SIMPLE Administrator's Guide

Part 1- Building a Simulation

SIMPLE Tools Documentation

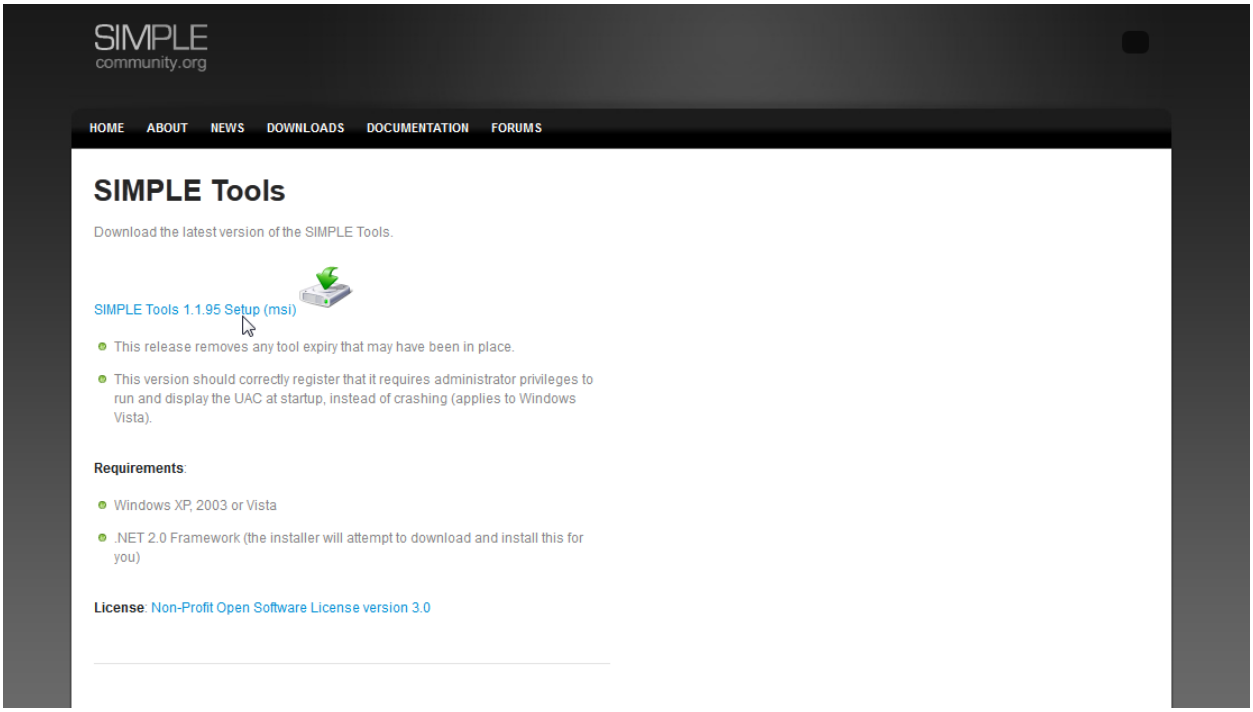
September 2012

Introduction

This document explains in detail how to create a simulation in SIMPLE Tools, by walking you through an example project step-by-step.

Getting SIMPLE Tools

The SIMPLE Tools program can be downloaded from **simplecommunity.org**, under **Downloads → SIMPLE Tools**.

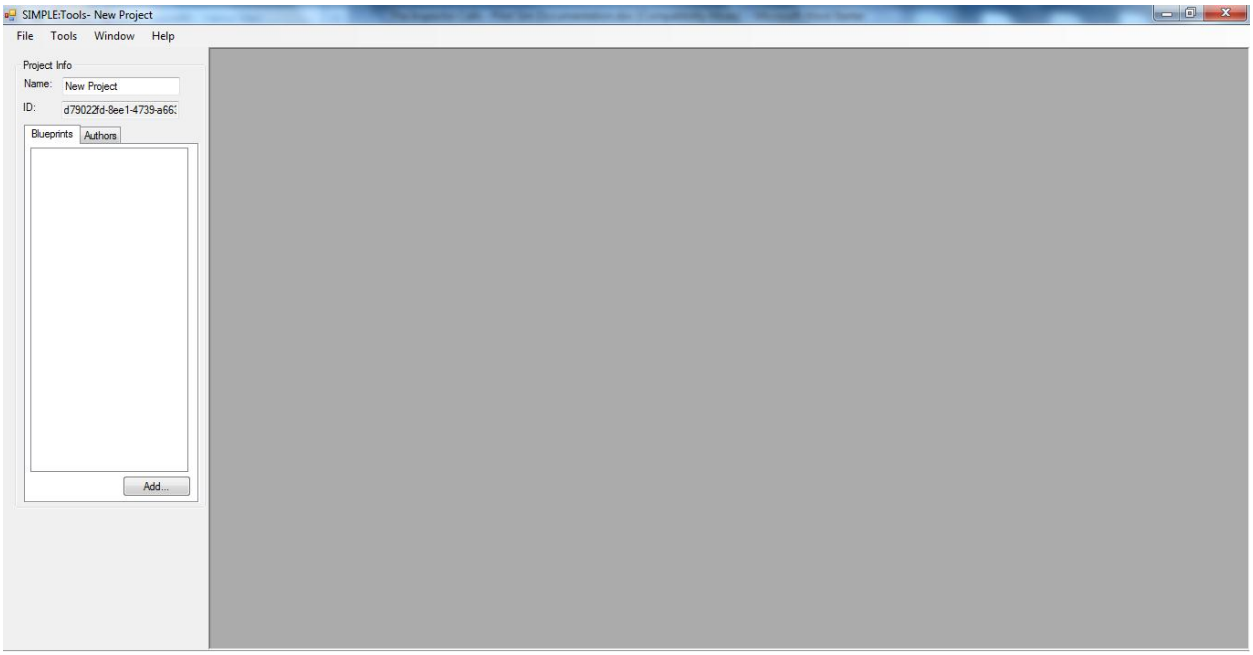


The downloaded file should be unzipped to access the installer, **SIMPLEtoolsSetup.msi**. Double-clicking on the installer installs SIMPLE Tools on the computer. A shortcut is automatically created on the Desktop, and in the Start menu.

