Sims U Share

Station Edition Addendum

to SimsUshare Documentation

by CommandSim

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For more information:

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SimsUshare Station Edition Overview

Our core mission is to create software and tools for Fire and Safety training that help virtually anyone imagine "what if's" in their first-due response area—as a means to prepare effectively. We recognize that to fulfill this mission, we not only have to make the simulation creation process simple, we also have to make the simulation sharing and extension process easy.

Who is the SimsUshare Station Edition For?

If you want to allow multiple users (people) to create and play simulations on one computer, the Station Edition lets you do this. Furthermore, the Station Edition lets you designate certain folders for sharing sims, and thereby easily distribute sims from your own area to the field. Therefore, it is now easy to make the creation and use of simulations something to which everyone in your department can contribute. If you do not have shared network drives, or even if you do, you can use third-party services such as Dropbox (http://www.dropbox.com) to share simulations among your personnel.

How is the Station Edition different from the regular SimsUshare software?

The regular version of SimsUshare is licensed to a single user for use on up to two of that person's computers. As its name suggests, "SimsUshare" is about sharing simulations for use in training. However, prior to the release of the Station Edition, people could only share simulations through a manual process of copying folders from one device to another.

The Station Edition adds two critical functions to the regular SimsUshare program:

1. **Enabling everyone on a station's computer to create simulations**. The ability to have multiple users on the same computer create simulations, without requiring each user to purchase an individual license; and,

2. **Sharing simulations on your network or via Dropbox.** The ability to enable supervisor(s) (such as the training officer) to set up shared areas/folders on the Department's network (or through services such as Dropbox) from where simulations can be retrieved, updated, and stored automatically.

Installing the Station Edition may require one to set appropriate permissions on your Department's network, and therefore should be installed by your network's administrator(s), even though the process is not so complicated. The Station Edition material provides directions to make sure this process is as simple as possible, and of course we encourage you to reach out to us if we can help you.

The SimsUshare Station Edition is a different program from the regular SimsUshare software distribution, and requires you to get a license code that enables this functionality.

<u>**Example Uses**</u>

Each of the following example uses comes back to the same principle—the widest possible benefit for simulations can be obtained by enabling more people with experience to create and share simulations.

A. **You want to allow any user on one or more computers to create their own simulations**. This is the default configuration, in which each user's sims exist in their own profile only, on the specific computer the sim was created on. Sims can be copied to other users, but the process involves manually copying and pasting sims.

B. **You want to allow any user on one or more computers not only to create their own simulations, but also to play a common set of simulations**. For example, the training supervisor may want to have a monthly focus for training, supplemented by a set of simulations for the field. The supervisor can specify one or more folders as "play only". Each user can see and play the simulations, but not edit sims from the group/folder directly. However, the user can copy any of these sims into their own private area for editing.

C. **You want to allow any user on one or more computers not only to create their own simulations, but also to share (play and edit) a common set of simulations**. The training supervisor can make shared folders (or even Dropbox) allow both playing and editing sims. The danger with this configuration is that if several users have this permission, they can modify the work of others. A productive example might be having special "Station1", "Station2", etc. folders, where each station has play/edit access to the proper folder, and the training supervisor can pull out sims from any of these folders to place in the common sims folder.

D. **You want to allow a user's private sims to travel among computers with SimsUshare**. By default, sims are stored in a user's "Documents" folder. The new features of the Station Edition allows the administrator to specify an alternate location for the default, which can be a network drive, and therefore be accessible from whatever computer the user logs in at (provided the SimsUshare software is accessible on that computer as well). This function is also available in the regular SimsUshare software, version 1.1.2 and above (Windows/Mac, currently).

This guide has the following three parts:

1. **Guide for the IT Administrator**. Instructions for installing and configuring the Station Edition.
2. **Guide for the Training Officer/Supervisor**. Instructions for organizing simulations among shared folders you want to give users access to.
3. **Guide for the Individual User**. Brief instructions for each simulation user/developer.

Need help? Please contact us at +1.215.627.8146, Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Eastern Standard Time.

Station Edition Guide for the IT Administrator

Note: these instructions are for installing SimsUshare on a Windows network. If you need to get this functionality on a network of Mac's, please contact us.

Installing SimsUshare Station Edition

We have created a separate document that details the two ways to install the Station Edition (through a standard EXE installer or MSI file). A third option is to download the set of files and the application to a shared network folder, and having the user's point to the application to run it.

Activating SimsUshare on each Computer

Even if you install SimsUshare in a common network folder, you will need to activate the license on each computer, once. As the administrator, you will likely be the person to activate the software first.

When the first person runs SimsUshare on the computer, the program will ask for the 12-character license code that you should have received when you purchased the SimsUshare. The code begins with "ste", for example, "ste45678abcd" (see Fig. 1):
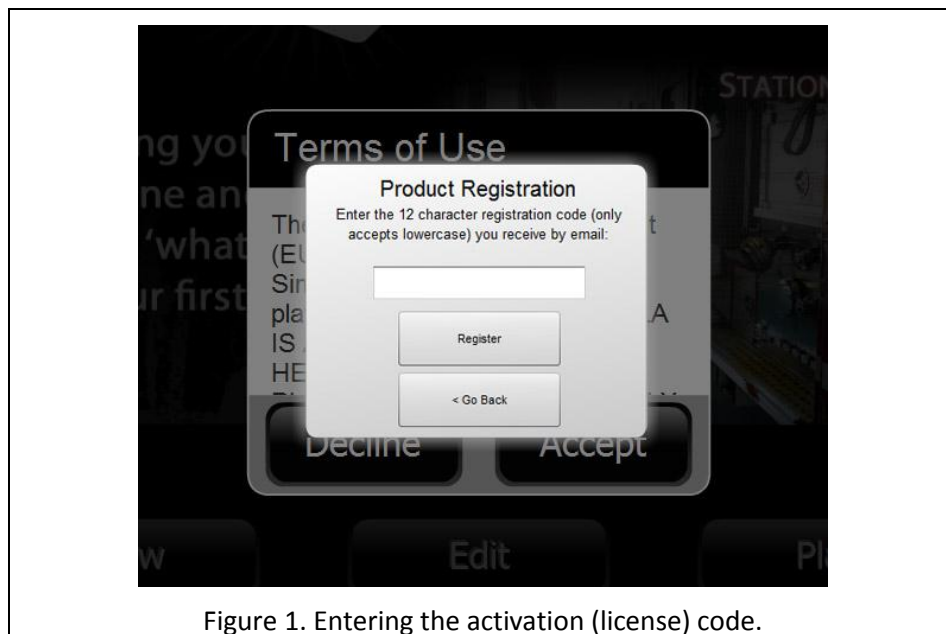

Figure 1. Entering the activation (license) code.

