



LibreOffice



Getting Started Guide

Chapter 13

Getting Started with Macros

Using the Macro Recorder ... and Beyond

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Using LibreOffice on macOS

Some keystrokes and menu items are different on macOS from those used in Windows and Linux. The table below gives some common substitutions for the instructions in this document. For a detailed list, see the application Help.

<i>Windows or Linux</i>	<i>macOS equivalent</i>	<i>Effect</i>
Tools > Options menu selection	LibreOffice > Preferences	Access setup options
Right-click	<i>Control</i> +click or right-click depending on computer setup	Open a context menu
<i>Ctrl</i> (Control)	⌘ (Command)	Used with other keys
<i>F11</i>	⌘+T	Open the Styles deck in the Sidebar

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Introduction

A macro is a set of commands or keystrokes that are stored for later use. An example of a simple macro is one that enters your address into an open document. You can use macros to automate both simple and complex tasks. Macros are very useful when you have to repeat the same task in the same way.

The simplest way to create a macro is to record a series of actions through LibreOffice's user interface. LibreOffice saves recorded macros using the open source LibreOffice Basic scripting language, which is an implementation of the well-known BASIC programming language. Such macros can be edited and enhanced after recording using the built-in LibreOffice Basic Integrated Development Environment (IDE).

The most powerful macros in LibreOffice are created by writing code using one of the four supported scripting languages (LibreOffice Basic, BeanShell, JavaScript, and Python). This chapter provides an overview of LibreOffice's macro facilities, mostly focused on its default macro scripting language, LibreOffice Basic. Some introductory examples are included for the BeanShell, JavaScript, and Python scripting languages. However, an in-depth discussion of how to use these languages for scripting is beyond the scope of this chapter.

Your first macros

Adding a macro

The first step in learning macro programming is to find and use existing macros. This section assumes that you have a macro that you want to use, which you may have found in a book or on the internet. For this example, the macro in Listing 1 is used. You should create a library and module to contain your macro; see "Macro organization" on page 17 for more information.

Listing 1: Simple macro that says hello

```
Sub HelloMacro
  Print "Hello"
End Sub
```

Use the following steps to create a library that will contain your macro:

- 1) Open any LibreOffice application.
- 2) Go to **Tools > Macros > Organize Macros > Basic** to open the Basic Macros dialog (Figure 1).
- 3) Click **Organizer** to open the Basic Macro Organizer dialog (Figure 2) and select the *Libraries* tab.
- 4) Set the *Location* drop-down to **My Macros & Dialogs**, which is the default location.
- 5) Click **New** to open the New Library dialog (not shown here).
- 6) Enter a library name, for example *TestLibrary*, and click **OK**.
- 7) On the Basic Macro Organizer dialog, select the *Modules* tab (Figure 3).
- 8) In the *Module* list, expand *My Macros* and select your library (in the example, *TestLibrary*). A module named *Module1* already exists and can contain your macro. If you wish, you can click **New** to create another module in the library.
- 9) Select *Module1*, or the new module that you created, and click **Edit** to open the Integrated Development Environment (IDE) (Figure 4). The IDE is a text editor and associated facilities that are built into LibreOffice and allow you to create, edit, run, and debug macros.