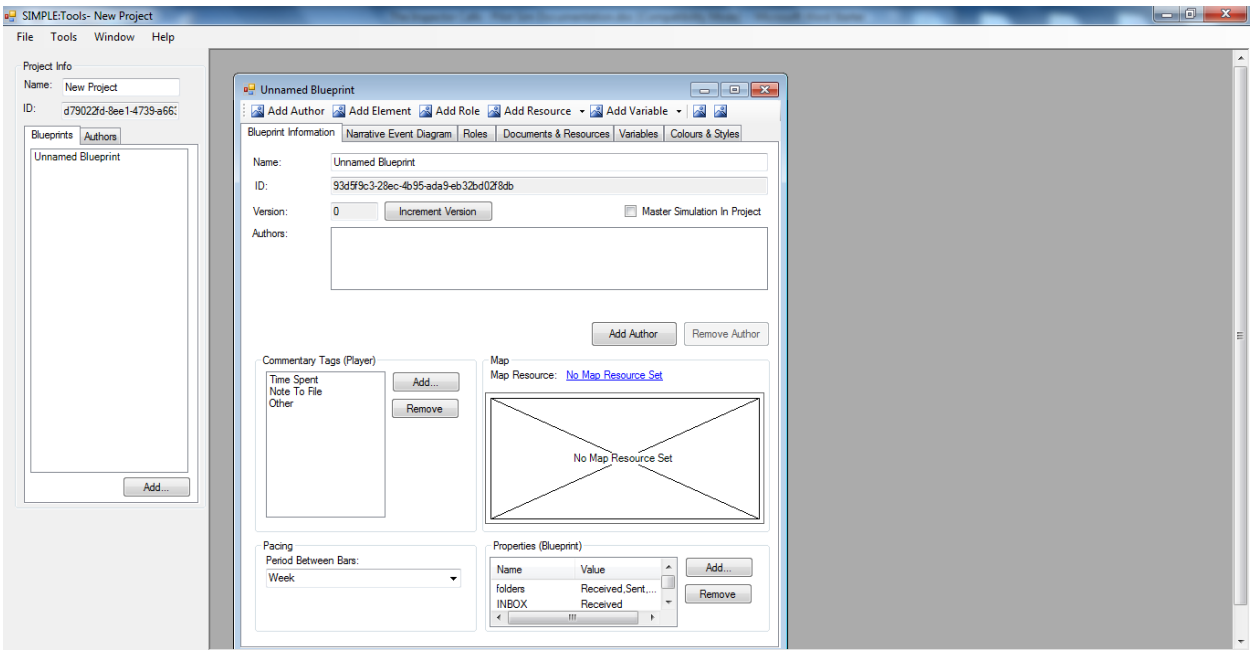
Creating a new Project

SIMPLE Tools can be opened by double-clicking on the shortcut icon. (Note that there is an intermittent bug on some platforms where the user may need to hover over the toolbar icon, right-click and choose **maximise** to see the window).

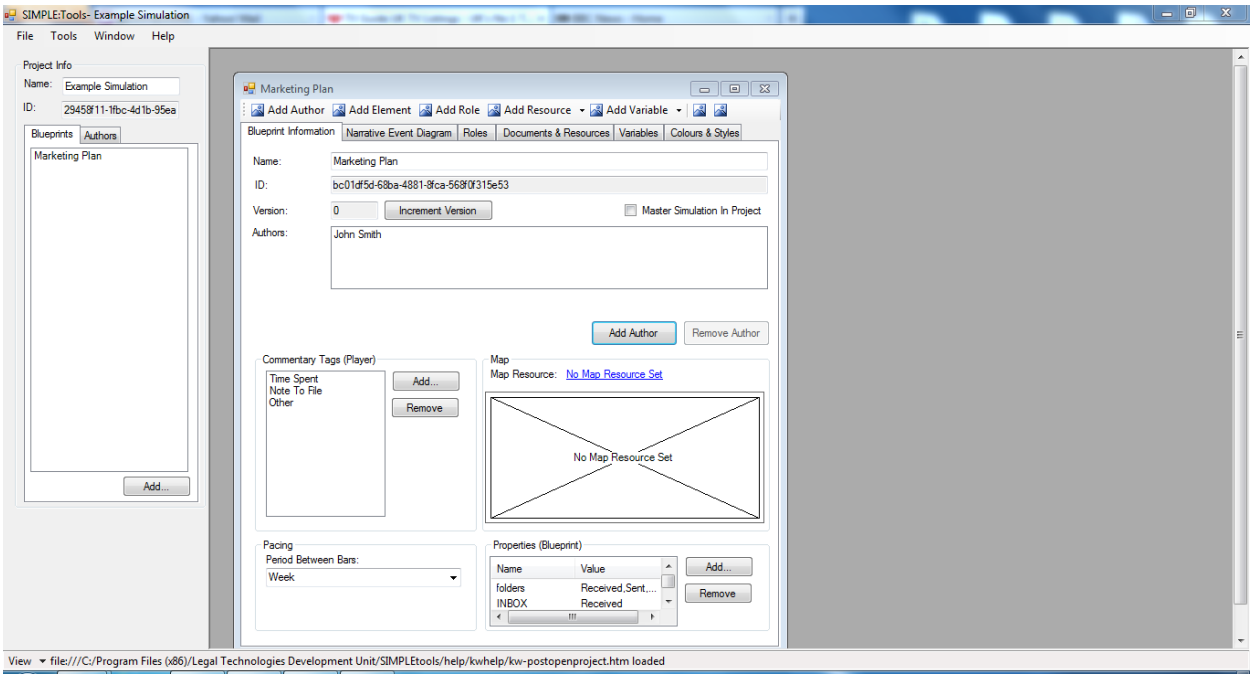
Select **File → New → Project** to create the blank project:



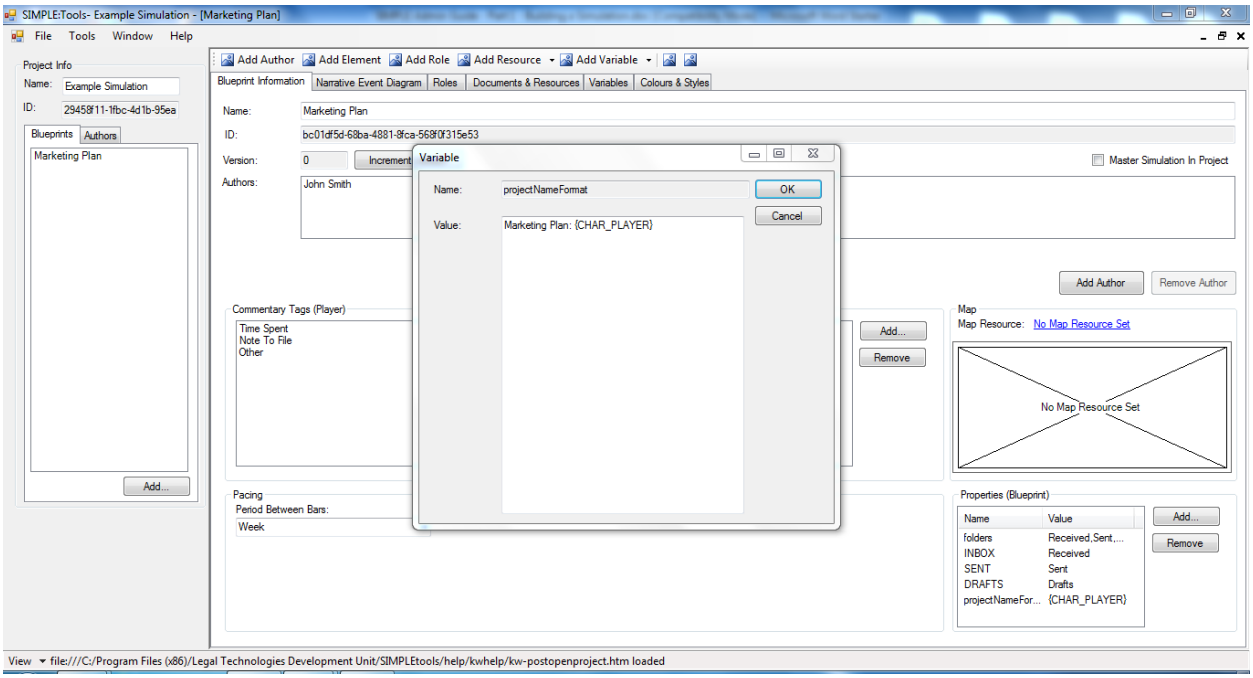
A new **Blueprint** is then created by clicking the **Add** button beneath the blank Blueprints list:



Type the name of the blueprint into the **Name field** in the new window. It is automatically updated in the Blueprint list. The Author of the blueprint is added by clicking the **Add Author** button. Additionally, the name of the project should be entered into the **Name field** under Project Info:



Next, in the **Properties** box (bottom-right of the screen), double-clicking the **projectNameFormat** text opens a dialog. This variable determines how the simulation name is displayed in SIMPLE. It defaults to the variable {CHAR_PLAYER}, which would be set to the character's name when creating the simulation instance. In order to distinguish simulations created from this blueprint from other simulations, you can prepend this with the name of the project or blueprint. This means that the dropdown sim selector menu in SIMPLE will be more meaningful after the simulations are created.

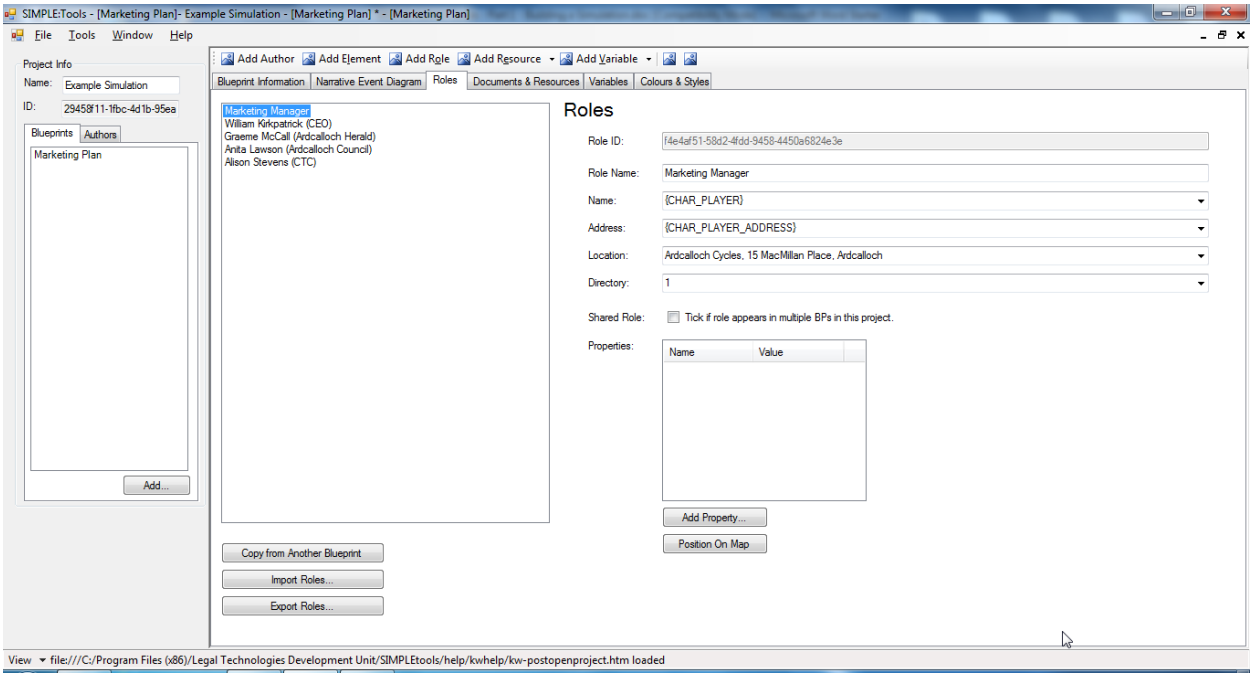


At this point, you should save the project by selecting **File → Save Project**. In the window, click **Make New Folder** to create a new folder to save the simulation into, and then highlighted this before clicking **OK**. Throughout the rest of the creation process, you should regularly save the project by selecting **File → Save Project.**