To activate the program for each user, the computer has to be connected to the Internet, with the ability to reach our licensing server, for verification. Once the first activation has been completed successfully, any subsequent new user will not need the license code – SimsUshare automatically reaches out to our licensing server, without prompting the user, and verify the license (Fig. 2). This activation only happens the first time a new user is seen on that specific computer.
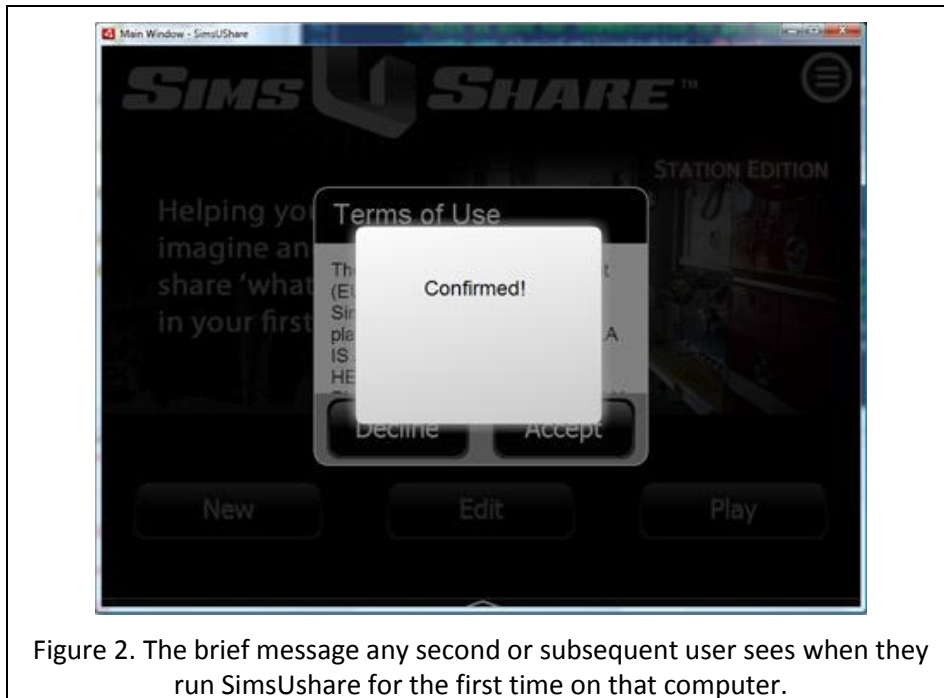
Figure 2. The brief message any second or subsequent user sees when they run SimsUshare for the first time on that computer.

Note: If you are installing SimsUshare in a common network drive, you must ensure the proper permissions are set to allow the executable to reach the Internet and our licensing servers. This may involve setting the proper folder permissions.

If you need to replace a computer and reinstall SimsUshare, please let us know to change the license to allow a new computer to be registered.

### Configuring Shared Simulation Catalogs on the Computer or Network

SimsUshare stores simulations in the user's 'Main Sim Folder', which, by default, is the user's "Documents" folder. By not allowing users to store simulations anywhere they'd like, it makes the program use more predictable and easier to use, especially for non-technical users.

If you prefer that a user's Main Sim Folder (MSF) is not the default Documents folder, you can specify a special flag in the configuration file that allows user's to choose their own. User's can even change the location of their Main Sim Folder themselves through the program, in the menu on the main screen. We recommend that a user's Main Sim Folder not be shared my multiple users, otherwise, it makes it easier for one user to overwrite the work of others. Rather, to enable sharing of sims that the user and the training officer/supervisor choose, we suggest making additional sim folders that the user can access. The key to accomplishing this is by setting up the `simfolders.xml` file, described in the next section.

We recognize that if each user only had a separate place to store and play sims, and no place to store or play common sims for training, it would be less useful for department-wide training because it would require manual copying of sims from one user to another. Therefore, we created a special configuration

file that you can modify to permit playing and editing of sims from common (shared) locations, either on the computer or on your network. Furthermore, you can specify these folders as "play only", if the training supervisor wants, which enables the supervisor to provide example sims that users can extend privately (and then store back into other common folders, if the supervisor desires).

The easiest way for a user to create or point to a common sim folder is through the "Add Sim Folder" menu option available on the screen in which the user selects a sim to edit (Fig. 3).