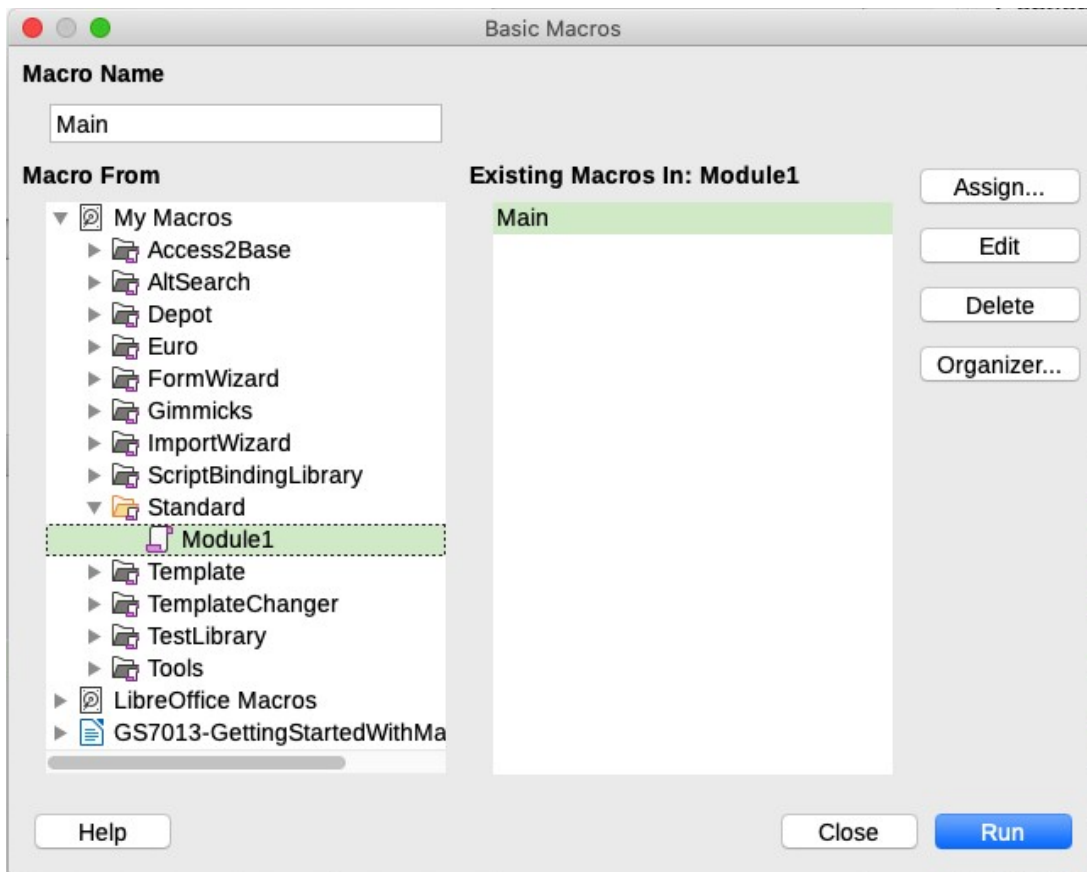


Figure 1: Basic Macros dialog

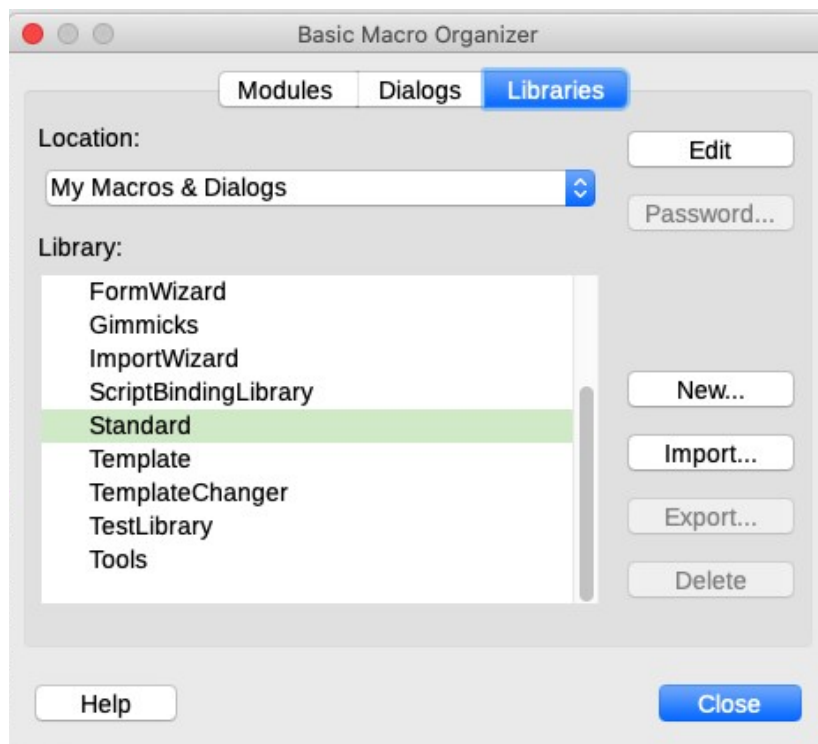


Figure 2: LibreOffice Basic Macro Organizer dialog, Libraries tab

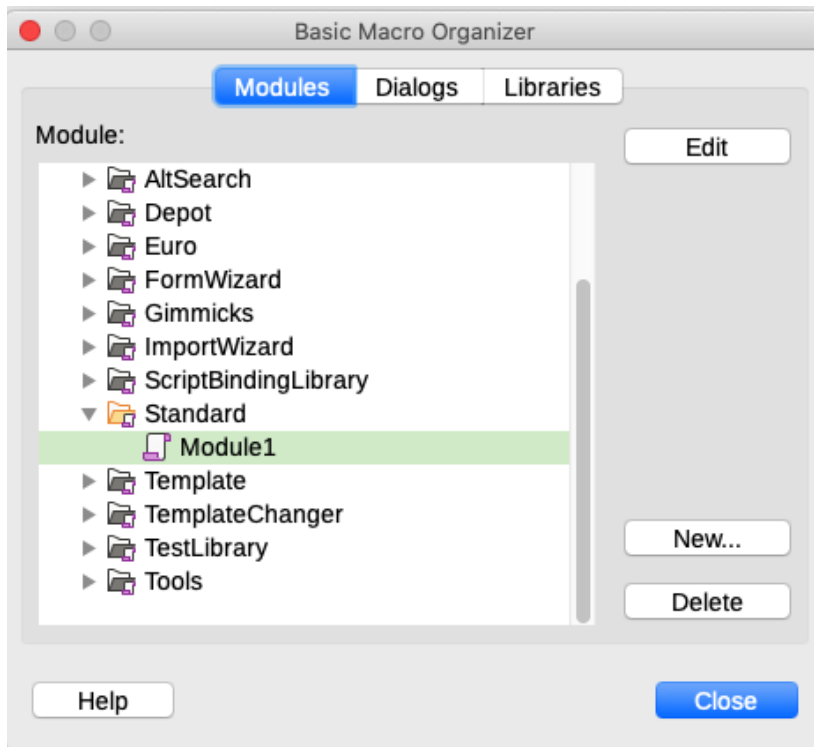


Figure 3: Basic Macro Organizer dialog, Modules tab

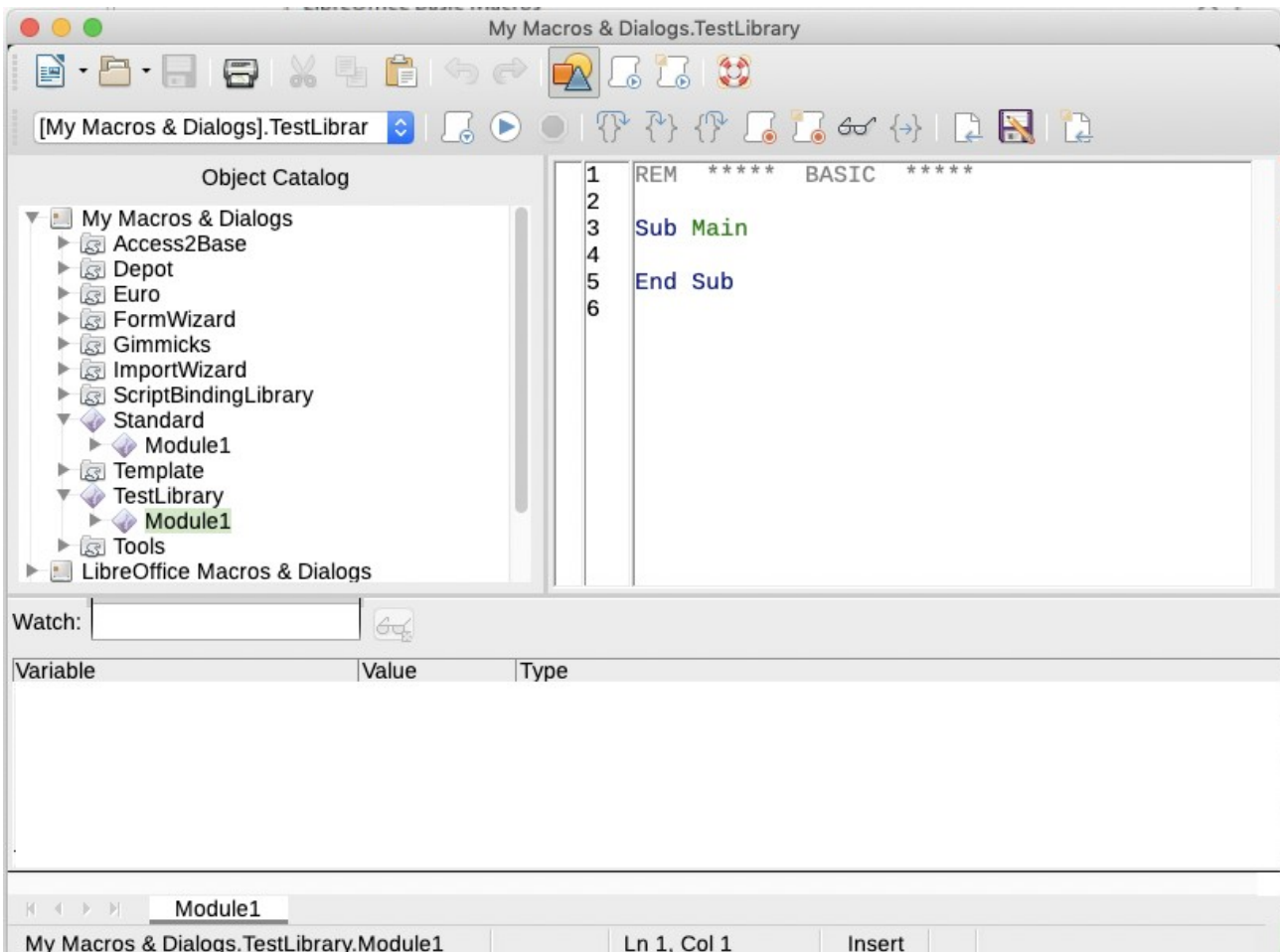


Figure 4: Integrated Development Environment window

- 10) When a new module is created, it contains a comment and an empty macro named `Main`, which does nothing.
- 11) Add the new macro either before `Sub Main` or after `End Sub`. Listing 2 shows the new macro added before `Sub Main`.

Listing 2: Module1 after adding the new macro

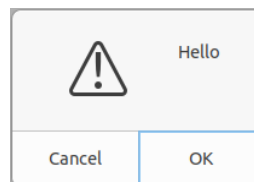
```
REM ***** BASIC *****
```

```
Sub HelloMacro
  Print "Hello"
End Sub
```

```
Sub Main
```

```
End Sub
```

- 12) Click the **Compile** icon on the Macro toolbar to compile the macro.
- 13) Select the `HelloMacro` subroutine in the *Object Catalog* window and click the **Run** icon on the Macro toolbar, or press the `F5` key, to run the `HelloMacro` subroutine in the module. A small dialog will open with the word "Hello" displayed (see below).



- 14) Click **OK** to close this small dialog.
- 15) If no subroutine or function is selected, a dialog like the one in Figure 5 will open. Then select the macro and click **Run** to execute it.

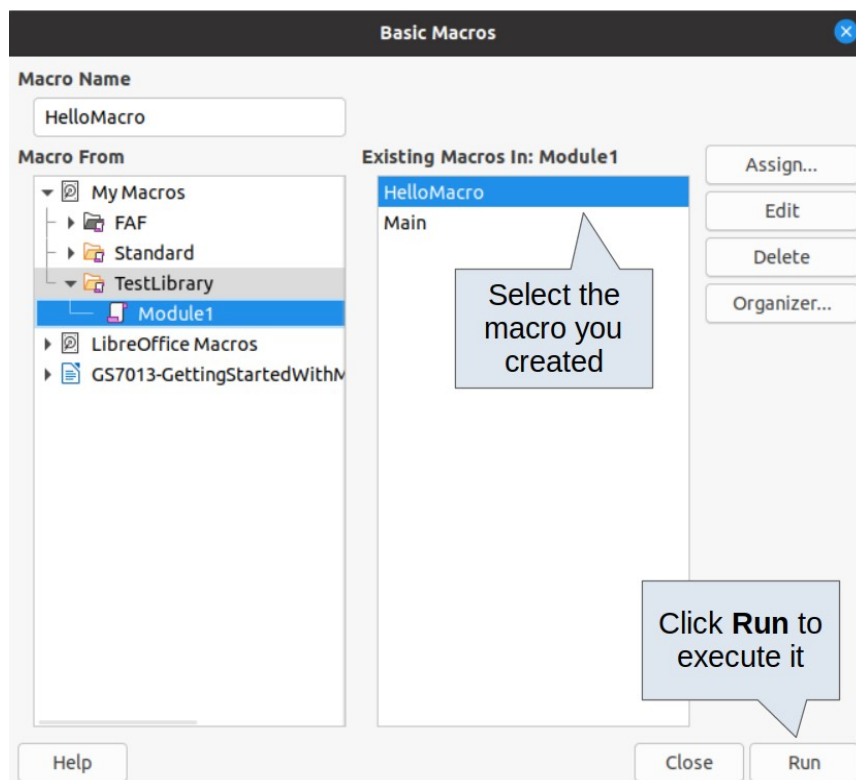


Figure 5: Dialog to select and run a macro

- 16) To select and run any macro in the module, click the **Select Macro** icon on the Standard toolbar or go to **Tools > Macros > Organize Macros > Basic**.
- 17) Select a macro and then click **Run**.

Recording a macro

When you record a macro in LibreOffice, you are actually recording the steps to perform a certain task using programming language. For example, consider that you have to repeatedly enter the same information into a document. You can copy this information after it has been entered into the document for the first time, then paste the information into the document each time you want to use it. However, if something else is copied to the clipboard, the contents of the clipboard are changed. This means that you have to re-copy this piece of information again to later paste it into the document. To overcome this problem, you can create a macro that enters this piece of information without having to copy it every time you need it.

Note

For some cases when you want to repeatedly enter information into a document, it may be more convenient to create an AutoText. See Chapter 2, Working with Text: Basics, in the *Writer Guide* for more information.

Make sure macro recording is enabled by going to **Tools > Options > LibreOffice > Advanced** and selecting the option **Enable macro recording** under *Optional Features*. By default, this feature is turned off in LibreOffice.

- 1) Go to **Tools > Macros > Record Macro** to start recording a macro. A small dialog with a **Stop Recording** button is displayed indicating that LibreOffice is recording a macro.
- 2) Type the desired text you want to be entered when this macro is run. As an example, type your name.
- 3) Click **Stop Recording** on the small dialog. This will cause Basic Macros dialog to open (similar to Figure 1 on page 5, but with different action buttons).
- 4) Open the library container *My Macros*.
- 5) Find the library named *Standard* in *My Macros*. Note that every library container has a library named *Standard*.
- 6) Select the *Standard* library and then choose an existing module in which to save the macro. Alternatively you can click **New Module** to create a new module to contain the newly recorded macro.
- 7) In the **Macro Name** text box at the top left section of the dialog, type a name for the macro you have just recorded, for example *EnterMyName*.
- 8) Click **Save** to save the macro and close the Basic Macros dialog.

If you followed all of the above steps, a macro named *EnterMyName* will have been created inside the selected module.

Note

Whenever you create a new module in LibreOffice, a subroutine named *Main* is automatically added to the module.

Running a macro

- 1) Go to **Tools > Macros > Run Macro** to open the Macro Selector dialog (Figure 6).
- 2) For example, select your newly created macro *EnterMyName* and click **Run**.

- 3) Alternatively, go to **Tools > Macros > Organize Macros > Basic** to open the Basic Macros dialog (Figure 1), select your macro and click **Run**.

