Personal Information Management

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First, the applications...

What do PIMs look like?
From: Kaushal Kumar <kakumar@novell.com>
To: desktop-devel-list@gnome.org, evolution-hackers@gnome.org, gnome-doc-list@gnome.org, gnome-i18n@gnome.org, release-team@gnome.org
Subject: [Evolution-hackers] gtkhtml has been branched
Date: Mon, 05 Sep 2005 01:59:03 -0600 (13:29 IST)

Hi all,

The gnome-2-12 branch of gtkhtml has been created. This would be the stable branch for GtkHTML 3.8.0. The development branch is CVS HEAD.

Cheers,
Kaushal

Evolution-hackers mailing list
Watch Madagascar

Start: Sat 09/10/2005
Due Date: Fri 09/02/2005
Status: Not Started
Priority: Normal
Elements of personal information management

- Email
- Files
- Bookmarks
- To-do lists
- Calendars
- Contact lists
Elements of personal information management

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This week’s readings focus on the first three of these.
Malone (1983), *How do people organize their desks?*

DESKTOP METAPHOR — ARISE!
Malone (1983), *How do people organize their desks?*

**DESKTOP METAPHOR — ARISE!**

...or rather, what does the organization of physical desks imply for computer-based information management built upon a desktop metaphor?
Malone (1983), *How do people organize their desks?*

**TWO MAJOR FINDINGS**

- People organize their desks to *remind* themselves of things.

- Categorizing things is *hard*, and affects how people organize their documents.
Malone (1983), *How do people organize their desks?*

**UNITS OF DESK ORGANIZATION**

- *files*: things that are explicitly titled and arranged.
- *piles*: things that are like... whatever. They may be unnamed and unarranged.
Malone (1983), *How do people organize their desks?*

**UNITS OF DESK ORGANIZATION**

- *files*: things that are explicitly titled and arranged.
- *piles*: things that are like... whatever. They may be unnamed and unarranged.

“It may be desirable to incorporate the possibility of untitled piles in computer-based information systems.”
Malone (1983), *How do people organize their desks?*

Remember, categorizing information is hard. How can computers help?
Malone (1983), *How do people organize their desks?*

Computers can help the user to

- **Overcome physical burdens**
  - avoid the mechanical difficulties of creating classifications

- **Overcome cognitive burdens**
  - multiple classifications
  - deferred classification
  - automatic classification
Malone (1983), *How do people organize their desks?*

- Multiple classifications – we’ll see this again... often teamed with information retrieval and called “views” or “aspects”

- Deferred classification – store it in a pile on the desktop

- Automatic classification – the *de facto* standard for email, called “sorting”
Malone (1983), *How do people organize their desks?*

“One can even imagine a system where users search for a document by a kind of simulated time-lapse photography of the history of their electronic desktop. They could ‘rewind’ and ‘fast forward’ the desktop to locate the last time the desired document was on the desk.”

We’ll see this again, too.
Malone (1983), *How do people organize their desks?*

What about the *reminding* function of the desktop?
Malone (1983), *How do people organize their desks?*

What about the *reminding* function of the desktop?

Just make a place to dump stuff where it’ll remain in view!
Freeman, Gelernter (1996), *Lifestreams: A Storage Model for Personal Data*

1. The desktop metaphor is weak
2. Named files and hierarchical directories are obsolete
Freeman, Gelernter (1996), *Lifestreams: A Storage Model for Personal Data*

The solution is a time-ordered stream of documents as an underlying storage system, organized by stream filters.

These are Lifestreams.
Freeman, Gelernter (1996), *Lifestreams: A Storage Model for Personal Data*

The manifesto:

1. Storage should be transparent
2. Directories are inadequate as an organizing device
3. Archiving should be automatic
4. The system should provide sophisticated logic for summarizing/compressing/picturing/animating large groups of related documents
5. Computers should make “reminding” convenient
6. Personal data should be accessible anywhere and compatibility should be automatic
Freeman, Gelernter (1996), *Lifestreams: A Storage Model for Personal Data*

Chronological streams provide historical context, a place for present work, and an attractive reminder mechanism, “future creation”.

“Time is a natural guide to experience; it is the attribute that comes closest to a universal skeleton-key for stored experience.”
Kaplan et al (1990), *Agenda: A personal information manager*

This is the program that created the category.

What sort of database do you need to manage personal information?

Boardman, Sasse (2004), *Stuff goes into the computer and doesn’t come out.*

- They find certain tools are overloaded.
- How does a small subset of British scholars organize its information? (they are very sensitive about their organization)
- They test WorkspaceMirror, developed because of their observations of “folder overlap.”
Two points of interest:

- Their study participants tended to not use bookmarks because they had difficulty remembering their context or relevance, or because they are not easily portable.

- They preferred to find files based on their location. The participants hated search, and would only use it as a last result.
Any questions or observations?