Figure 3. Options within Station Edition for managing sim folders.
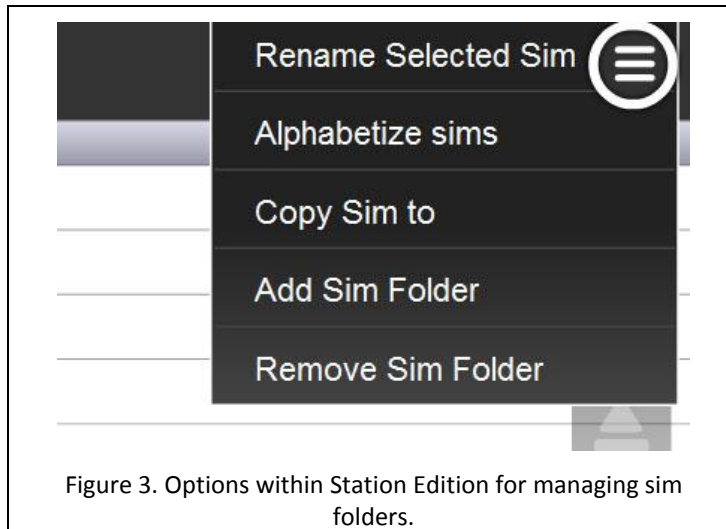
The user is asked to give the folder a name, and then select where that folder resides. SimsUshare then creates the folder in the specified location as well as the catalog index file and folder that will contain any sims for that folder. Behind the scenes, SimsUshare creates a folder called `config` in the Main Sim Folder chosen, and writes an XML file that describes where the sim folders are located. In this way, a user theoretically could maintain different sets of sim folders, simply by switching the Main Sim Folder, as described above. From Fig. 3, you can see two other options: *Remove Sim Folder*, for removing the folder (but not deleting any contents), and *Copy Sim to*, which is used to copy a sim from one folder to another.

Note: Since the user creates the sim folders in this manner, only that user's version of SimsUshare will be affected.

The configuration file for the computer is called `simfolders.xml`, and is located in the `config` folder where you have installed SimsUshare. The `simfolders.xml` in this location applies generally to all users on the computer. Users can override the general settings by creating their own `simfolders.xml` and placing it in their Main Sim Folder. This mechanism allows the training officer to create/edit/copy sims in a common folder which other users only can play the sims.

Recommendation: We recommend that when you create sim folders, instead of manually creating the `simfolders.xml` file, you use the "Add Sim Folder" option to create a `config/simfolders.xml` file so you can choose the location with the file selector and see how SimsUshare represents the path string exactly.

Understanding the simfolders.xml Configuration File

The elements of `simfolders.xml` should be straightforward, if you are familiar with XML.

A Simple Example

Here is a simple example we shall dissect (ignore the line numbers, in the first column). The example is for adding a single folder to contain simulations, which will be titled "Monthly Sims" in the list of sims presented to the user, in addition to the user's default `Documents` folder (which is labeled "My Simulations").

In this example, any user on the computer with this configuration file can play any simulations in the specified folder. The user cannot edit the simulation, however. If SimsUshare Station Edition is set up on other computers as well that can access this folder, each user can play the simulation without fear of overwriting it. The next example will show how to mark a folder to allow both playing and editing.

Important: The title of each simulation folder must be unique among all folders, otherwise unanticipated consequences will occur.

Important security warning regarding edit access: SimsUshare will only allow users to edit sims in their default (private) folder, and any folder not marked `playonly` (see line 2 in this example). However, if you as the administrator do not give withhold write permission (in Windows/Mac) to that actual folder, it is possible (but unlikely) that a savvy user creates a special configuration file to enable writing/editing for himself, by specifying a user configuration file (in his own Main Sim Folder), which takes precedence over the config file for the computer, in general. See the section at the end entitled "*Setting a Configuration File for Specific User(s)*".

```
1    <simfolders>
2         <simfolder title="Monthly Sims"
          path="C:\Users\ExampleUser\Documents\My Dropbox\mydbsims"
          playonly="true" />
3    </simfolders>
```

Note: for simplicity, this example only has one folder for storing simulations, in addition to the user's Main Sim Folder, but you can specify as many folders as you would like, by replicating the instruction on line 2 (notice, in this documentation, line 2 is split into three lines, but you must not have a line-break or carriage return that breaks up a literal string, i.e., text between two double-quotation marks).

Line 1. The opening <simfolders> element. Between this line and the closing element tag on line 4 (</simfolders>) you specify any number of folder descriptions, to represent the folders/groups of simulations you want to include.

Line 2. The simfolder element. The simfolder element is required to have at least two attributes, title and path. The title attribute gives the name that will be displayed for the user, to represent the set of sims in the folder. The path attribute spells out the full pathname (note: without a final backslash [for Windows, or forward slash (/) on Mac]) of the folder in which the sims should be placed.

In this example, we created a fictional user named `ExampleUser`, and pointed to this person's Dropbox folder, in a sub-folder called `mydbsims`.

You replicate this line for each folder of sims you want. Each title must be unique. Note also that this line must not be broken up by a linefeed, line break, or carriage return between the literal string (the sequence in the `path` attribute after the first quotation mark until the second).

Line 3. The closing `simfolders` element. This element must be the last element in the XML file.

When you have set the proper configuration file, as above, users will see the following list when they use SimsUshare:
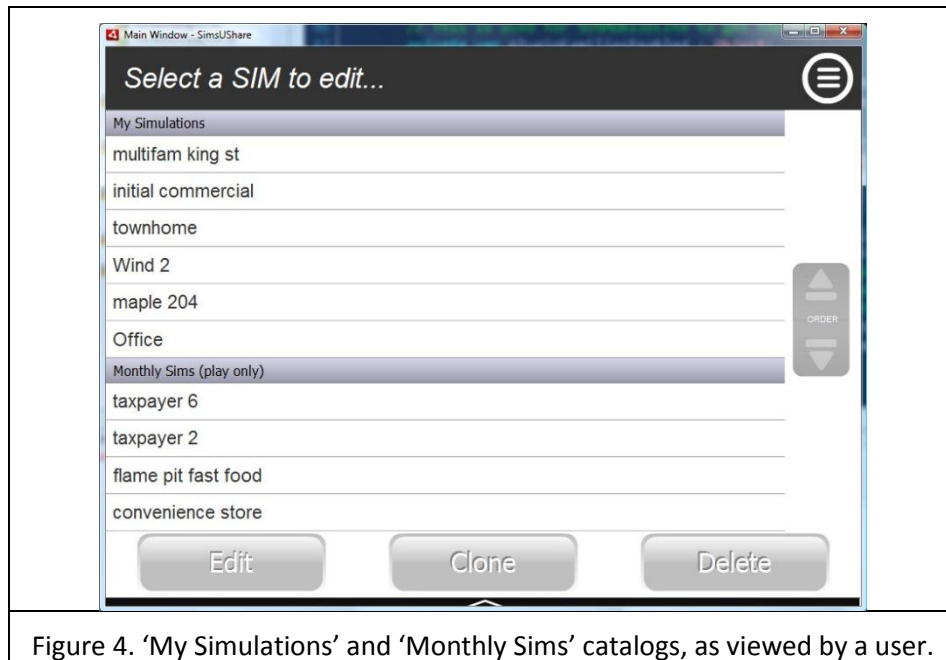

Figure 4. 'My Simulations' and 'Monthly Sims' catalogs, as viewed by a user.