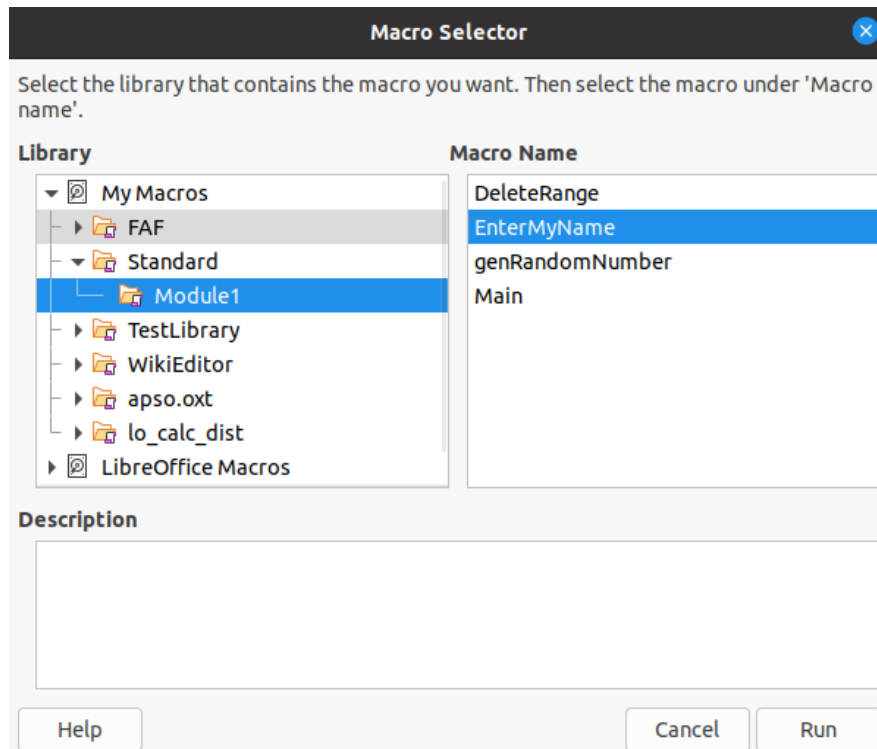


Figure 6: Use the Macro Selector dialog to select and run an existing macro

Viewing and editing macros

To view and/or edit the macro that you created:

- 1) Go to **Tools > Macros > Organize Macros > Basic** to open the Basic Macros dialog.
- 2) Select your new macro *EnterMyName* and click **Edit**. The Basic IDE will open and the macro *EnterMyName* will be shown as in Listing 3.

This first macro is not complicated. A little explanation will significantly help you in understanding macros. The discussion starts with first line of the macro and describes features through the whole listing.

Listing 3: Code recorded for the EnterMyname macro

```
sub EnterMyName
rem -----
rem define variables
dim document as object
dim dispatcher as object
rem -----
rem get access to the document
document = ThisComponent.CurrentController.Frame
dispatcher = createUnoService("com.sun.star.frame.DispatchHelper")
rem -----
dim args1(0) as new com.sun.star.beans.PropertyValue
args1(0).Name = "Text"
args1(0).Value = "Your name"
dispatcher.executeDispatch(document, ".uno:InsertText", "", 0, args1())
end sub
```

Commenting with REM

All comments in Basic macro coding begin with REM, which stands for remark. All text after REM on the same line is ignored by the Basic interpreter when the macro is run.

Tip

As a short cut, you can use the single quote character (') to start a comment.

LibreOffice Basic is not case-sensitive for keywords, so REM, Rem, and rem can all start a comment. If you use symbolic constants defined by the Application Programming Interface (API), it is safer to assume that the names are case-sensitive. Symbolic constants are an advanced topic not covered by this user guide and are not required when using the macro recorder in LibreOffice.

Defining subroutines with SUB

Individual macros are stored in subroutines and these subroutines begin with the keyword SUB. The end of a subroutine is indicated by the words END SUB. The code starts by defining the subroutine named Main, which is empty and does nothing. Note that the code in Listing 3 for the EnterMyName macro starts with the keyword SUB and ends with END SUB.

There are advanced topics that are beyond the scope of this user guide, but knowing about them might be of interest:

- You can write subroutines that accept input values to be used inside the macro. These values are called arguments. This can only be done when you create subroutines from scratch. Recorded macros in LibreOffice do not accept arguments.
- Another kind of subroutine is called a function, which is a subroutine that can return a value as a result of its work. Functions are defined by the keyword FUNCTION at the beginning. Recorded macros in LibreOffice create subroutines only.

Defining variables using DIM

You can write information on a piece of paper so that you can look at it later. A variable, like a piece of paper, contains information that can be changed and read. The DIM keyword originally stood for *Dimension* and was used to define the dimensions of an array. The DIM statement used in the EnterMyName macro is similar to setting aside a piece of paper to be used to store a message or note.

In the EnterMyName macro, the variables document and dispatcher are defined as the type object. Other common variable types include string, integer, and date. A third variable, named args1, is an array of property values. A variable of type array allows a single variable to contain multiple values, similar to storing multiple pages in a single book. Values in an array are usually numbered starting from zero. The number in the parentheses indicates the highest usable number to access a storage location. In this example, there is only one value, and it is numbered zero.

Explaining macro code

The following is an explanation of the code used in the EnterMyName macro. You may not understand all the details, but the explanation of each line of code may give you some idea of how a macro works.

```
sub EnterMyName
```

Defines the start of the EnterMyName macro.

```
dim document as object
```

Defines `document` as an object variable. Objects are a specific variable type with multiple fields (sometimes they are called properties) and actions (also they are called methods). The fields can be perceived like variables (including an object) and actions like subroutines which allow us to operate with the object.

Note

Sometimes the word *service* is used. A service is supplied by a type of object which are distinguished in order to point out how they are used.

```
dim dispatcher as object
```

Defines `dispatcher` as an object variable.

```
document = ThisComponent.CurrentController.Frame
```

`ThisComponent` is a runtime object created by LibreOffice that refers to the current document.

`CurrentController` is a property referring to a service that controls the document. For example, when you type, it is the current controller that takes note of what you type. `CurrentController` then dispatches the changes to the document frame.

`Frame` is a controller property that returns the main frame for a document. Therefore, the variable named `document` refers to a document's frame, which receives dispatched commands.

```
dispatcher = createUnoService("com.sun.star.frame.DispatchHelper")
```

Most tasks in LibreOffice are accomplished by dispatching a command. LibreOffice includes a `DispatchHelper` service, which provides an easy way to dispatch a URL using one call instead of multiple ones and does most of the work when using dispatches in macros. The method `CreateUnoService` accepts the name of a service and it tries to create an instance of that service. On completion, the dispatcher variable contains a reference to a `DispatchHelper`.

```
dim args1(0) as new com.sun.star.beans.PropertyValue
```

Declares the `args1` array of properties. Each property has a name and a value. In other words, it is a name/value pair. The created array has one property at index zero.

The `com.sun.star.beans.PropertyValue` expression is a Universal Network Objects (UNO) structure. Structures are special variable types that contain other variables united by logical basis. They can be convenient to operate with sets of heterogeneous information that should be treated as a single whole. An explanation of UNO and user structures goes far beyond the scope of this book. For more information on creating and using structures, see the LibreOffice Help system and other Basic guides.

```
args1(0).Name = "Text"
```

```
args1(0).Value = "Your name"
```

Gives the property the name "Text" and the value "Your name", which is the text that is inserted when the macro is run.

```
dispatcher.executeDispatch(document, ".uno:InsertText", "", 0, args1())
```

The dispatch helper sends a dispatch to the document frame (stored in the variable `document`) with the command `.uno:InsertText`. The next two arguments, frame name and search flags, are beyond the scope of this book. The last argument is the array of property values to be used while executing the command `InsertText`.

In other words, this line of code executes the UNO command `.uno:InsertText` passing the value “Your Name” as the “Text” parameter.

```
end sub
```

The last line of the code ends the subroutine.

Creating a macro

When creating a macro, it is important to ask two questions before recording:

- 1) Can the task be written as a simple set of commands?
- 2) Can the steps be arranged so that the last command leaves the cursor ready for the next command or entering text or data into the document?

A more complex example of a macro

A common task is to copy rows and columns of data from a website and format them as a table in a text document as follows:

- 1) Copy the data from the website to the clipboard.
- 2) To avoid strange formatting and fonts, paste the text into a Writer document as unformatted text.
- 3) Reformat the text with tabs between columns so that it can be converted into a table using **Table > Convert > Text to Table**.

With the two questions above in mind, inspect the text to see if a macro can be recorded to format the text. As an example of copied data, consider the text copied from the API website describing the `FontWeight` constants (Figure 7). The first column in this example indicates a constant name and each name is followed by a space and a tab, and each line has two trailing spaces.

DONTKNOW	The font weight is not specified/known.
THIN	specifies a 50% font weight.
ULTRALIGHT	specifies a 60% font weight.
LIGHT	specifies a 75% font weight.
SEMILIGHT	specifies a 90% font weight.
NORMAL	specifies a normal font weight.
SEMIBOLD	specifies a 110% font weight.
BOLD	specifies a 150% font weight.
ULTRABOLD	specifies a 175% font weight.
BLACK	specifies a 200% font weight.

Figure 7: Example of copied data

Suppose you want the first column in the table to contain the numeric value of the font weight, the second column the constant name, and the third column the text description. This task can be accomplished easily for every row except for `DONTKNOW` and `NORMAL`, which do not contain a numeric value.

Below are the steps to record this macro using keystrokes and assuming that the cursor is at the beginning of the line with the text “THIN”.

- 1) Make sure macro recording is enabled by going to **Tools > Options > LibreOffice > Advanced** and selecting the option **Enable macro recording**. By default, this feature is turned off when LibreOffice is installed on your computer.

- 2) Go to **Tools > Macros > Record Macro** to start recording.
- 3) Press *Ctrl+Right Arrow* to move the cursor to the start of the word “specifies”.
- 4) Press *Backspace* twice to remove the tab and the space.
- 5) Press *Tab* to add the tab without the space after the constant name.
- 6) Press *Delete* to delete the lower case “s” and then press *Shift+S* to add an upper case “S”.
- 7) Press *Ctrl+Right Arrow* twice to move the cursor to the start of the number.
- 8) Press *Ctrl+Shift+Right Arrow* to select and move the cursor before the % sign.
- 9) Press *Ctrl+C* to copy the selected text to the clipboard.
- 10) Press *End* to move the cursor to the end of the line.
- 11) Press *Backspace* twice to remove the two trailing spaces.
- 12) Press *Home* to move the cursor to the start of the line.
- 13) Press *Ctrl+V* to paste the selected number to the start of the line.
- 14) Pasting the value also pasted an extra space, so press *Backspace* to remove the extra space.
- 15) Press *Tab* to insert a tab between the number and the name.
- 16) Press *Home* to move to the start of the line.
- 17) Press *Down Arrow* to move to the next line.
- 18) Stop recording the macro and save the macro, see “Recording a macro” on page 8.

It takes much longer to read and write the steps above than to actually record the macro. Work slowly and think about the steps as you do them. With practice you will learn how to organize the steps to create macros that can be used to automate repetitive tasks.

The generated macro code in Listing 4 has been modified to contain the step numbers in the comments to match the steps discussed above.