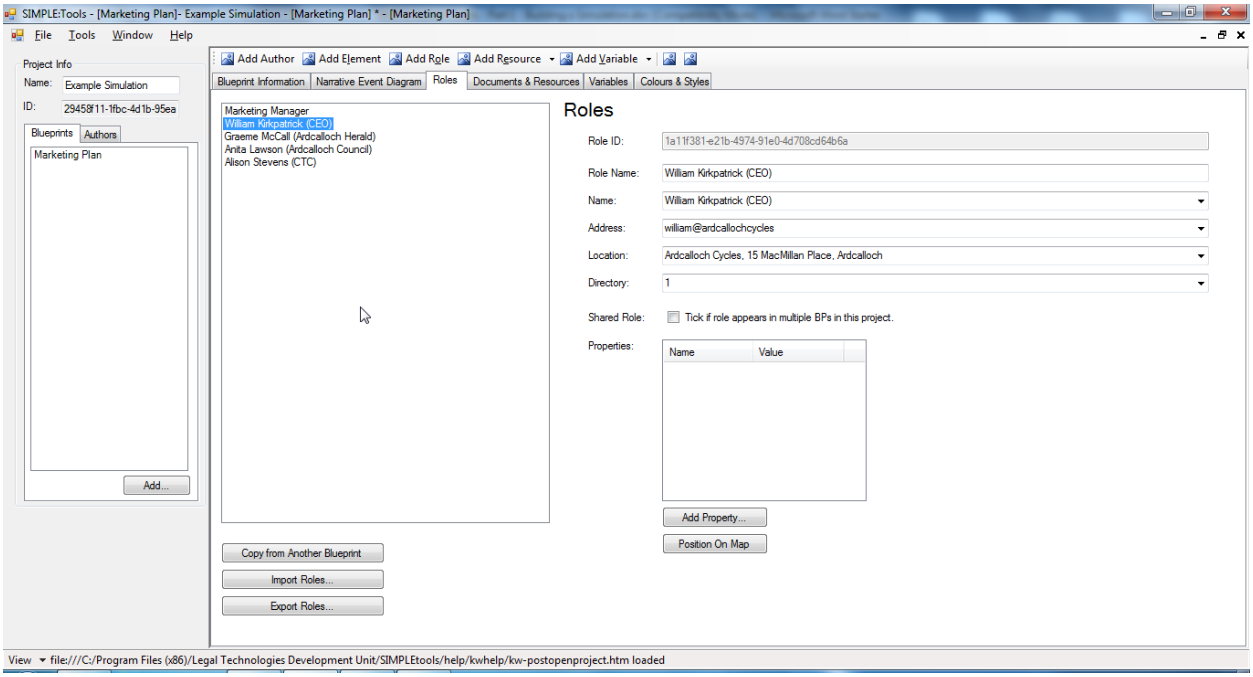
Creating Roles

Clicking the **Add Role** button creates a new Role and switches the view to the Roles tab. You should then populate the fields. You can use a variety of variables and text. In this example, the **Role Name** is entered as 'Marketing Manager', the **Name** and **Address** fields are populated with variable names, {CHAR_PLAYER} and {CHAR_PLAYER_ADDRESS}, and a physical address is entered for **Location**.

This role represents the player in the simulation, and these fields have been variabilised because there will be multiple instances of this simulation, with each one having a different name and e-address.



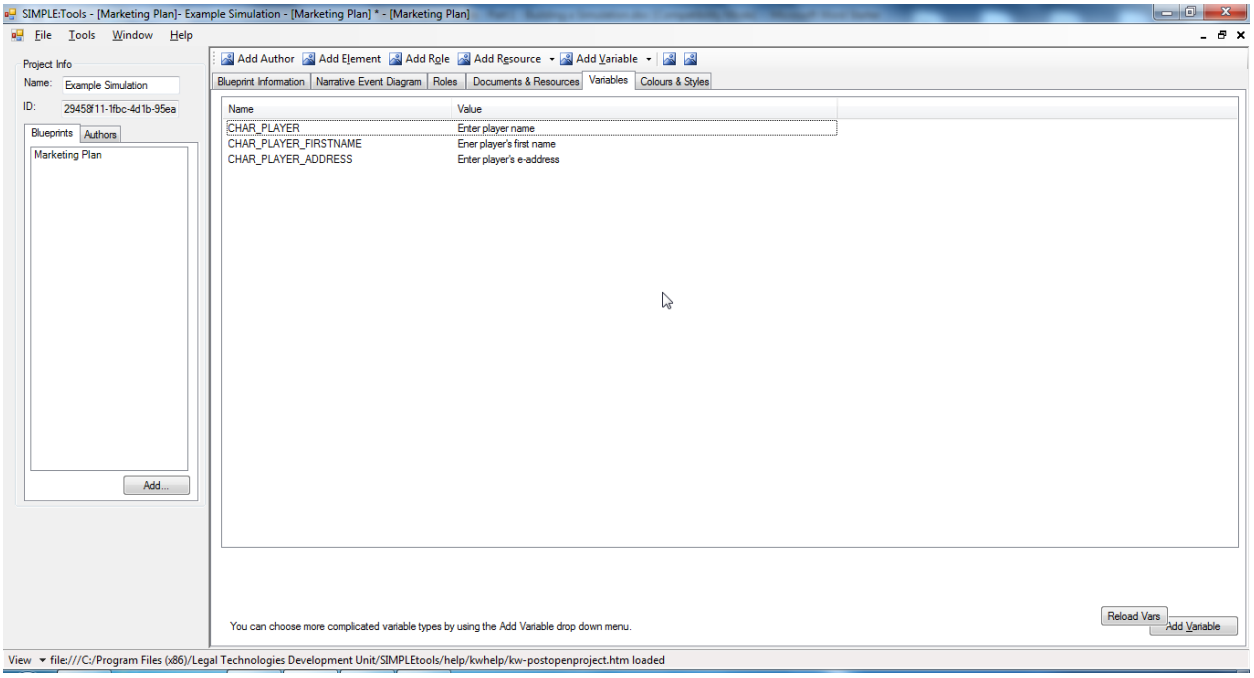
Some other roles are then created, this time with their details hard-coded into the project file, but these could also be variabilised.



The variables then need to be created by clicking the **Add Variable** button, and entering the variable names and values in the popup window. Variable values can be functions which will automatically select randomised or dynamic values (see Appendix 1), but in this case we will use the simplest version, which

is just to enter some placeholder text. When creating a simulation instance from the project blueprint, all variables are listed on the screen and can then be edited before the simulation is actually created. Therefore, some hints have been provided to help the user populate the variable values later on.

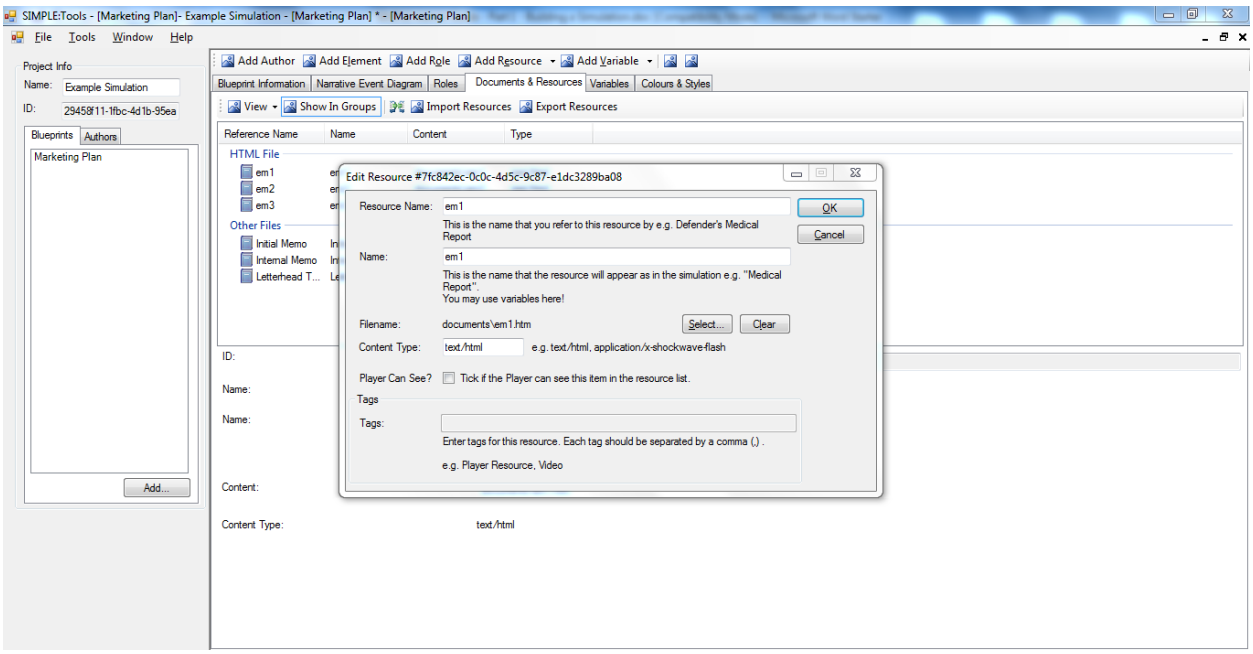
Note that the variable name with curly brackets is used when calling the variable in an HTML document or referencing the variable in the Roles fields, but on the variables list the curly brackets are not used, e.g. {CHAR_PLAYER} vs. CHAR_PLAYER. Once variables have been created, they are available via a dropdown menu in the Roles fields, or can be typed manually.