Notice that the "Unique Title" sim catalog is marked "(Play Only)", indicating the user cannot edit the sim. If the user tries to edit the sim, an error message appears and prevents the user from editing the sim.

When you designate a folder as "play only", the user cannot change the order of the sims in that catalog.

An Example that Allows Play and Edit for Sims

The first example created a "play only" folder called "Unique Title". This setup may be appropriate for a station computer that can access a common set of simulations.

The training supervisor may want to create a special folder for users on a computer (or network) both to play and edit simulations. The danger, however, is that if users on different computers can access the same folder, they may overwrite or change the work of other users.

In this example, we'll make that folder also editable on this computer. One typical reason to have this configuration would be for the training supervisor, on his or her computer, to have edit and play access to the common folder, whereas other users (on their computer) have only 'play' abilities.

Here are the contents of our example `simfolders.xml`:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="iso-8859-1"?>
<simfolders>
        <simfolder title="Unique Title"
        path="C:\Users\ExampleUser\Documents\My Dropbox\mydbsims" />
</simfolders>
```

The key difference in this example is the absence of the attribute `playonly`. When that is set to true, as in the first example, SimsUshare won't allow a user to edit simulations in that folder, only play them.

While this example only specifies one folder, you can add as many `<simfolder …/>` lines as you would like, to add more folders.

When you set a folder with edit access, any user with such access can reorder/arrange the sims.

Changing the Default Place to Store Simulations

By default, SimsUshare sets the user's Main Sim Folder to be in the SimsUShare folder within the user's Documents folder on a typical Windows or Mac setup. If you add a special attribute to the `<simfolder>` element, within a `simfolders.xml` file, you can tell SimsUshare to store new simulations in that folder, as in:

```
<simfolder title="Unique Title" default="true" …
```

Only one simfolder should be marked as default, at most. If no default is specified, SimsUshare uses the Main Sim Folder.

Telling SimsUshare to Use a Different Folder than Documents by Default

In some network configurations, you may not want individual users to store materials in their local Documents folder, to make it easier for users to access their files on whichever computer they happen to be on. In version 1.5.2, we introduced a new attribute called "baseSimFolder", in the program's simfolders.xml file. If you add this attribute, with the value of the default path, to the config/simfolders.xml file where the program is installed (the application directory), SimsUshare will use that path as the default location for users to store their sims. This means that all users will default to that path, therefore it is up to you as the admin to ensure the path you specify is localized for each user. For example, as an admin, you can map a drive letter to the user's specific folder, but all users access their specific files with the same path, such as F:\. Please note that it is critical to specify a sub-folder, such as F:\Sims, rather than the drive letter alone.

Telling SimsUshare to let the New User Choose their Main Sim Folder on Launch

In some network configurations, you as the administrator may not want users to use their Documents folder.To tell SimsUshare to query the user when the user launches the program for the first time, you specify `userChoosesBaseSimFolder="true"` on the first line, as follows:

```
<simfolders userChoosesBaseSimFolder="true">
…
```

When the user first launches SimsUshare, a dialog box appears (Fig. 5) directing them to select their Main Sim Folder. If the location is important to you, you should tell users which folder to select.
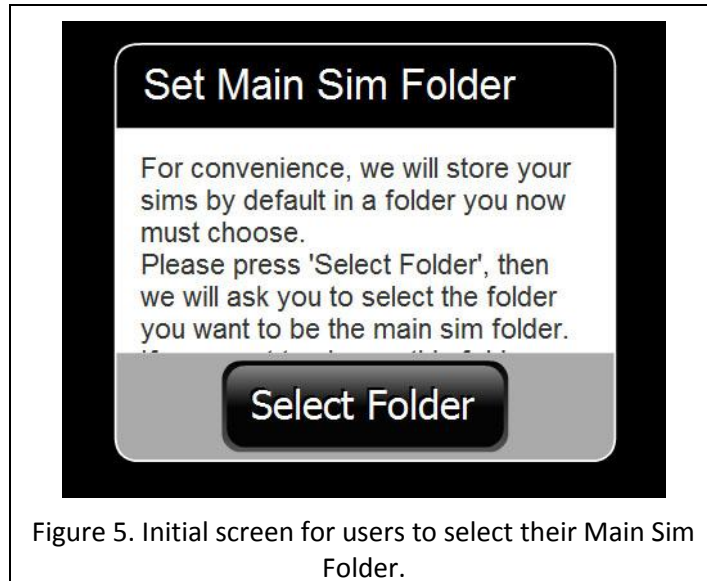

Figure 5. Initial screen for users to select their Main Sim Folder.

The Default "simfolders.xml" File

By default, the Station Edition comes with the following `simfolders.xml`, which has explanatory notes in the comment sections:

```
<!-- If you place an attribute "userChoosesBaseSimFolder" on
<simfolders> set to "true" (for example, <simfolders
userChoosesBaseSimFolder="true">),
      then the program asks the user to choose the base sim (main)
folder, the first time a user launches the program. Otherwise, we try
to use user's Documents.
      If you place an attribute "baseSimFolder" on <simfolders> set to
the path of where you want to make the main sim folder (as
      opposed to the default of the user's Documents folder, the
program will use the path you specify as the main sim folder. The
      user can override this, if desired, by using the main menu
"Choose Main Sim Folder" and specifying the main sim folder.

