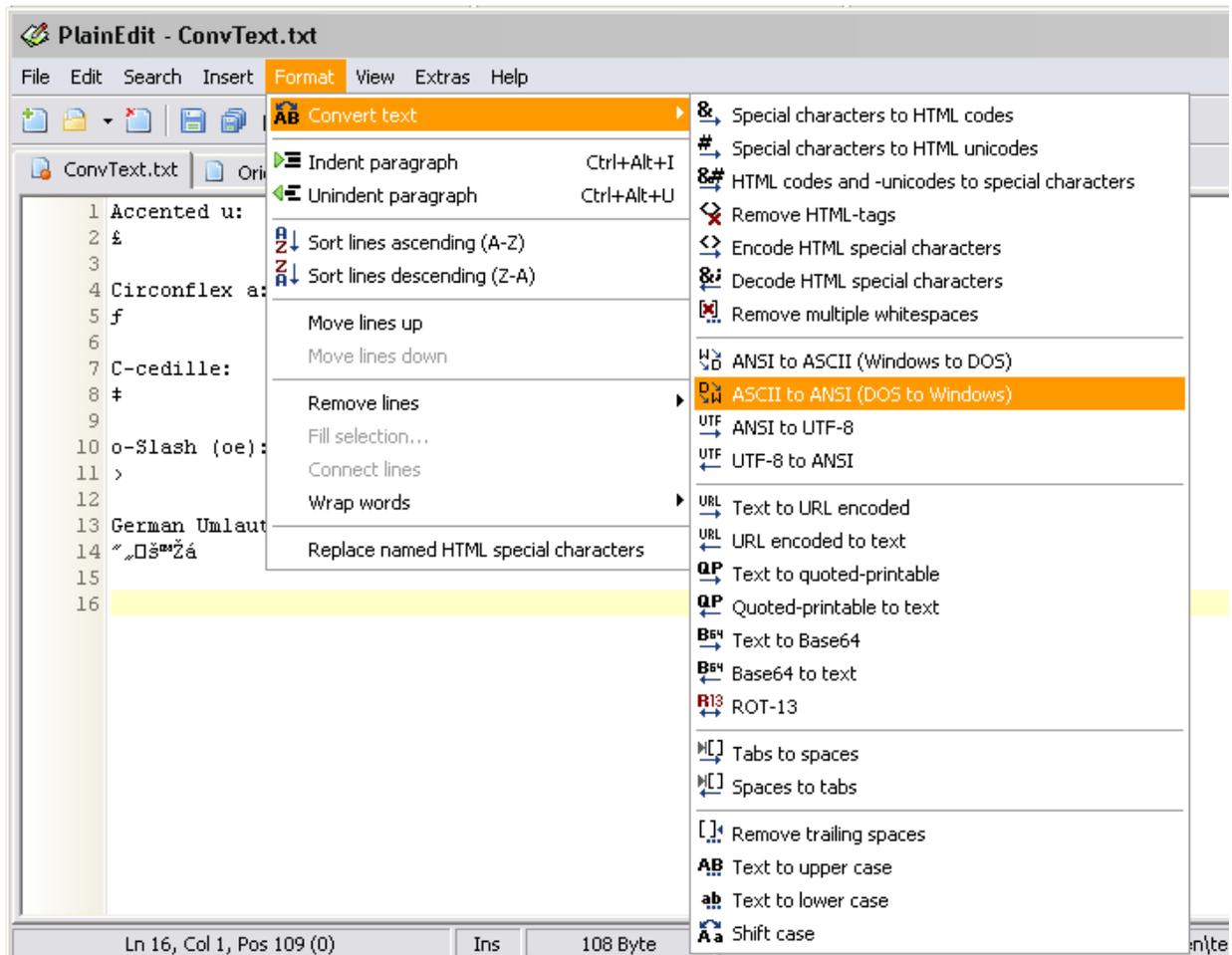
1. After working on the file using the Palmtop, e.g. with MEMO or PE editor, transfer the file to the Windows PC (e.g. using a CF card or serial connection using Total Commander and the HPLX Plugin)
2. On the Windows PC, open the file with the freeware editor "PlainEdit"
<http://www.gaijin.at/dlplainedit.php>
At first, the special characters will look garbled.
3. In Plainedit, use the function Format > Convert Text > ASCII to ANSI (DOS to Windows). Special characters are displayed correctly now.
4. Work on the file in Windows / PlainEdit
5. Once you plan to transfer the file back to the Palmtop, use PlainEdit's function Format > Convert Text > ANSI to ASCII (Windows to DOS)
Special characters look garbled again.
6. Transfer the file to the Palmtop
7. Work on the file using the Palmtop (MEMO, PE or similar). There, the special characters will be displayed correctly.