Creating Documents and Resources

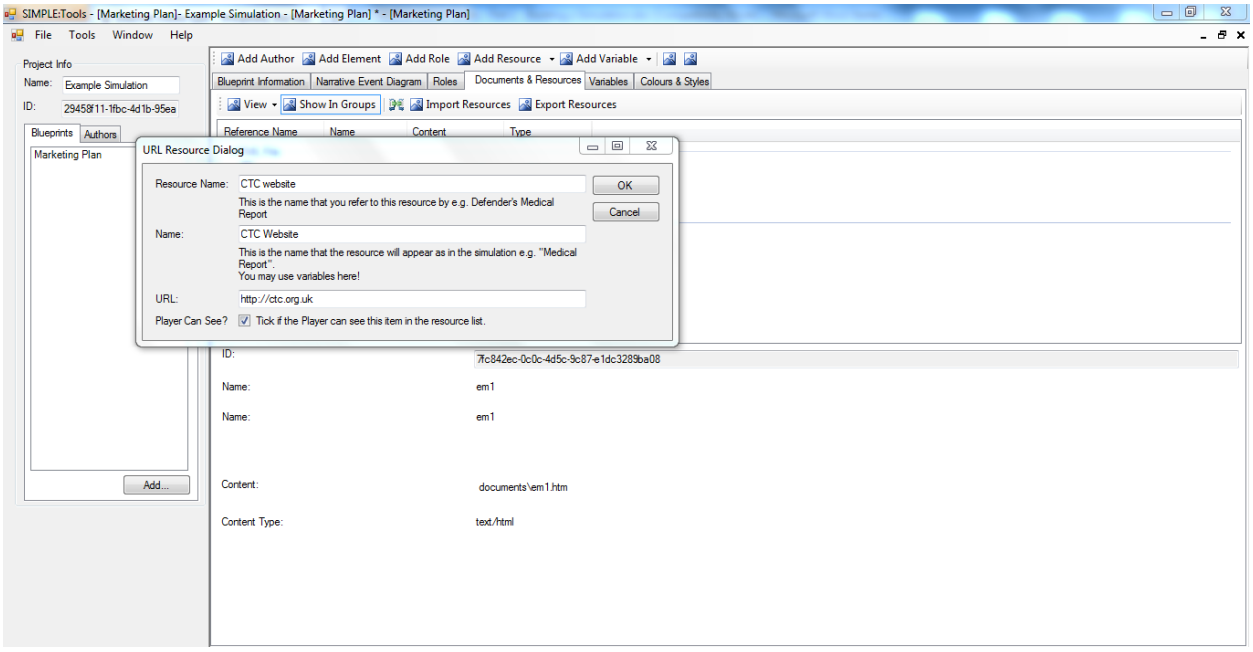
Any documents which will use variables must be in a text-based format. Essentially, this means they must be plain text (.txt) or HTML files. Formats such as Word, Excel and PDF are stored in a binary format, and therefore variable substitution will not work. Variables are not compulsory, and all file formats are supported in SIMPLE (though you should ensure that your users have the appropriate software to read and edit documents in the format you provide).

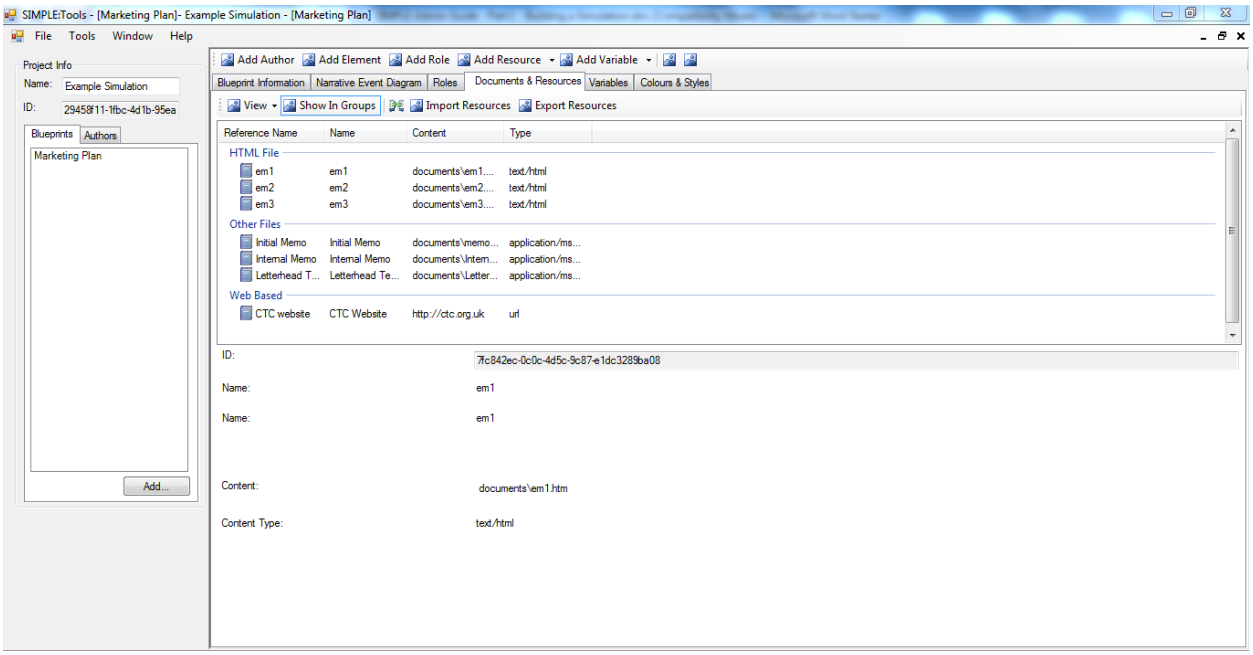
Once you have created your resources, they can be added to the project by clicking the **Add Resource** dropdown and choosing **File Resource**.



