TagTree: Exploring Tag-Based Navigational Structures

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Although desktop search engines are now widely available on the computers of typical users, navigation through folder hierarchies is still the dominant mode of information access. Most users still prefer to store and search for their information within a strict hierarchy of folders.

This poster describes a new concept of storing files and folders in and retrieving from TagTrees using tagging and automatically maintained navigational hierarchies. TagTrees are compatible with all currently prevalent software environments. A prototype implementation called tagstore provides a flexible framework for experimentation and a testbed for both usability studies and longer term field tests. [Voit 2011]

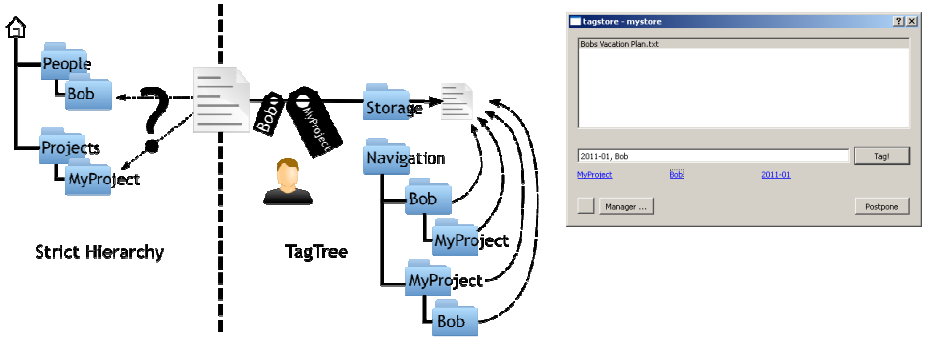
From the early file storage systems of the last century until modern desktop computer systems, the method of storing files into a hierarchy of folders has not changed. The amount of information has increased dramatically within

the last fifty years. Therefore advanced methods of accessing information in local files are an important issue.

Tagging seems to be a promising approach for handling a large number of items. Within the last thirty years a variety of personal information management tools were developed with little or no influence on the average computer desktop as Voit et al. [2009] summarizes.

Storing files in TagTrees provides multi-path navigation to the same information. Users are able to browse to files using associative tags. This kind of navigation does not rely on a mental model of the folder hierarchy system.. Therefore, within a large set of files, navigation performance in TagTrees is able to provide better performance than browsing in strict folder hierarchies.

Ongoing user studies show that users are able to adopt this new way of browsing their file system very fast. Subjective impression of test users is very positive.



References

Voit, Karl [2011]. tagstore. http://www.tagstore.org/. (Accessed 2011-01-17)

Voit, Karl, Keith Andrews, and Wolfgang Slany [2009]. Why Personal Information Management (PIM) Technologies Are Not Widespread. ASIS&T 2009 Workshop on Personal Information Management (PIM 2009). http://pimworkshop.org/2009/papers/voit-pim2009.pdf.