Listing 4: Copying numeric value to start of the column

```
sub CopyNumToCol1
rem -----
rem define variables
dim document as object
dim dispatcher as object
rem -----
rem get access to the document
document = ThisComponent.CurrentController.Frame
dispatcher = createUnoService("com.sun.star.frame.DispatchHelper")

rem (3) Press Ctrl+Right Arrow to move the cursor to the start of "specifies".
dispatcher.executeDispatch(document, ".uno:GoToNextWord", "", 0, Array())

rem (4) Press Backspace twice to remove the tab and the space.
dispatcher.executeDispatch(document, ".uno:SwBackspace", "", 0, Array())

rem -----
dispatcher.executeDispatch(document, ".uno:SwBackspace", "", 0, Array())

rem (5) Press Tab to add the tab without the space after the constant name.
dim args4(0) as new com.sun.star.beans.PropertyValue
args4(0).Name = "Text"
args4(0).Value = CHR$(9)
```

```

dispatcher.executeDispatch(document, ".uno:InsertText", "", 0, args4())

rem (6) Press Delete to delete the lower case s ....
dispatcher.executeDispatch(document, ".uno>Delete", "", 0, Array())

rem (6) ... and then press Shift+S to add an upper case S.
dim args6(0) as new com.sun.star.beans.PropertyValue
args6(0).Name = "Text"
args6(0).Value = "S"

dispatcher.executeDispatch(document, ".uno:InsertText", "", 0, args6())

rem (7) Press Ctrl+Right Arrow twice to move the cursor to the number.
dispatcher.executeDispatch(document, ".uno:GoToNextWord", "", 0, Array())

rem -----
dispatcher.executeDispatch(document, ".uno:GoToNextWord", "", 0, Array())

rem (8) Press Ctrl+Shift+Right Arrow to select the number.
dispatcher.executeDispatch(document, ".uno:WordRightSel", "", 0, Array())

rem (9) Press Ctrl+C to copy the selected text to the clipboard.
dispatcher.executeDispatch(document, ".uno:Copy", "", 0, Array())

rem (10) Press End to move the cursor to the end of the line.
dispatcher.executeDispatch(document, ".uno:GoToEndOfLine", "", 0, Array())

rem (11) Press Backspace twice to remove the two trailing spaces.
dispatcher.executeDispatch(document, ".uno:SwBackspace", "", 0, Array())

rem -----
dispatcher.executeDispatch(document, ".uno:SwBackspace", "", 0, Array())

rem (12) Press Home to move the cursor to the start of the line.
dispatcher.executeDispatch(document, ".uno:GoToStartOfLine", "", 0, Array())

rem (13) Press Ctrl+V to paste the selected number to the start of the line.
dispatcher.executeDispatch(document, ".uno:Paste", "", 0, Array())

rem (14) Press Backspace to remove the extra space.
dispatcher.executeDispatch(document, ".uno:SwBackspace", "", 0, Array())

rem (15) Press Tab to insert a tab between the number and the name.
dim args17(0) as new com.sun.star.beans.PropertyValue
args17(0).Name = "Text"
args17(0).Value = CHR$(9)

dispatcher.executeDispatch(document, ".uno:InsertText", "", 0, args17())
rem (16) Press Home to move to the start of the line.
dispatcher.executeDispatch(document, ".uno:GoToStartOfLine", "", 0, Array())

rem (17) Press Down Arrow to move to the next line.
dim args19(1) as new com.sun.star.beans.PropertyValue
args19(0).Name = "Count"
args19(0).Value = 1
args19(1).Name = "Select"
args19(1).Value = false

```

```
dispatcher.executeDispatch(document, ".uno:GoDown", "", 0, args19())
end sub
```

To run this macro, first place the cursor at the beginning of the line to which you want to apply the recorded steps. Then go to **Tools > Macros > Run Macro**, select the *CopyNumToCol1* macro and click **Run**. Figure 8 shows the original line and the resulting line after applying the macro.

Original Line (before running the macro)

THIN specifies a 50% font weight.

To run the macro,
place the cursor at the
beginning of the line

New Line (after running the macro)

50 THIN Specifies a 50% font weight.

This is the resulting
line after running
the macro

Figure 8: Result of applying the recorded macro

Keep in mind that the steps described above will only work properly if the line follows the format we assumed while creating the macro. If you run this macro on the “DONTKNOW” and “NORMAL” lines the results will not be as expected because these two lines have different formats. Figure 9 shows the original line starting with “DONTKNOW”.

Original Line not following the assumed structure

DONTKNOW The font weight is not specified/known.

Running the macro on a line with a different structure

weight DONTKNOWShe font weight is not specified/known.

Figure 9: Result of using the macro in a line with a different structure

Running a macro quickly

It is not convenient to repeatedly run macros using **Tools > Macros > Run Macro**. If you frequently need to use a certain macro, you can assign a keyboard shortcut to quickly run it. Next are the steps to assign the shortcut *Ctrl+K* to the *CopyNumToCol1* macro.

- 1) Go to **Tools > Customize**. This will open the Customize dialog.
- 2) Select the *Keyboard* tab. In the *Shortcut Keys* section, select the *Ctrl+K* shortcut.
- 3) In the *Category* section, select *LibreOffice macros*. Navigate this section and select the *CopyNumToCol1* macro.
- 4) Now click the **Modify** button to assign the *Ctrl+K* shortcut to the *CopyNumToCol1* macro.
- 5) Click **OK** to close the *Customize* dialog.

Now you can run the *CopyNumToCol1* macro using the *Ctrl+K* shortcut. This is very fast and easy to configure after you get used to the macro workflow. Figure 10 illustrates the steps described above.

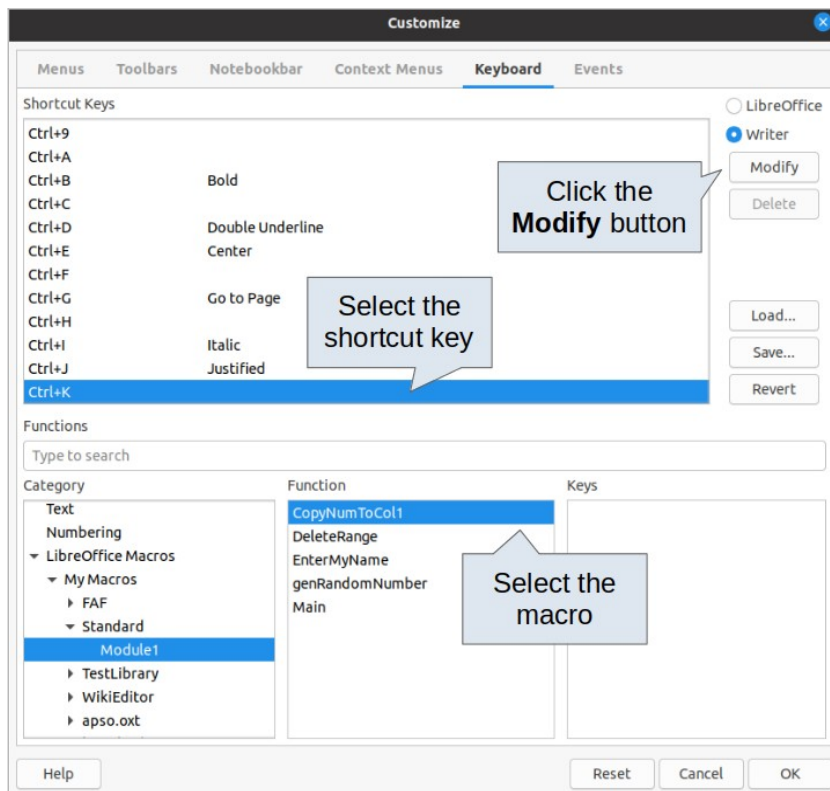


Figure 10: Assigning a shortcut to a macro

Limitations of the macro recorder

The *Macro Recorder* has some limitations, which means that some actions may not be recorded. A deeper knowledge of LibreOffice internal workings helps to understand how and why the macro recorder will work. The main cause of these limitations is the dispatch framework and its relationship to the macro recorder.

Dispatch framework

The purpose of the dispatch framework is to provide uniform access to components (documents) for commands that usually correspond to menu items. Using **File > Save**, the shortcut keys *Ctrl+S*, or clicking the **Save** icon on the Standard toolbar are all commands that are translated into the same “dispatch command”.

The dispatch framework can also be used to send “commands” back to the user interface (UI). For example, after saving a new document, the list of recent files is updated.

A dispatch command is text, for example `.uno:InsertObject` or `.uno:GoToStartOfLine`. The command is sent to the document frame and this passes on the command until an object is found that can handle the command.

How the macro recorder uses the dispatch framework

The macro recorder records the generated dispatches. The recorder is a relatively simple tool to use and the same commands that are issued are recorded for later use. The problem is that not all dispatched commands are complete. For example, inserting an object generates the following code:

```
dispatcher.executeDispatch(document, ".uno:InsertObject", "", 0, Array())
```

It is not possible to specify what kind of object to create or insert. If an object is inserted from a file, you cannot specify which file to insert.

If while recording a macro you use **Tools > Options** to open and modify configuration items, the generated macro does not record any configuration changes. In fact, the generated code is commented so it will not even be run.

```
rem dispatcher.executeDispatch(document, ".uno:OptionsTreeDialog", "", 0,
Array())
```

If a dialog is opened, a command to open the dialog is likely to be generated. Any work done inside the dialog is not usually recorded. Examples of this include macro organization dialogs, inserting special characters, and similar types of dialogs. Other possible problems using the macro recorder include things such as inserting a formula, setting user data, setting filters in Calc, actions in database forms, and exporting a document to an encrypted PDF file. You never know for certain what will work unless you try it. For example, the actions from the search dialog are properly captured.

Other options

When the macro recorder is not able to solve a specific problem, the usual solution is to write code using the LibreOffice objects. Unfortunately, there is a steep learning curve for these LibreOffice objects. It is usually best to start with simple examples and then increase the scope of macros as you learn more. Learning to read generated macros is a good place to start.

Macro organization

In LibreOffice, macros are grouped in modules, modules are grouped in libraries, and libraries are grouped in library containers. A library is usually used as a major grouping for either an entire category of macros, or for an entire application. Modules usually split functionality, such as user interaction and calculations. Individual macros are subroutines and functions. Figure 11 shows an example of the hierarchical structure of macro libraries in LibreOffice.