Each email resource is given a name to be referred to by the sim creator, and a name by which it will appear in the simulation. These can be the same. The resource file is uploaded by clicking the **Select** button and browsing to the resource on your desktop. If the content type is not detected, it should be typed manually. Content Types are MIME types, such as 'text/html', 'application/msword', etc. If you are not familiar with these, information can be found online, such as here: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_media_type. Note that this description is used for technical purposes by the software (namely, so that the user's computer knows how to open the resource) and so must be typed exactly. The checkbox for **Player Can See** is left blank for documents that are sent by the mentor as part of the simulation. Ticking this box results in the resource appearing in the users list of resources from the outset of the simulation, rather than arriving in their inbox, so this should be ticked for any template files being made available to users in their Resource List. After clicking **OK**, the resource is added to the list.

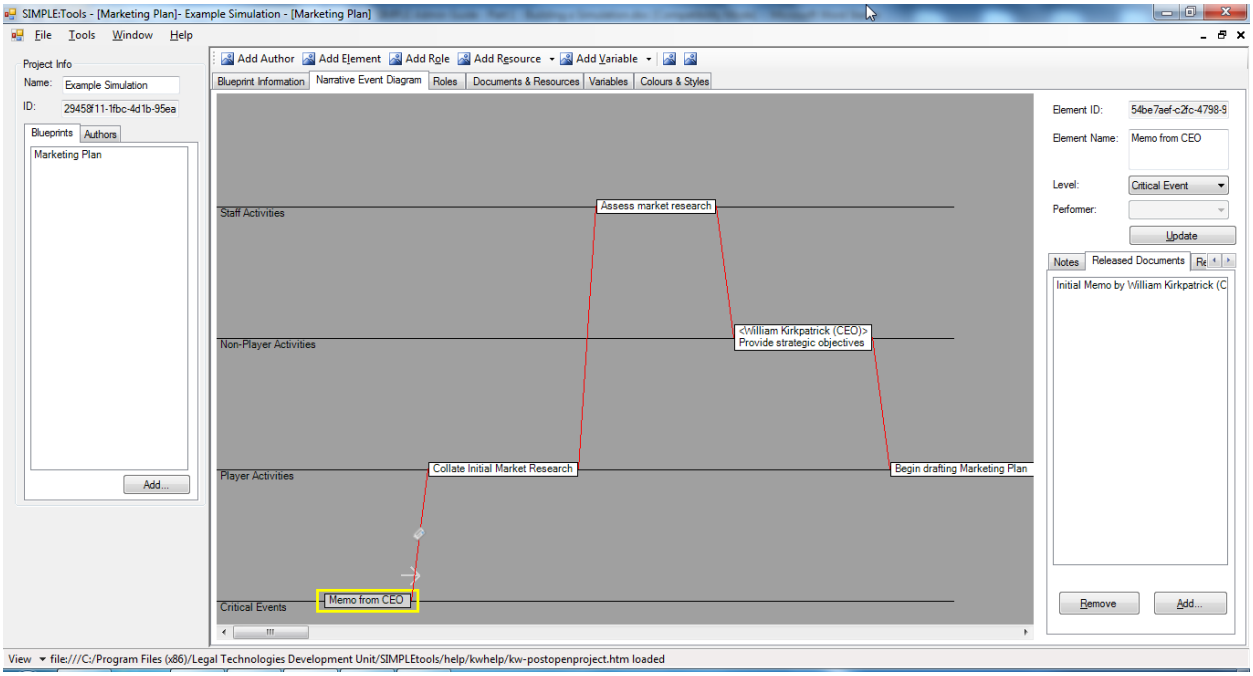
URL resources are created by clicking **Add Resource → URL Resource**. Again, two names are provided for each resource, and a hyperlink given. In the example below, the **Player Can See** box was ticked, in order that the resource would appear in the player's resource list.


SIMPLE:Tools - [Marketing Plan]- Example Simulation - [Marketing Plan] * - [Marketing Plan]
File Tools Window Help
Project Info
Name: Example Simulation
ID: 29458f11-1fbc-4d1b-95ea
Blueprints Authors
Marketing Plan
Add...
Add Author Add Element Add Role Add Resource Add Variable
Blueprint Information Narrative Event Diagram Roles Documents & Resources Variables Colours & Styles
View Show In Groups Import Resources Export Resources
Reference Name Name Content Type
URL Resource Dialog
Resource Name: CTC website
This is the name that you refer to this resource by e.g. Defender's Medical Report
OK
Cancel
Name: CTC Website
This is the name that the resource will appear as in the simulation e.g. "Medical Report".
You may use variables here!
URL: http://ctc.org.uk
Player Can See? Tick if the Player can see this item in the resource list.
ID: 7fc842ec-0c0c-4d5c-9c87-e1dc3289ba08
Name: em1
Name: em1
Content: documents\em1.htm
Content Type: text/html


SIMPLE:Tools - [Marketing Plan]- Example Simulation - [Marketing Plan]
File Tools Window Help
Project Info
Name: Example Simulation
ID: 29458f11-1fbc-4d1b-95ea
Blueprints Authors
Marketing Plan
Add...
Add Author Add Element Add Role Add Resource Add Variable
Blueprint Information Narrative Event Diagram Roles Documents & Resources Variables Colours & Styles
View Show In Groups Import Resources Export Resources
Reference Name Name Content Type
HTML File
em1 em1 documents\em1.... text/html
em2 em2 documents\em2.... text/html
em3 em3 documents\em3.... text/html
Other Files
Initial Memo Initial Memo documents\memo... application/ms...
Internal Memo Internal Memo documents\Intern... application/ms...
Letterhead T... Letterhead Te... documents\Letter... application/ms...
Web Based
CTC website CTC Website http://ctc.org.uk url
ID: 7fc842ec-0c0c-4d5c-9c87-e1dc3289ba08
Name: em1
Name: em1
Content: documents\em1.htm
Content Type: text/html

