Tag based file/document management

Computers and its interfaces have evolved a lot since Windows 95. One important thing hasn't changed though: the way we store files in the system. We store files in folders in with names like C:\Users\Username\Documents. Having files organized in this way, following old technical standards is a big leftover from computing history that should be removed. Finding files in the current system is way too cumbersome. Tag based file management is the solution.

Every file should not be stored in a folder on a drive, but in a filepool, to be retrieved via tags, which are independent of the technical constraints of the folder hierarchy and thus much more flexible.

This can be done in a way that is backwards compatible with Windows, and almost all of the applications running on it.

As pictures can say a 1000 words, the explanation of this idea will continue in pictures.

Wouter van Wijk

ps. This actually is a follow up on my own Windows program that was designed to make browsing throught folders easier. It's called Folder View. See www.folderview.com

Saving documents/files

To start with the Save Document dialog. Normally this dialog is the starting point of a quest through the filesystem or the network. Including strange things like C:\, \\Server\Share\ User/Folder, My Computer and H:\USB.

Not so with a tag based filemanager. A user can fill in a title, check some boxes next to the tags the file should belong to, and press Save.

Compare that simplicity to the oldstyle dialog below.

Gewijzigd op Type

ODF-tekstdocument (.odt)

Automatische bestandsnaamextensie Met wachtwoord opslaan Eilterin

•

Grootte

Labels

lnterVideo

My Music

🐌 TomTom

Opslaan als

9.

Recente locaties

Bureaublad

wouter Computer Netwerk

Opslaan in: Documente

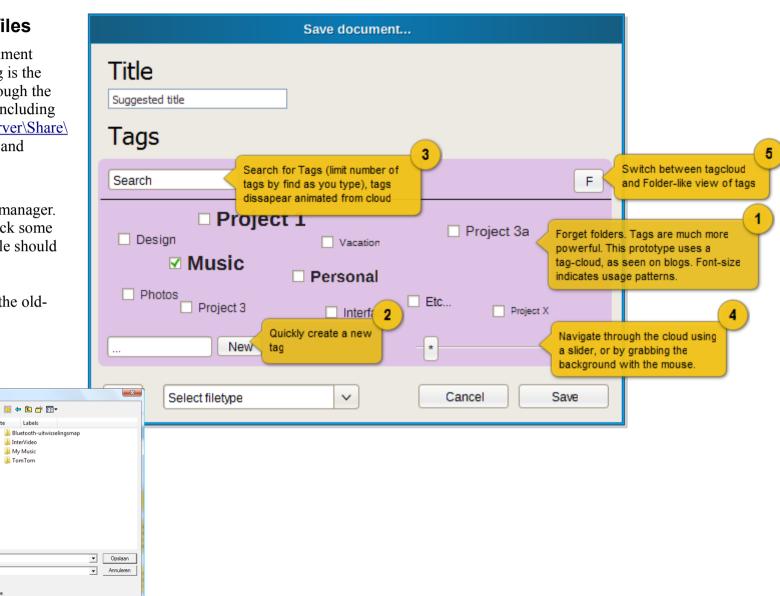
Adobe

Onslaan als:

FrostWire

Mijn Google Gadgets

SharpDevelop Projects



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Unlike most tagging-systems, these tags can be hierarchical. So the Music tag can contain other tags like Pop, Classical, or Radiohead and Bach. If the user wants it that way, it's not compulsory.

When the user checks a tag that contains other tags, a popup will appear containing the other tags.

Title Suggested title	Save document
Tags	
	Photos
 Proj Design Music Pop 	When the user checks a tag, an overlay appears, containing the sub-tags (if any).
Sear D Blur V Rac	diohead

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For backwards compatibility, the dialog can be expanded to save files the traditional way. Of course, a user can tag this file too, so it wil be easily accessible even though it's stored somewhere else.

	Save document		
Title Suggested title			
Tags			
D Pi	oject 1		
Design	Vacation	Project 3a	
⊠ Musi	C		
Project	3 🔲 Interface	itc Project X	
Search	0,	New	
proc 1 attr	News	old-s	lialog can also be used for tyle saving of files on a
<u>P</u> laces	Name	Today	on in the filesystem
🗷 Desktop 📖 File System	exec	Today	
BACKUP	E fscreate	Today	
BOOT	E keycreate	Today	
RECOVER	E prev E sockcreate	Select the location to save to a r folder. And tag it of course	lorma
▲ Add = Bernov This button sh the folder view	ows/hides	ncel Save	

The tags in the dialog don't have to be presented in a tag cloud. They can also be presented in an hierarchical way, just like the old folder-system.

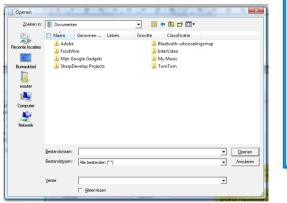
Save document				
Title Suggested title Tags				
Search Project 1 Music Pop Rock Radiohead Photos Vacation	 O. Personal Project 3a Interface Design Project 3 Project X 	Etc Folder-like view font size still ind	licates usage.	
V Select filetype	• •	Cancel Save		

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Open Document/file

Unlike in the current system, the Open Document/file dialog is very different from the Save Document dialog. At the bottom is a file list, which contains the files. If the right file is not already there, just type the name into the upper quicksearch box, or check some tags. Both methods will limit the number of files in the filelist.