      All simfolders are assumed to be ok for edit and play; if you
have a "playonly" attribute on a simfolder, it means sims inside are
only playable.
```

```
            To specify this, use playonly="true"
            If an item is marked default="true", that folder is where the
    sims go by default, otherwise we use the base sim folder
            All folder titles must be unique to the user and computer.
            For the Station Edition, place this file in a "config" folder,
    and put the config folder as a sibling to the SimsUshare app.
            For the regular verison, place this file in a "config" folder,
    and put the config folder in the base sim folder (sibling of "sims
    folder).
      -->
    <simfolders>
            <!-- read-only folder example: <simfolder title="Unique Title"
    path="C:\Users\ExampleUser\Documents\My Dropbox\mydbsims"
    playonly="true" />  -->
            <!-- writeable folder example: <simfolder title="Desktop Sims"
    path="C:\Users\Jonathan\Desktop\mydesktopsims" /> -->
    </simfolders>
```

The "`<!--`" character is an opening sequence of characters to ignore the subsequent content, up until it reaches the "`-->`" (closing) comment sequence. In XML, spacing is ignored, except when it appears between consecutive quotation marks. We have put the comments in light grey, to show a distinction between characters respected in the XML file, and those that are comments.

Therefore, this file specifies no folders as shared, since each line is 'commented out.' We left the comments in so you can use them as a guide when creating your own specification.

You can use these examples in the configuration file for the computer as a whole (any user who logs into this computer), or for a specific user (in which case, the file must be in the SimsUshare folder within the user's Main Sim Folder, described in the next section). Again, if SimsUshare sees a configuration file in the user's Main Sim Folder, it respects those specifications over any specification in the general computer configuration file.

Setting a Configuration File for Specific User(s)

It is possible to set the configuration for an individual user/login, as well. To do so, you place the configuration file in the user's Main Sim Folder (usually, their Documents folder) inside a folder named `config` (as illustrated in Fig. 6).
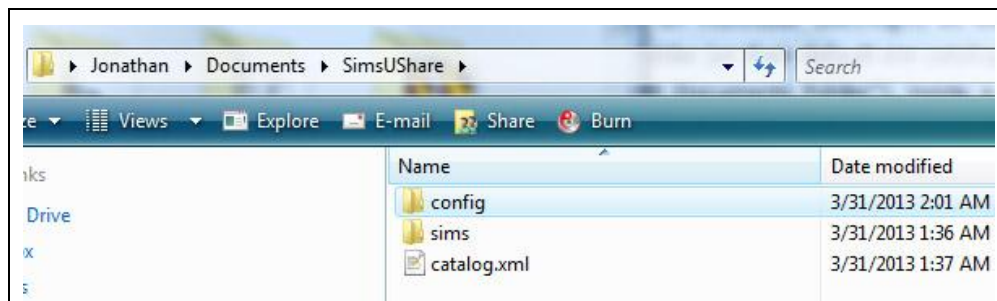
Figure 6. The configuration folder (config) for an individual user, which would have a file called "simfolders.xml" within it.

Any settings applied in the user's profile will override any settings on the computer overall.

One reason to do this would be to allow a training officer to write/edit simulations on a computer, but not allow other users to edit, only to play simulations.

Station Edition Guide for the Training Officer/Supervisor