Attention!

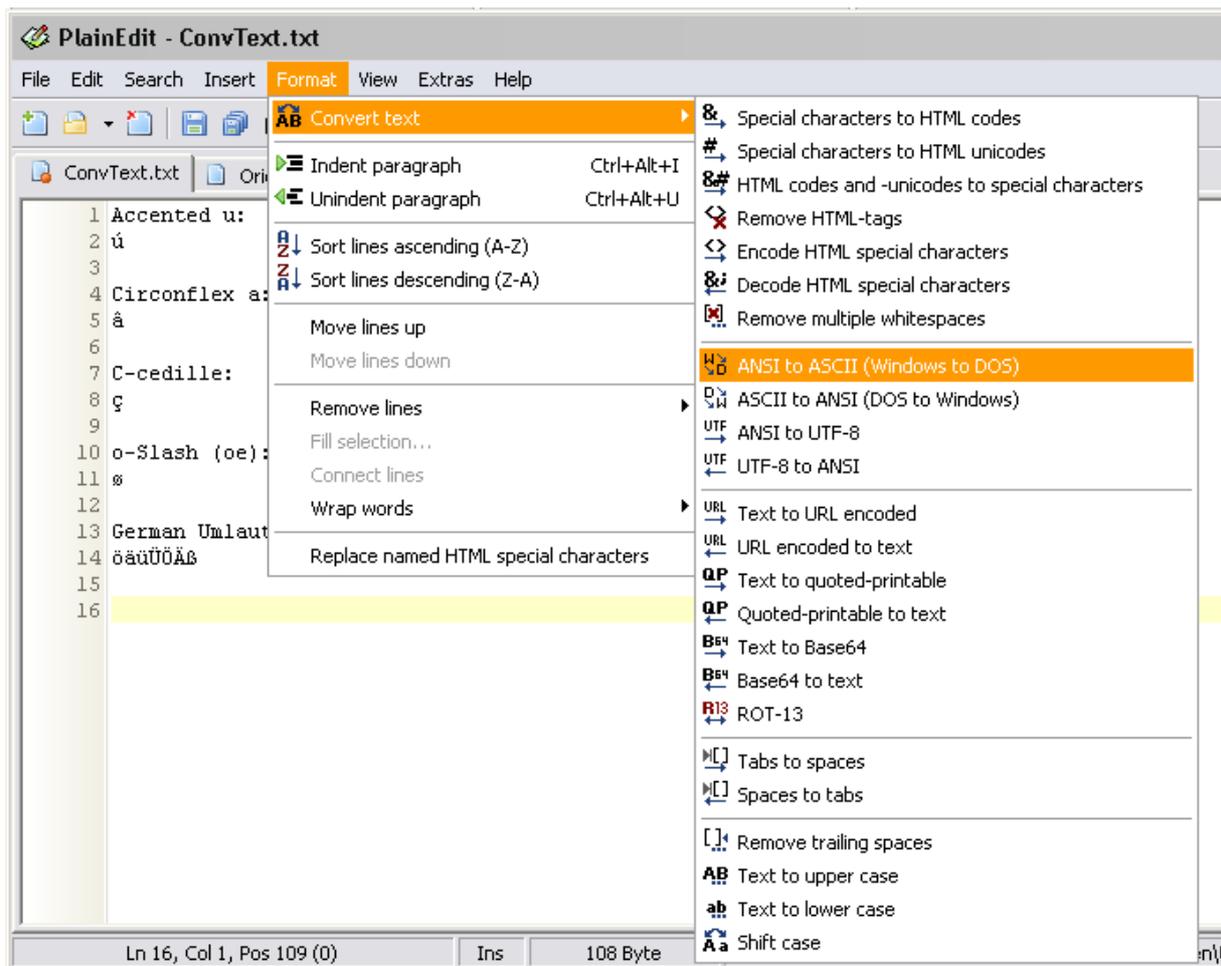
If you ever forget to convert the file back to DOS format before transferring the file to the Palmtop, do not add any new special character to the file on the Palmtop, because then you would have special characters using mixed encodings in the same file, which will result in a mess.

You may edit a Windows-encoded file on the Palmtop, as soon as you only add standard characters (from the US-ASCII character set, no language-specific special characters).

DOS to Windows conversion in PlainEdit:



Windows to DOS conversion in PlainEdit:



Further workflow optimization using keyboard hotkeys

In order to avoid the need to use PlainEdit's menu for the conversion, you may define keyboard shortcuts for the conversion, e.g. *Shift-Ctrl-D* for DOS-to-Windows conversion and *Shift-Ctrl-W* for Windows-to-DOS conversion.

This can be done in PlainEdit's hotkey configuration dialog:

Extras > Hotkey Configuration