Compare that simplicity to the old-style dialog below.

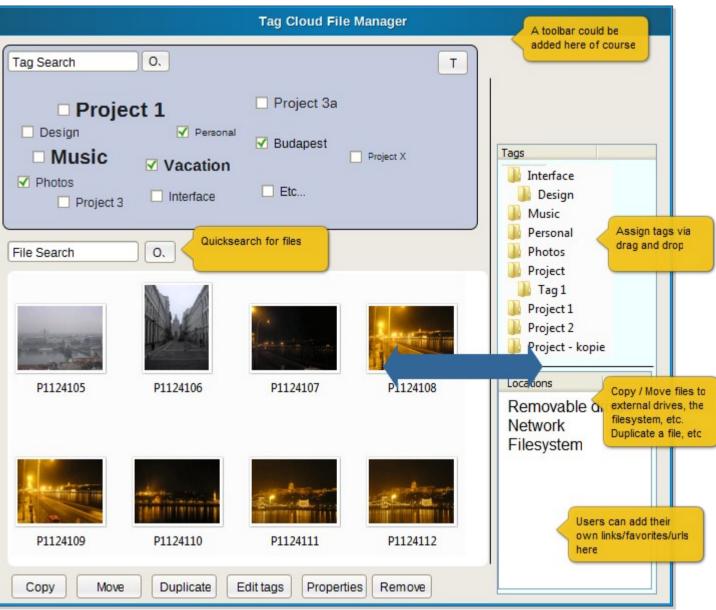


Open do	cument
Title Quicksearch (title, contents)	Quicksearch (limit the number of files below, by find as you type)
Tags	
Search O.	Т
Project 1 Design Vaca Music Project 3 Person	Interface
Name Last used	Size Type
Filename2	This shows the results, by default the most recent
Filename3 Filename4 Filename5 Filename6	files (of the type the program requests) on top. Most of the times, the requested file will already be in the list. But of course, you can limit the number of results by entering something in the search-box or
	checking some tags.
re	sult-list updates accordingly.

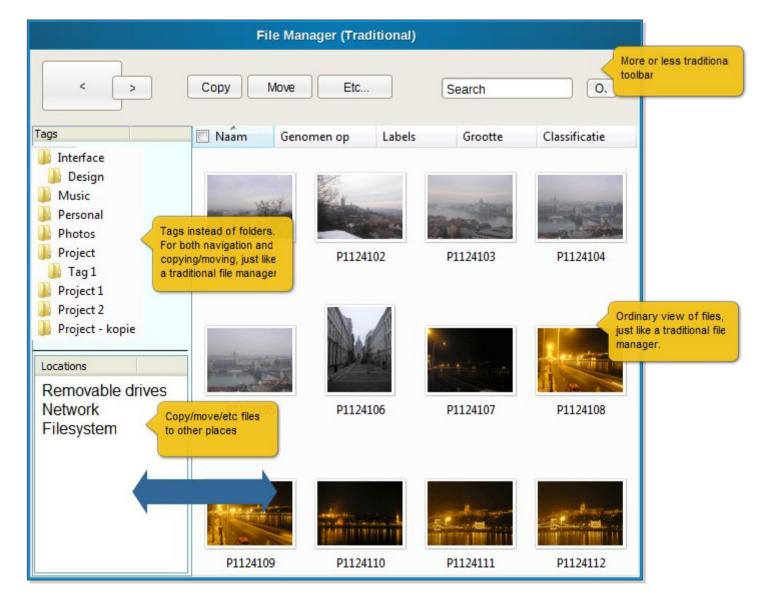
File Manager

The new tagbased filemanager is extremely simple to use. The user most probably won't use it as much as the traditional filemanager, simply because the files are by default organised much more easier and structured. The user simply doesn't have to organise as much as in a traditional system.

But nevertheless, some organizing will be needed. Again, a tag cloud is used to select the files to be organised, just like in the Open Document dialog. The selected files can be moved and copied to the lists on the right side of the window. These lists contain the tags an things like the old-school filesystem, the network and removable drives.



For backwards compatibility, a more traditional filemanager can be used. This one looks a lot like traditional filemanagers, but uses tags instead of folders.



Other

To facilitate all the different uses of the filesystem and network, the tags are not just tags. Checking a tag can result in a system-action/script which can be defined by the user. But the system also contains standard actions. Examples of actions:

- a tag can be linked to a location in the filesystem (on the harddisk/external drive/network/etc)
- checking a tag let the system to sync the (encrypted) file. With pda, another folder, ftp-location, external drive, mp3player, webservice like flickr or google docs.

The system also contains default tags:

- Recent ...
- Most recent imports into the system (photos, mp3, downloads, copies from external drives, CD-rips)
- File or document-types
- External drives / Network tags
- Software