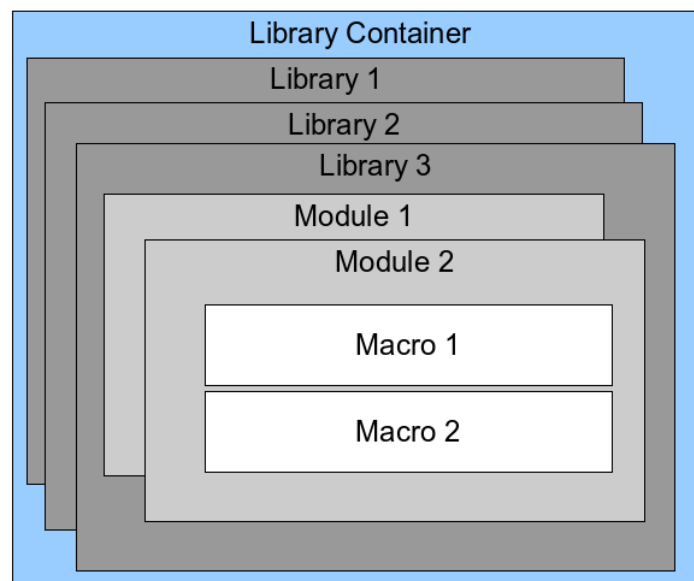


Figure 11: Macro Library hierarchy

Go to **Tools > Macros > Organize Macros > Basic** to open the Basic Macros dialog (Figure 1 on page 5). All available library containers are shown in the *Macro From* list. Every document is a library container, capable of containing multiple libraries. The application itself acts as two library containers, one container for macros distributed with LibreOffice called *LibreOffice Macros*, and one container for personal macros called *My Macros*.

The *LibreOffice Macros* are stored with the application runtime code, which may not be editable to you unless you are an administrator. This helps protect these macros because they should not be changed and you should not store your own macros in the *LibreOffice Macros* container.

Unless your macros are applicable to a single document, and only to a single document, your macros will probably be stored in the *My Macros* container. The *My Macros* container is stored in your user area or home directory.

If a macro is contained in a document, then a recorded macro will attempt to work on that document, because it primarily uses *ThisComponent* for its actions.

Every library container contains a library named *Standard*. It is better to create your own libraries with meaningful names than to use the *Standard* library. Not only are meaningful names easier to manage, but they can also be imported into other library containers whereas the *Standard* library cannot.

Caution

LibreOffice allows you to import libraries into a library container, but it will not allow you to overwrite the library named *Standard*. Therefore, if you store your macros in the *Standard* library, you cannot import them into another library container.

Just as it makes good sense to give your libraries meaningful names, it is prudent to use meaningful names for your modules. By default, LibreOffice uses names such as *Module1*, *Module2*, and so on.

As you create your macros, you must decide where to store them. Storing a macro in a document is useful if the document will be shared and you want the macro to be included with the document. Macros stored in the application library container named *My Macros*, however, are globally available to all documents.

Macros are not available until the library that contains them is loaded. However, in contrast to other libraries, the *Standard* and *Template* libraries are automatically loaded. A loaded library is displayed differently from a library that is not loaded. To load the library and the modules it contains, double-click on the library.

Where are macros stored?

LibreOffice stores user-specific data in a folder inside the user's home directory. The location is operating system specific. Go to **Tools > Options > LibreOffice > Paths** to view where other configuration data are stored. User macros written in Basic are stored in `LibreOffice\4\user\basic`. Each library is stored in its own directory inside the `basic` directory.

For casual use, it is not necessary to understand where macros are stored. If you know where they are stored, however, you can create a backup, share your macros, or inspect them if there is an error.

Exporting macros

The LibreOffice Basic Macro Organizer dialog allows you to export macro libraries so that they can be reused and shared with other people. To export a macro library:

- 1) Go to **Tools > Macros > Organize Macros > Basic** and then click the **Organizer** button.
- 2) Click the *Libraries* tab and choose which library you want to export.
- 3) Click **Export** and then select **Export as BASIC Library** (note that you cannot export the *Standard* library).
- 4) Choose where you want to save the library and click **Save**.

When a library is exported, LibreOffice creates a folder containing all files related to the library. Figure 12 shows an example of how a library named *TestLibrary* with a single module called *Module1* would be exported.

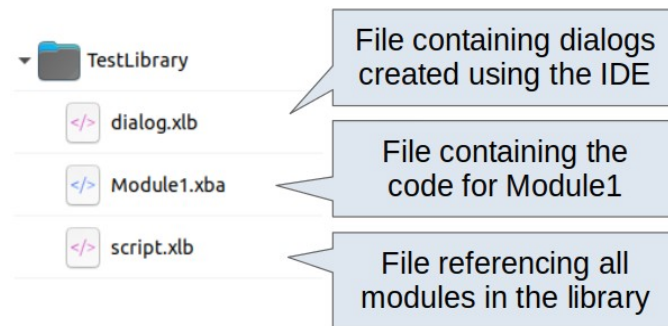


Figure 12: Folder containing the exported library

Importing macros

The LibreOffice Basic Macro Organizer dialog allows you to import macro libraries into your document as well as creating, deleting, and renaming libraries, modules, and dialogs.

- 1) On the *Libraries* tab, select the library container to use and then click **Import** to import macro libraries.
- 2) Navigate to the directory containing the library to import (Figure 13). There are usually two files from which to choose, `dialog.xlb` and `script.xlb`. It does not matter which of these two files you select; both will be imported. Macros can be stored in libraries inside LibreOffice documents. Select a document rather than a directory on disk to import libraries contained in a document.

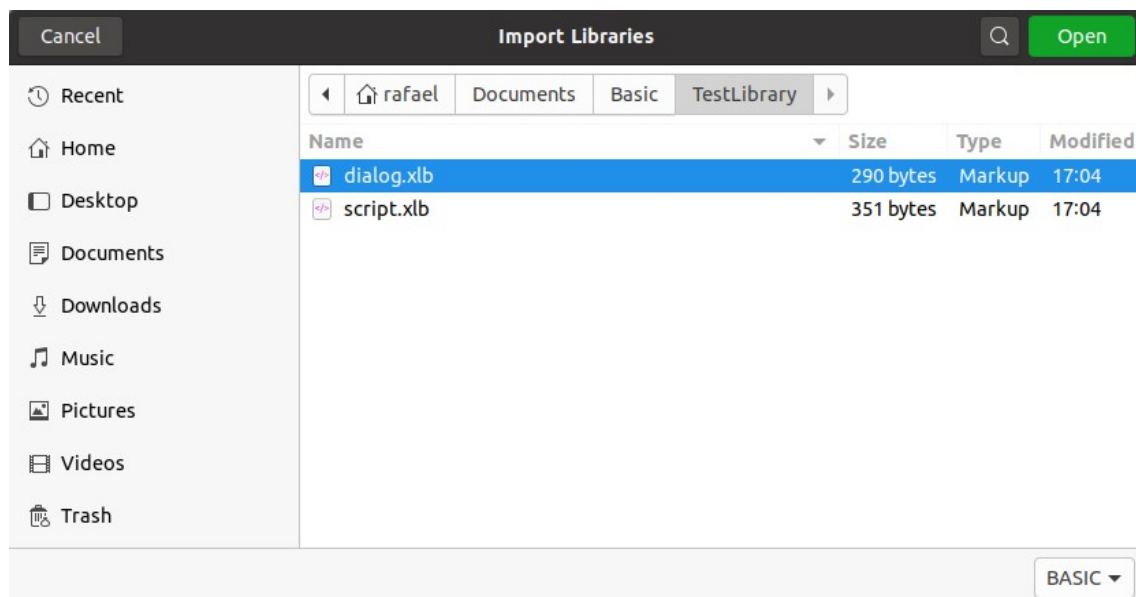


Figure 13: Navigating to a macro library

- 3) Select a file and click **Open** to continue and open the Import Libraries dialog (Figure 14).

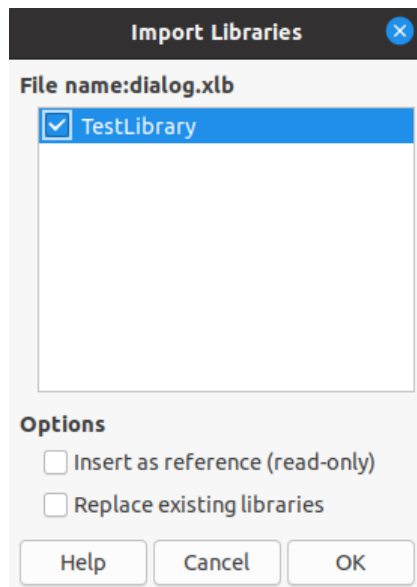


Figure 14: Choose library import options

- 4) Select the following options for importing libraries:
 - If no options are selected, the library is copied to your user macro directory. However, if the library you are importing has the same name and you are importing into the same location, it will not be copied.
 - Select **Insert as reference (read-only)** if you want to use the library as reference, but not import it into the document. When a library is used as a reference, it remains in its current location and is fully functional, but cannot be modified in the Basic IDE.
 - Select **Replace existing libraries** if the library you want to import has the same name and you want to replace the existing library.
- 5) Click **OK** to import the macro library you selected.

✓ Note

You cannot export/import the library named *Standard*.

i Tip

On Linux, LibreOffice-specific files are stored in the user's home directory inside the `.config` folder. Directories and files with names beginning with a dot may be hidden and not shown in a normal file selection dialog. When using LibreOffice dialogs, rather than the operating system's specific dialogs, type the name of the desired directory in the *Name* field.

Downloading macros to import

You can find macros created by the community to download from the internet. Some macros are contained in documents, some as regular files that you need to import, and some are published as text and need to be copied and pasted into the Basic IDE. See “Adding a macro” on page 4 on how to add macros to your macro library and “Viewing and editing macros” on page 9 on how to edit macros using the Basic IDE.

Some macros are available as free downloads on the Internet (see Table 1).

Table 1. Places to find macro examples

Location	Description
https://www.pitonyak.org/oo.php	Reference materials regarding macros.
https://www.pitonyak.org/database/	Reference materials regarding database macros.
https://wiki.documentfoundation.org/Macros	Lots of links to macros.
https://forum.openoffice.org/en/forum/	Forums, with many examples and help.

How to run a macro

Although you can use **Tools > Macros > Run** to run all macros, this is not efficient for frequently used macros. LibreOffice offers many ways for you to quickly run your macros.

In addition to assigning a shortcut to macros, as seen in “Running a macro” on page 8, you can also link macros to a toolbar icon, menu item, event, or a button embedded in a document. When choosing a method, it is also good to ask questions such as:

- Should the macro be available for only one document or globally for all documents?
- Is the macro for a specific document type, such as a Calc document?
- How frequently will the macro be used?

The answers will determine where to store the macro and how to make it available. For example, you will probably not add a rarely used macro to a toolbar. To help determine your choices, see Table 2.