When your personnel use the regular SimsUshare program, they store their simulations by default in their own "Main Sim Folder", which is typically their Documents folder (though this location can be changed by the user or the IT administrator).

Rather than simply leaving users to their own decisions on creating simulations, without guidance, you may want to provide a common set of simulations for users to apply and work off of, in their training. For example, you might have different topics for training each month, and want to provide a common set of simulations to support your monthly curriculum. You can tell your IT administrator to setup one or more shared folders, either on your network or through Dropbox, so that you can create simulations that other computers in the field can access.

We recommend that you set up such a folder as "play only", which means that users in the field can play simulations in that folder, but not edit and save them directly. Users can rearrange (change order, rename, delete, etc.) sims in catalogs which they can write to; catalogs that are "play only" prohibit users from such reorganization.

In Fig. 7, you see two catalogs, a user's main sim folder/catalog, and a second, "play only", folder.
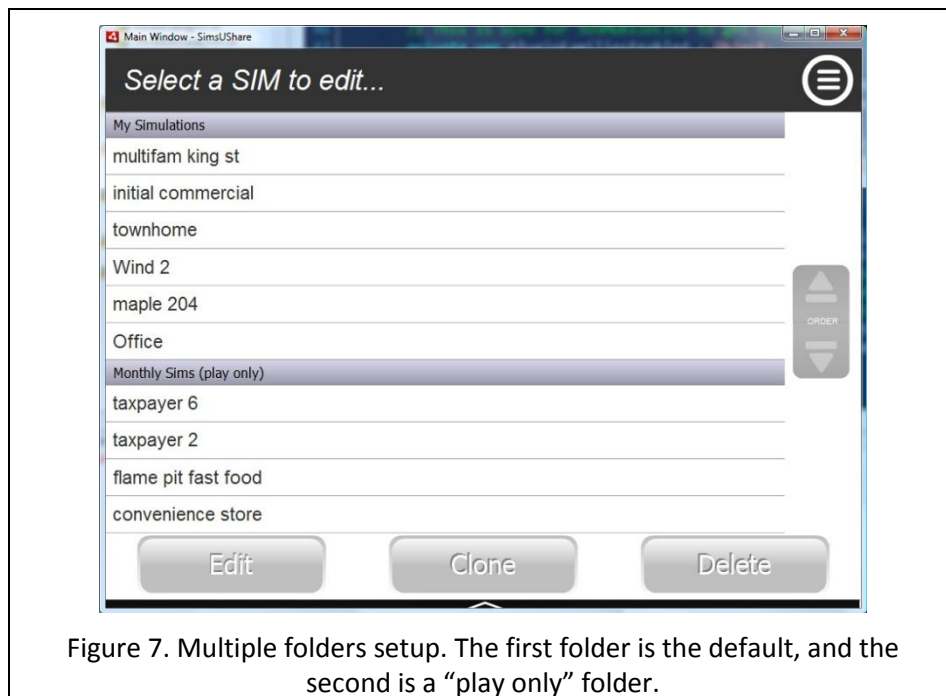

Figure 7. Multiple folders setup. The first folder is the default, and the second is a "play only" folder.

Users can copy a "play only" simulation into their own spaces (see Fig. 8), and then edit or change it, but this would not overwrite the simulation for others on your network.

Important Security Warning: The "play only" designation is not truly a secure way to keep simulations protected, if the user wants to change them, and has edit access to the folder. The only true way to keep

simulations from being editable is for your IT admin to make the Windows/Mac shared folder permission set to "read only" for people who do not need to change those simulations.

You can also tell your IT administrator to set up one or more folders with simulations that users can change directly. In other words, you can decide if you want your users to be able to change simulations that reside in shared folders. In general, you want to limit the folders you set up with edit access for users, because any user can then modify or overwrite the work of others. This is especially problematic if you give access to multiple computers for editing simulations in the same folder. It is possible that one person in one station intentionally or accidentally changes the work of someone else in another station.
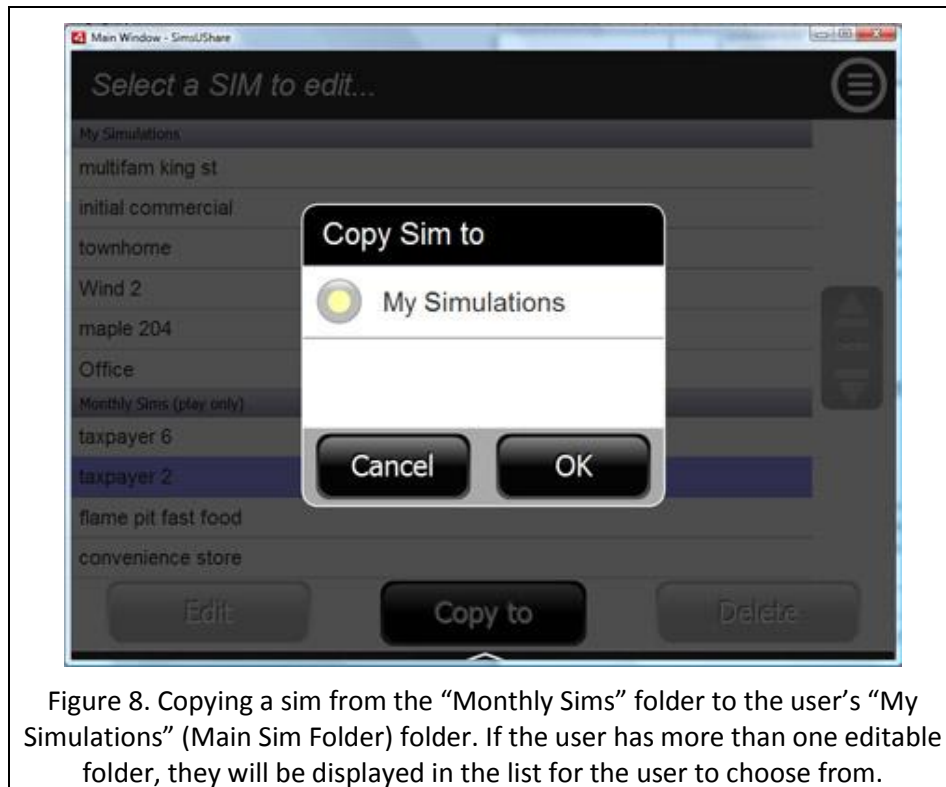

Figure 8. Copying a sim from the "Monthly Sims" folder to the user's "My Simulations" (Main Sim Folder) folder. If the user has more than one editable folder, they will be displayed in the list for the user to choose from.