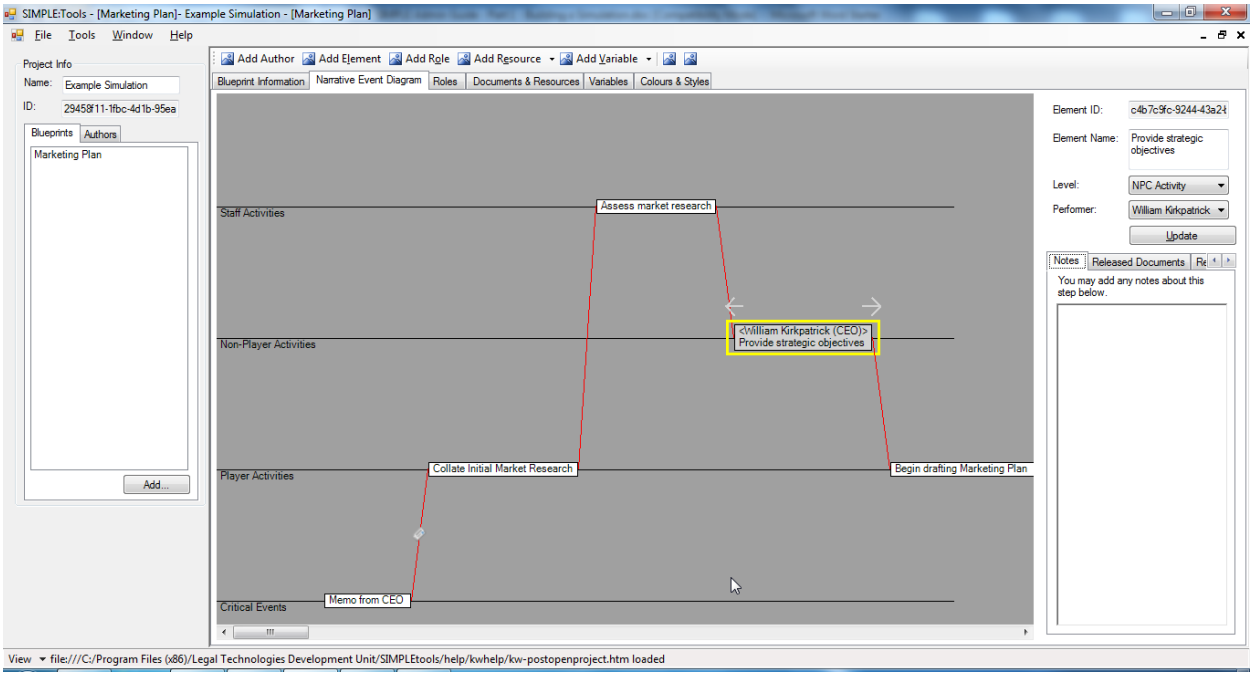
Creating the Narrative Event Diagram

Events on the Narrative Event Diagram are created by clicking the **Add Element** button. This creates a node on the diagram with the text 'New Element'. The title of the node is then replaced in the right-hand pane. The initial event is often a Critical Event which releases a resource. This is set by selecting the **Level** from the dropdown. Select the **Released Documents** tab on the right hand side (use the arrows to scroll the tabs). The Add button is then clicked in order to bring up the **Select Resources** dialog, which allows the resources that should be sent to be ticked. Clicking **OK** adds the resource to the **Released Documents** list. At this point, the text **Sender not Set** is displayed alongside the resource. Double-clicking the resource brings up the **Select Sender** dialog, allowing the sending character to be selected. Clicking **OK** then sets the sender in the **Released Documents** list.



Clicking the **Add Element** button again creates the next node, (named 'Collate Initial Market Research' in the example above). Because this is a Player Activity, the **Level** dropdown is set to **Player Activity**, moving the node to the timeline above. This event does not automatically send a document, but may result in resources being sent (e.g., as a reminder, if the player does not perform the task unprompted). To associate documents with the task, select the **Related Documents** tab, and choose the relevant document from the **Select Resources** dialog.

When adding an **NPC Activity** (Non-Player Character), the Performer must be specified. In other words, we must say who the staff member will be playing when performing this event. In this case, the **Performer** is William Kirkpatrick (CEO).



Linking Simulations

If you have an adversarial simulation, involving learners playing against each other, you can create more than one Blueprint and link them together. See Appendix 2 for more information.

Exporting the Project

Once you are happy with the project, and after ensuring all changes are saved, the project should be exported by selecting **File → Pack/Deploy**. A zip file is automatically created in the specified folder. This file is the successfully exported SIMPLE project, which can then be imported into the SIMPLE Platform.

See **SIMPLE Admin Guide Part 2 – Running a Simulation** for instructions on how to install the project file to the SIMPLE Platform and instantiate the simulations.

Appendix 1 – Supported Variable Formats

When choosing variable names, it is recommended to use all upper case characters with underscores in place of spaces, and to avoid using special characters such as apostrophes or double-quotes.

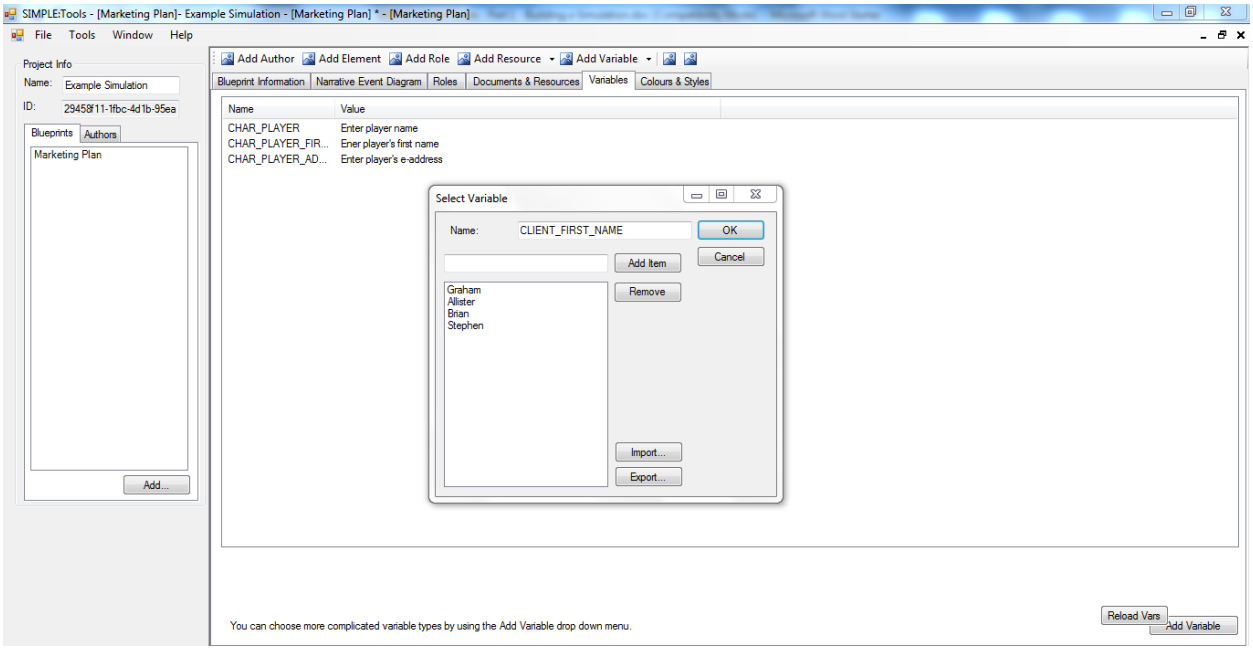
The following variable formats are supported:

Basic text replacement

Click **Add Variable** from the top menu. In the dialog that appears, type the variable name. In the Value field, type the placeholder text that you want to appear when instantiating a simulation on the SIMPLE Platform. This can be edited by the user creating the simulations by typing their own value in here.