Table 2. Where to store a macro

Where to place the macro	For all LibreOffice applications	For a specific LO application	For a single document
Toolbar	No	Yes	Yes
Menu	No	Yes	Yes
Shortcut	Yes	Yes	No
Event	Yes	No	Yes

Toolbars, menu items, and keyboard shortcuts

To add a menu item, keyboard shortcut, or toolbar icon that calls a macro, use the *Customize* dialog, which contains pages to configure menus, keyboard shortcuts, toolbars, and events. To open this dialog, go to **Tools > Customize**. Use of the *Menus*, *Toolbars*, *Context Menus*, and *Keyboard* tabs are covered in Chapter 14, Customizing LibreOffice.

Events

Whenever something happens in LibreOffice, it is called an event. For example, opening a document, changing status of modified, or moving the mouse cursor are all events. LibreOffice allows events to trigger the execution of a macro; the macro is then called an event handler. Full coverage of event handlers is well beyond the scope of this chapter, but a little knowledge can accomplish much.



Caution

Be careful when you configure an event handler. For example, assume that you write an event handler that is called every time that a document is modified, but you make a mistake so the event is not properly handled. One possible result is that your event handler will force you to kill LibreOffice.

- 1) Go to **Tools > Customize** to open the *Customize* dialog and select the *Events* tab (Figure 15). The events in the *Customize* dialog are related to the entire application and specific documents.
- 2) In the *Save In* drop-down, select **LibreOffice**, or a specific document from the menu to save your event.
- 3) A common use is to assign the Open Document event to call a specific macro. The macro then performs certain setup tasks for the document. Select the desired event and click **Macro** to open the Macro Selector dialog (similar to Figure 6 on page 9 but with different action buttons).
- 4) Select the desired macro and click **OK** to assign the macro to the event. The *Events* tab will show that the event has been assigned to a macro.

Many objects in a document can be set to call macros when events occur. The most common use is to add a control, such as a button, into a document. Even double-clicking on a graphic opens a dialog with a *Macros* tab that allows you to assign a macro to an event.

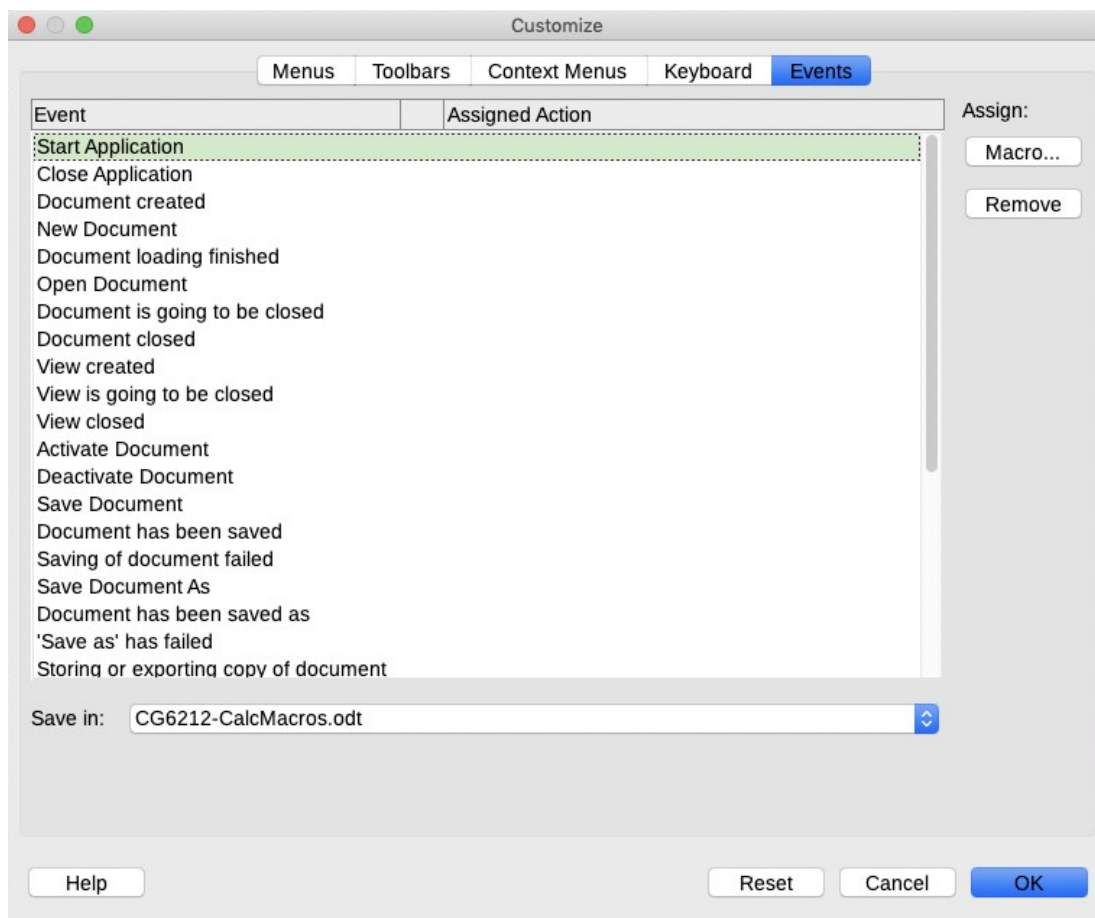


Figure 15: Events tab in Customize dialog

Using extensions

An extension is a package that can be installed into LibreOffice to add new functionality. Extensions can be written in almost any programming language and may be simple or sophisticated. Extensions can be grouped into types, for example:

- Calc add-ins, which provide new functionality for Calc, including new functions that act like normal built-in functions.
- New components and functionality, which normally include some level of User Interface (UI) integration such as new menus or toolbars.

- Chart add-ins with new chart types.
- Linguistic components such as spelling checkers.
- Document templates and images.

Although individual extensions can be found in several places, there is currently an extension repository at: <https://extensions.libreoffice.org/> and some documentation at <https://libreplanet.org/wiki/Group:OpenOfficeExtensions/List>.

For more about obtaining and installing extensions, see Chapter 14, Customizing LibreOffice.

Writing macros without the recorder

The examples covered so far in this chapter were created using the macro recorder and the dispatcher. You can also write macros that directly access the objects that comprise LibreOffice if you are confident in writing computer code. In other words, you can create a macro that directly manipulates a document using more advanced programming logic.

Directly manipulating LibreOffice internal objects is an advanced topic that is beyond the scope of this chapter. A simple example, however, demonstrates how this works.

Listing 5: Append the text "Hello" to the current document

```
Sub AppendHello
    Dim oDoc
    Dim sTextService$
    Dim oCurs

    REM ThisComponent refers to the currently active document.
    oDoc = ThisComponent

    REM Verify that this is a text document.
    sTextService = "com.sun.star.text.TextDocument"
    If NOT oDoc.supportsService(sTextService) Then
        MsgBox "This macro only works with a text document"
        Exit Sub
    End If

    REM Get the view cursor from the current controller.
    oCurs = oDoc.currentController.getViewCursor()

    REM Move the cursor to the end of the document.
    oCurs.gotoEnd(False)

    REM Insert text "Hello" at the end of the document.
    oCurs.Text.insertString(oCurs, "Hello", False)
End Sub
```

Overview of BeanShell, JavaScript, and Python macros

Many programmers may not be familiar with LibreOffice Basic, so LibreOffice supports macros written in three other languages that may be more familiar: BeanShell, JavaScript, and Python.

Macros are organized in the same way for all four scripting languages. The *LibreOffice Macros* container holds all the macros that are supplied in the LibreOffice installation. The *My Macros* library container holds your macros that are available to any of your LibreOffice documents. Each document can also contain your macros that are not available to any other document.

When you use the recording facility, the macros are created in LibreOffice Basic. To use the other available scripting languages, you must write the code yourself.

When you select to run a macro using **Tools > Macros > Run Macro**, LibreOffice displays the *Macro Selector* dialog. This dialog enables selection and running of any available macro, coded in any of the available languages (Figure 16).

When you edit a macro using **Tools > Macros > Edit Macros**, LibreOffice displays the LibreOffice Basic IDE. This dialog enables selection and editing of any available LibreOffice Basic macro, but not macros in other languages.

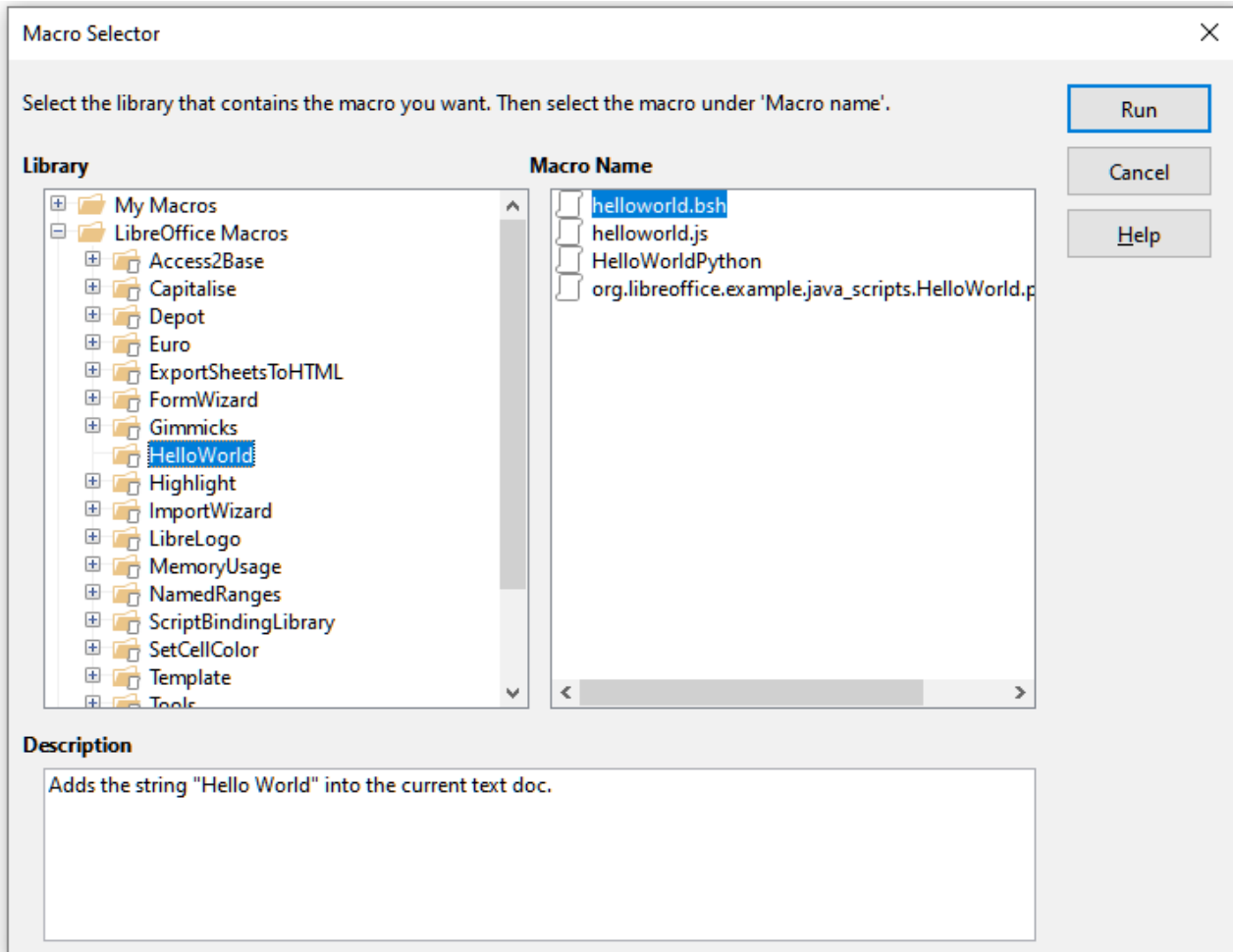


Figure 16: Macro Selector dialog

The component model used in LibreOffice is known as Universal Network Objects or UNO. LibreOffice macros in any scripting language use a UNO runtime application programming interface (API). The XSCRIPTCONTEXT interface is provided to macro scripts in all four languages, which provides some means of access to the various interfaces which they might need to perform an action on a document.