Note: You will see in the background of Fig. 8 that the middle button label is "Copy To". If you had selected a sim in a writeable/editable folder, the button would be labeled "Clone". The difference between "Clone" and "Copy To" is that "Clone" makes a copy of the sim within the current folder, whereas "Copy To" copies the sim into some different folder, which you select. When you have more than one editable/writeable folder, you can copy a sim from one folder to another by pressing the menu button (upper right corner), and selecting "Copy Sim To".

One reason to allow editable/writeable folders would be if you wanted to have users at Station 1, for example, send you back simulations they made, without them having to manually copy the simulation files. Suppose you create a writeable folder for each station, and tell the users to put their simulations into that folder for you to examine. When you decide to distribute any simulation someone has submitted, you can copy the simulation into a "play only" folder(s), for distribution across your organization.

Therefore, your job is to decide how much access you want your personnel to have, then to direct your IT administrator to create the proper configuration file(s). A configuration file tells SimsUshare which folders can be used for what purpose. We suggest that you start simple, perhaps with a single "play only" folder for the department.

A typical setup will have a "play only" folder on your network (or Dropbox) for simulations you want to deliver, but on your computer, that folder is marked to allow editing/saving simulations. If you share your computer with others, you can have your IT administrator set up a special configuration allowing you, when you are logged into that computer, to write to any "play-only" folder, but other users cannot do so.

If you want personnel in the field to be able to easily contribute simulations, you may want to add folders in which users can save/edit simulations. As discussed in the User section, below, each user can create any number of sim folders by themselves, but the folders are not by default linked into everyone's copy of SimsUshare—each user must individually point to any shared folder (unlike the procedure we describe in the IT Administrator section regarding making common folders appear for everyone.

Station Edition Guide for the SimsUshare User

You, a user of the Station Edition, will see private simulations you have made, as well as simulations made in other folders that the training officer/supervisor allows you access to. Your simulations reside in what we call your Main Sim Folder, which is typically your Documents folder (though you or your IT Administrator can change it).

If you want to change the location of your Main Sim Folder, you can select the "Change Main Sim Folder" item from the menu on the main screen, as shown in Fig. 9. We recommend leaving the default location chosen for your Main Sim Folder, but you can decide if you want to change it.

<table>
<tr><td>(a)</td><td>(b)</td><td>(c)</td></tr>
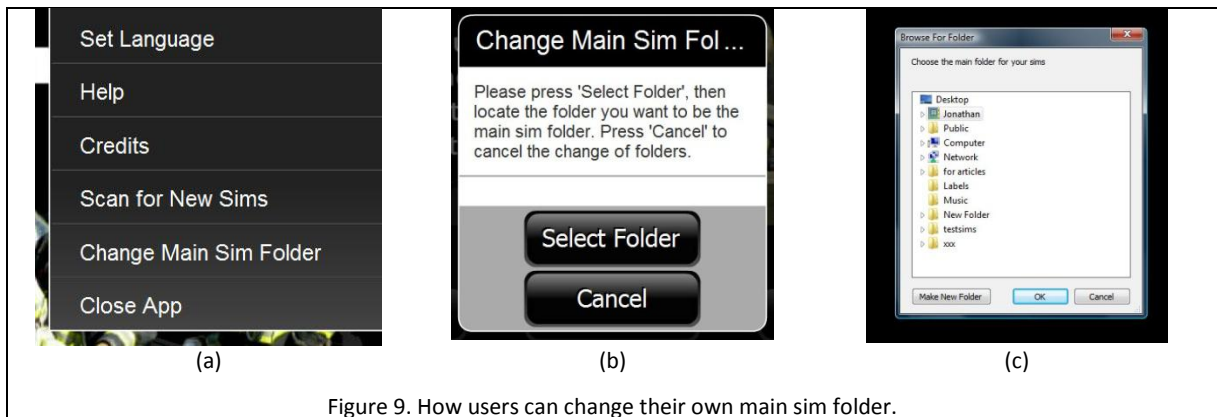</table>

Figure 9. How users can change their own main sim folder.