Select variable

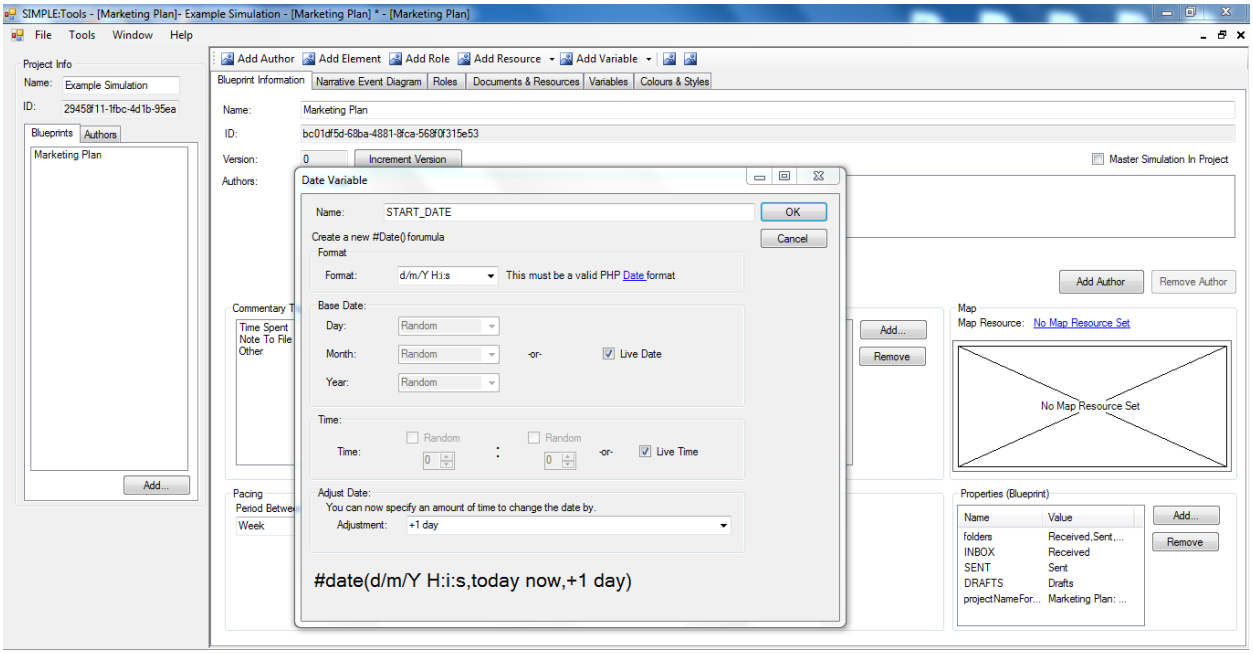
Click the dropdown arrow next to **Add Variable**, and select **Add Select Variable**. In the dialog that appears, give the variable a name. Then add items by clicking **Add Item**. Click **OK** to save the variable.



When a simulation is instantiated, one value will be automatically selected from the list. These can be used to randomise character names.

Date variable

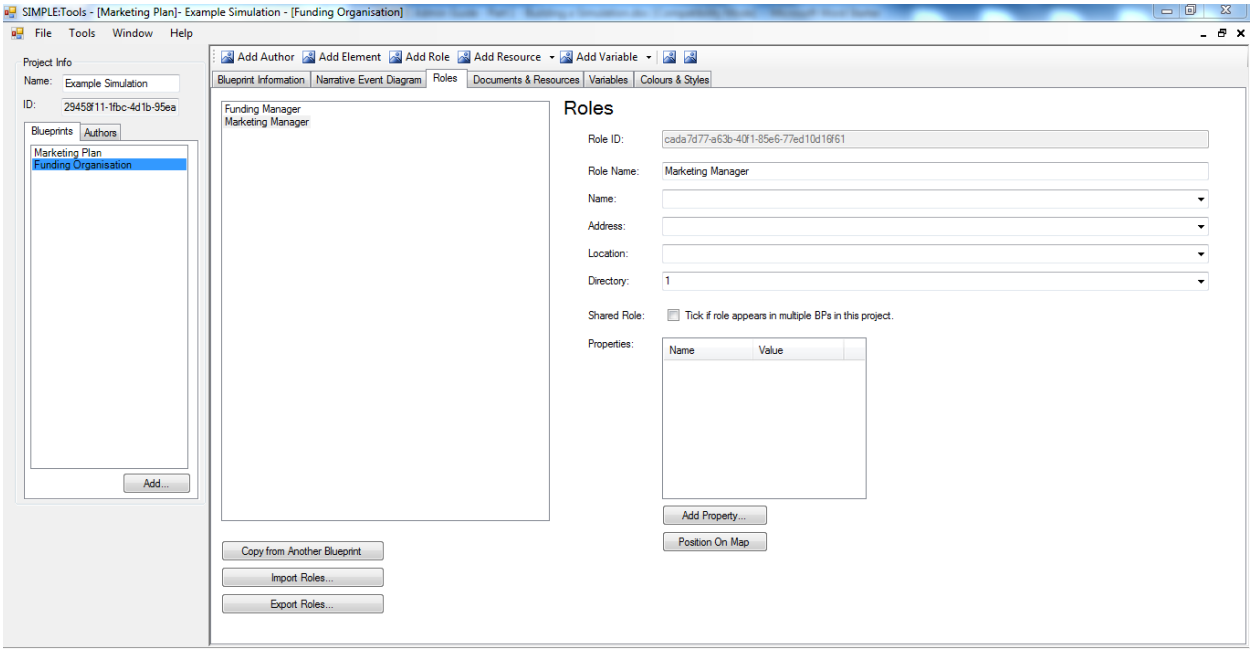
Click the dropdown arrow next to **Add Variable**, and select **Add Date Variable**. In the dialog that appears, give the variable a name.



The dialog allows you to construct a date in the PHP date() notation, which will be automatically interpreted by the SIMPLE Platform into a date. The **Format** field allows you to specify how the date is displayed. The **Base Date** and **Adjustment** fields allow you to specify a particular date, or to randomise one or more parts of it. Note that the variable will be interpreted each time a document is downloaded, so using the Live Date option may result in inconsistent dates in documents if not used properly.

Appendix 2 – Linked Blueprints

In each of your Blueprints that are to be linked, you should ensure that you have created a role for the linked character. For example, if our 2 players are a Marketing Manager and a Funding Manager, then both of these roles need to exist in both blueprints. The data will be copied across from the role you are linking to, so you only need to have the Role Name completed.



This will be sufficient to allow you to link the roles after you instantiate the simulations on the SIMPLE Platform.

Linked Blueprints is one example where it is useful to have edited the **projectNameFormat** variable (in **Blueprint Information -> Properties**) to display the blueprint name before the name of the simulation.