Tip

If you want to learn more about the LibreOffice API as well as UNO objects, refer to the official API documentation at <https://api.libreoffice.org/>

BeanShell macros

BeanShell is a Java-like scripting language that was first released in 1999.

When you select **Tools > Macros > Organize Macros > BeanShell**, LibreOffice displays the BeanShell Macros dialog (Figure 17).

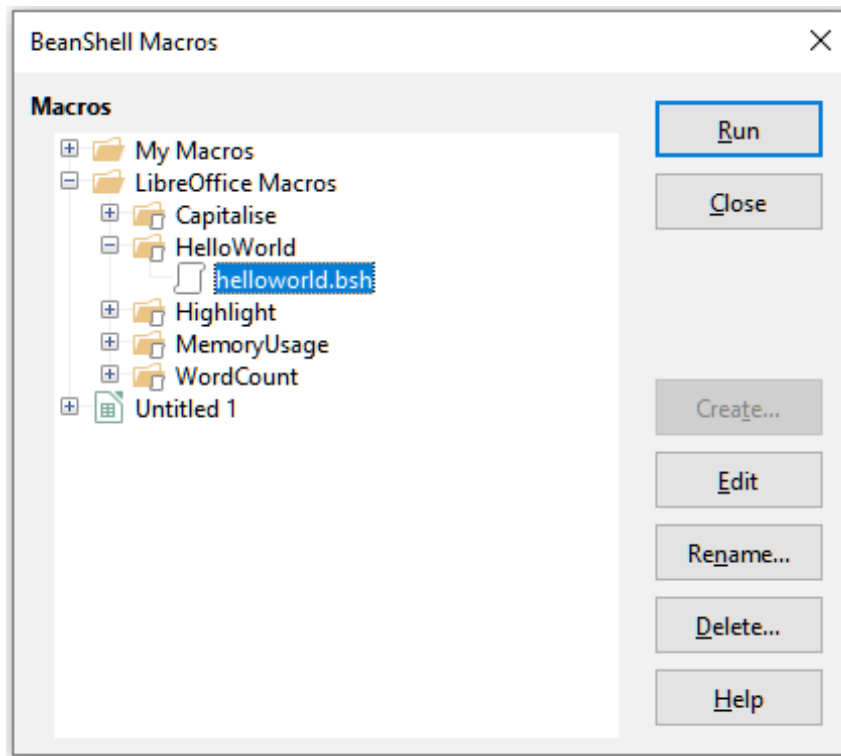


Figure 17: BeanShell Macros dialog

Click the **Edit** button on the BeanShell Macros dialog to access the BeanShell Debug Window (Figure 18).

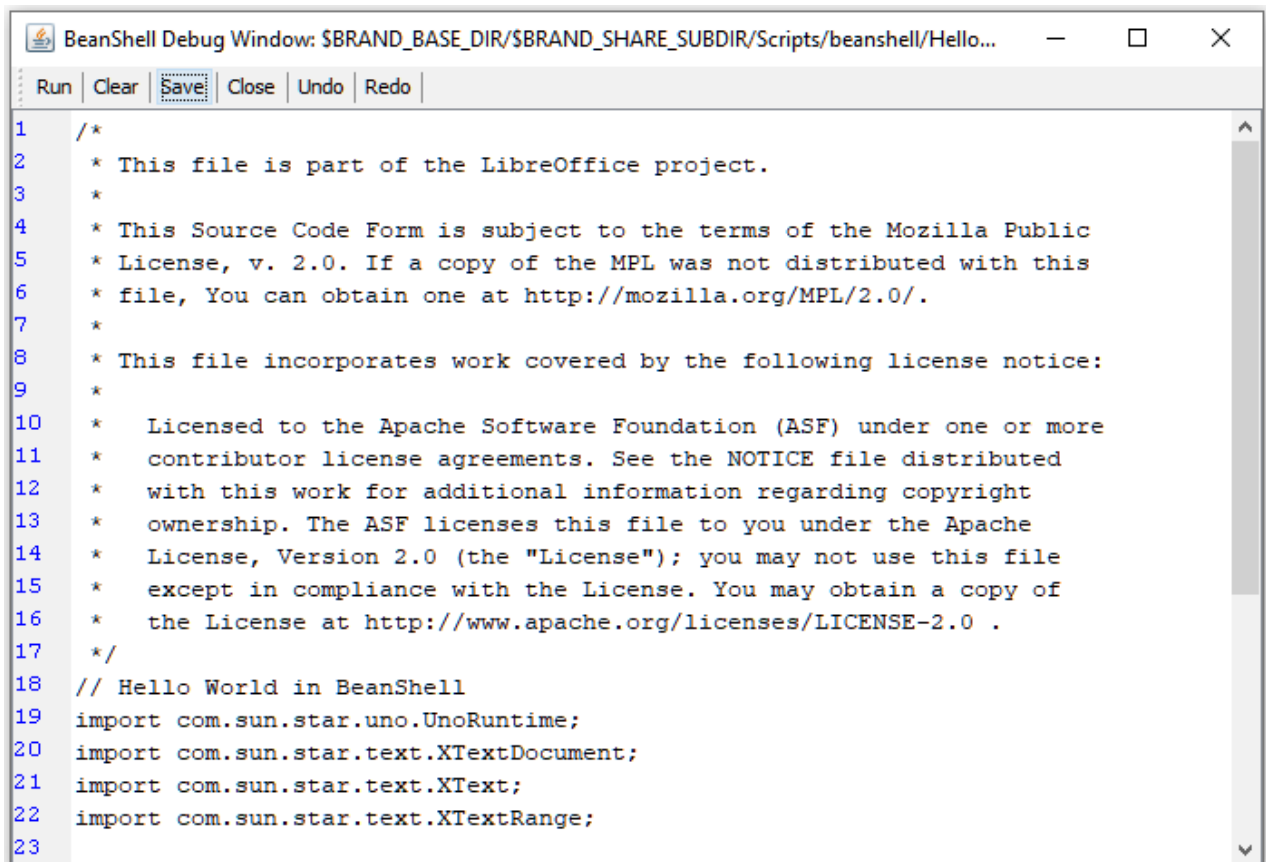


Figure 18: BeanShell Debug Window

Listing 6 is an example of a BeanShell macro that inserts the text “Hello World from BeanShell” in cell A1 of the active Calc spreadsheet.

Listing 6: Sample BeanShell macro

```
import com.sun.star.uno.UnoRuntime;
import com.sun.star.sheet.XSpreadsheetView;
import com.sun.star.text.XText;

model = XSCRIPTCONTEXT.getDocument();

controller = model.getCurrentController();

view = UnoRuntime.queryInterface(XSpreadsheetView.class, controller);
sheet = view.getActiveSheet();
cell = sheet.getCellByPosition(0, 0);
cellText = UnoRuntime.queryInterface(XText.class, cell);
textCursor = cellText.createTextCursor();
cellText.insertString(textCursor, "Hello World from BeanShell", true);
return 0;
```

JavaScript macros

JavaScript is a high-level scripting language that was first released in 1995.

When you select **Tools > Macros > Organize Macros > JavaScript**, LibreOffice displays the JavaScript Macros dialog (Figure 19).

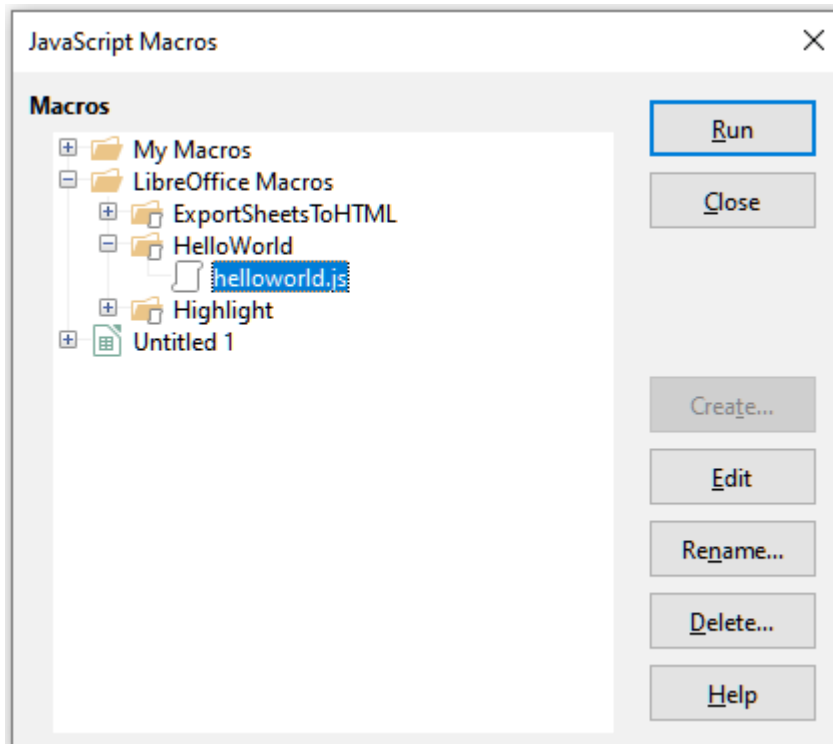


Figure 19: JavaScript Macros dialog

Click the **Edit** button on the JavaScript Macros dialog to access the Rhino JavaScript Debugger (Figure 20). Detailed instructions for using this tool can be found on Mozilla’s website at <https://developer.mozilla.org/en-US/docs/Mozilla/Projects/Rhino/Debugger>.