Your supervisor can mark a folder either allowing you to edit simulations in that folder, or simply playing simulations in that folder. If a folder is marked for "Play Only", when you select a simulation in that folder, SimsUshare will allow you to copy the sim into your private simulation folder, or into any other folder your supervisor has given you edit access, if any. Fig. 10 show an example of two folders, your Main Sim Folder (labeled "My Simulations"), and a play-only folder marked "Monthly Sims".
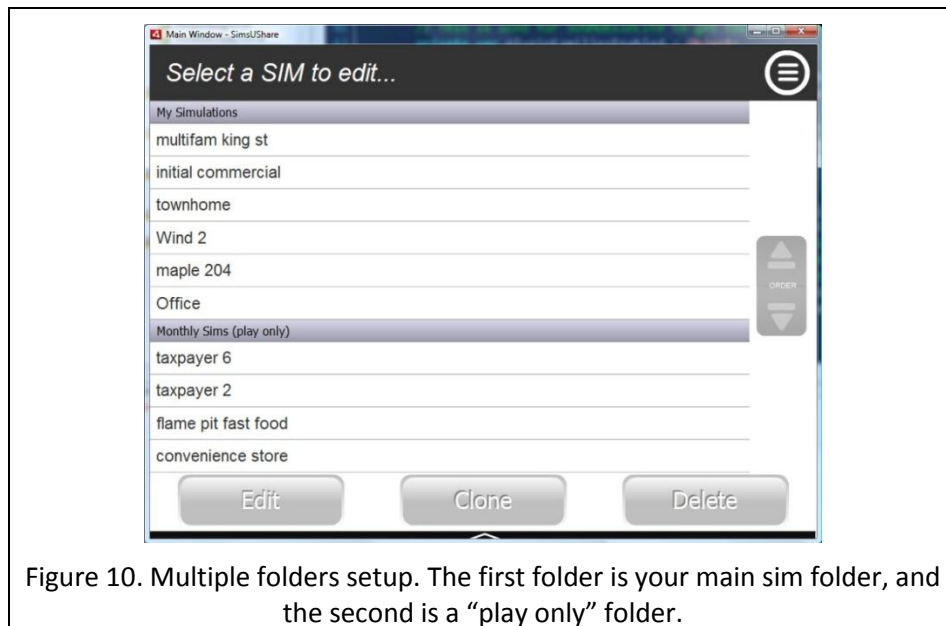

Figure 10. Multiple folders setup. The first folder is your main sim folder, and the second is a "play only" folder.

Your default main sim folder is located in your Documents folder, in a folder marked "SimsUShare". The IT administrator can change this location, so if you do not see a SimsUShare folder in your Documents folder, your administrator may have placed your folder somewhere else.

Your training supervisor will tell you what folders he or she is giving you access to, and whether or not you can edit the simulations in those folders. If you have access to more than one folder, you will see the simulations grouped by folder name, for example, in Fig. 10.

Looking at Fig. 11, you can see the menu option "Add Sim Folder", in the "Select SIM to Edit…" screen. You may also create your own sim folders, but they will only be visible to you, not any other users. If you make your folder on a shared network drive, or otherwise shared area, other users can link to your folder, but that link is not created automatically for anyone but you.
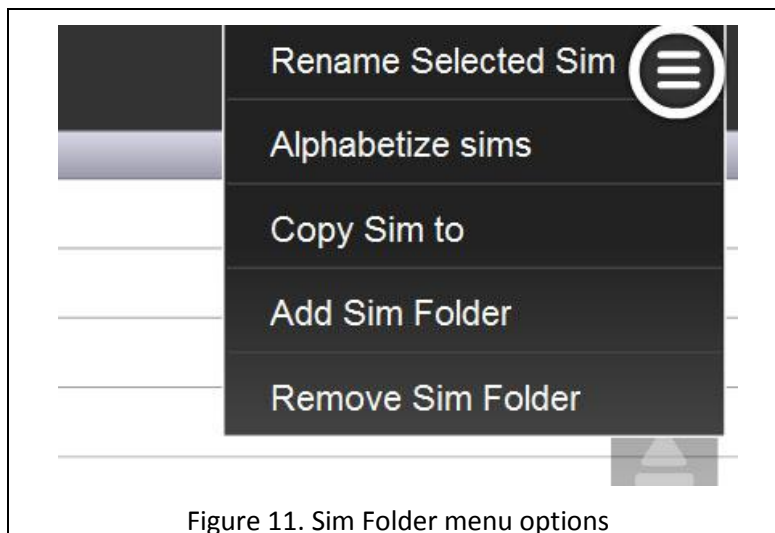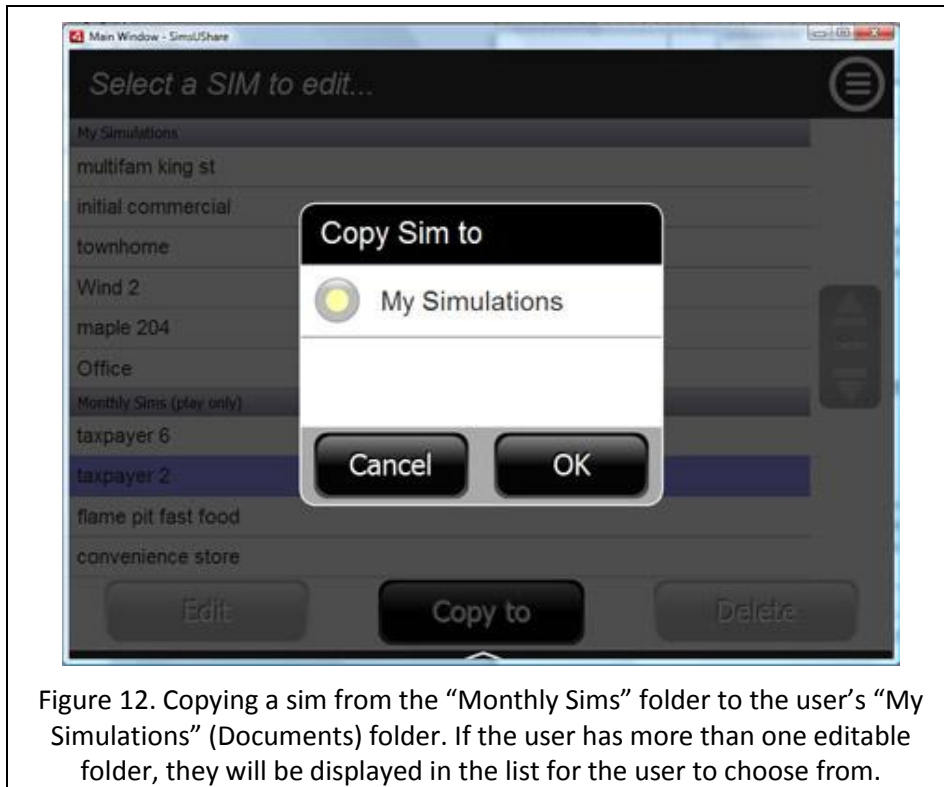

Figure 11. Sim Folder menu options

When you edit a simulation, SimsUshare will record changes to that simulation in folder in which the simulation resides. If you want to copy a simulation into another folder, and you have edit access to another folder, you can choose "Copy Sim To" from the menu in the "Select SIM to Edit…" screen. SimsUshare will direct you to choose the target folder (see Figure 12).

Figure 12. Copying a sim from the "Monthly Sims" folder to the user's "My Simulations" (Documents) folder. If the user has more than one editable folder, they will be displayed in the list for the user to choose from.

Once you have selected the target folder, SimsUshare will ask you to name the copy in the folder (Fig. 13). If that name is already in use, SimsUshare will ask you to choose another name.

Figure 13. Choosing a name for the copied sim.
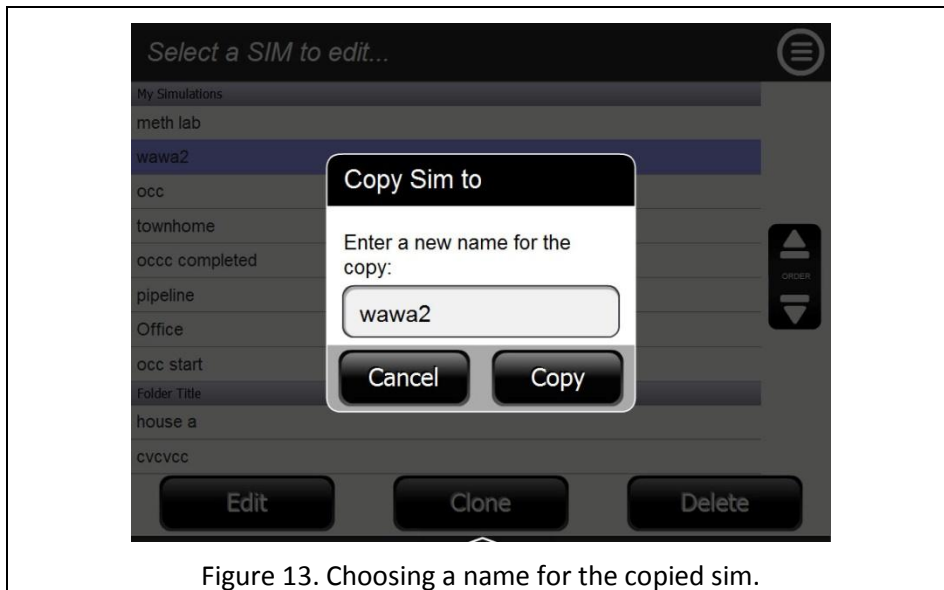
Your IT administrator and training supervisor will have set up SimsUshare to direct simulations into the folders appropriate for your department. If you would like to store your own simulations in folders you have access to, other than what they have made for you, please talk with your training supervisor to get the documentation for creating personal folder configuration files.