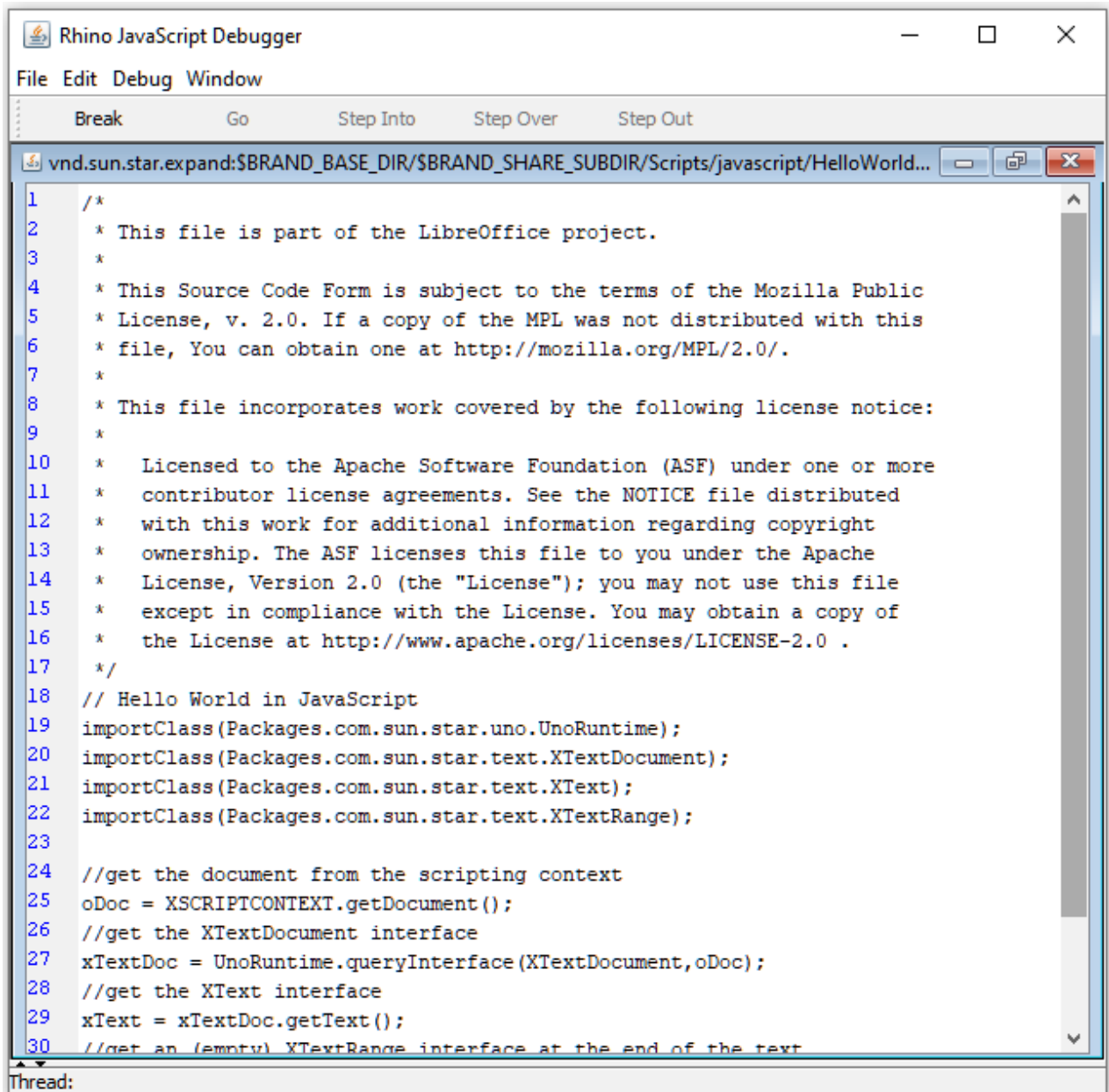


Figure 20: Rhino JavaScript Debugger

Listing 7 is an example of a JavaScript macro that inserts the text “Hello World from JavaScript” in cell A1 of the first sheet in a Calc spreadsheet.

Listing 7: Sample JavaScript macro

```
importClass(Packages.com.sun.star.uno.UnoRuntime);
importClass(Packages.com.sun.star.sheet.XSpreadsheetDocument);
importClass(Packages.com.sun.star.container.XIndexAccess);
importClass(Packages.com.sun.star.table.XCellRange);
importClass(Packages.com.sun.star.table.XCell);

documentRef = XSCRIPTCONTEXT.getDocument();
```

```

spreadsheetInterface = UnoRuntime.queryInterface(XSpreadsheetDocument,
documentRef);

allSheets = UnoRuntime.queryInterface(XIndexAccess,
spreadsheetInterface.getSheets());

theSheet = allSheets.getByIndex(0);

Cells = UnoRuntime.queryInterface(XCellRange, theSheet);

cellA1 = Cells.getCellByPosition(0,0);

theCell = UnoRuntime.queryInterface(XCell, cellA1);

theCell.setFormula("Hello World from JavaScript");

```

Python macros

Python is a high-level, general-purpose programming language that was first released in 1991.

When you select **Tools > Macros > Organize Macros > Python**, LibreOffice displays the Python Macros dialog (Figure 21).

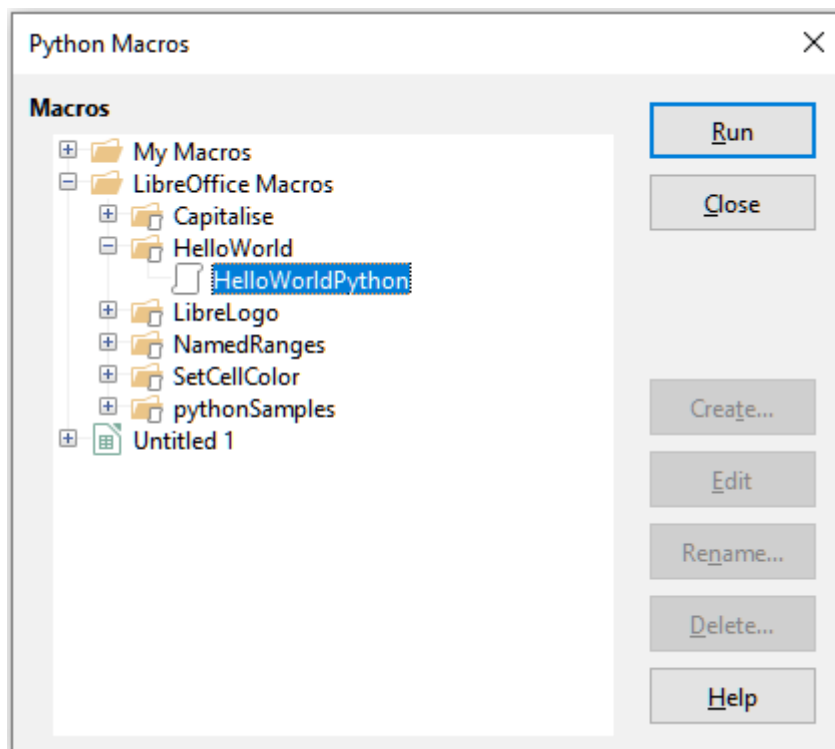


Figure 21: Python Macros dialog

Facilities to edit and debug Python scripts are not currently integrated into the standard LibreOffice user interface. However, you can use any Python editor to create scripts and then copy these files into the Scripts folder in your home directory. For more information, refer to “Where are macros stored?” on page 18.

Listing 8 presents an example of a Python macro that writes the text “Hello World from Python” into cell A1 of the first sheet in a Calc spreadsheet.

Listing 8: Sample Python macro

```
import uno

def HelloWorld():
    doc = XSCRIPTCONTEXT.getDocument()
    cell = doc.Sheets[0]['A1']
    cell.setString('Hello World from Python')
    return
```

Tip

The Alternative Python Script Organizer (APSO) extension makes it easier to edit and organize Python scripts, in particular when embedded in a document. Using APSO you can configure your preferred source code editor, start the integrated Python shell and debug Python scripts. Visit <https://gitlab.com/jmzambon/apso> to download APSO and learn more about how to use it.

Tip

To learn more about Python scripting in LibreOffice, you can refer to the Wiki “Macros/Python Basics”, where you will find in-depth explanations and examples on how to get started with Python scripting. To learn more, visit https://wiki.documentfoundation.org/Macros/Python_Basics.

Finding more information

Numerous resources are available that provide help with writing macros. Use **Help > LibreOffice Help**, or press the *F1* key, to open the LibreOffice help pages. The upper left corner of the LibreOffice help system contains a drop-down list that determines which help set is displayed. To view the help for Basic, choose **Basic** from this list.

Included material

Many excellent macros are included with LibreOffice. Use **Tools > Macros > Organize Macros > Basic** to open the LibreOffice Basic Macros dialog. Expand the *Tools* library in the *LibreOffice* library container. Inspect the *Debug* module — some good examples include *WritedbInfo* (document) and *printdbgInfo* (sheet).

Online resources

The following links and references contain information regarding macro programming:

<https://wiki.documentfoundation.org/Macros>

<https://ask.libreoffice.org/> (a Q&A site where volunteers answer questions related to LibreOffice)

https://wiki.documentfoundation.org/Documentation/Other_Documentation_and_Resources (look in Programmers section for BASIC Programmers’ Guide and Developers’ Guide; the latter contains a detailed explanation)

<http://forum.openoffice.org/en/forum/> (Apache OpenOffice community forum; volunteers answer questions about LibreOffice as well)

Printed and ebook materials

Andrew Pitonyak published a free online book “OpenOffice.org Macros Explained” that is a great reference to learn the Basic language used both in LibreOffice and OpenOffice. The PDF version can be downloaded at https://www.pitonyak.org/OOME_3_0.pdf.

Dr. Mark Alexander Bain published the book “Learn OpenOffice.org Spreadsheet Macro Programming”. See <https://www.packtpub.com/openoffice-ooobasic-calc-automation/book>.

Roberto Benitez's “Database Programming with OpenOffice.org Base & Basic” is also a great source to learn more about macro programming.