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Building Your Custom Home(page) With Streamlined Bookmarks

BOOKMARKS RECORD THE URL (Web address) of where you've been on the Web and may want to visit again. Bookmarks (the term used by Netscape; Internet Explorer calls them Favorites) offer the convenience of returning to a site merely by looking in the bookmark file and then clicking on the bookmark name.

The idea is convenience, but in practice the system can be unwieldy. For example, as you scan your bookmarks, do you remember what the bookmark for www.bflstpk.com connects to? (Nothing, by the way.) Do you have so many bookmarks that finding the one you want is a chore?

Streamlining your browser's existing bookmarks file is a simple improvement. Create descriptive file folders in which the bookmarks can be placed. File folders can be named as you please, but be specific: Don't just use "law" or "legal research" folders. Try lawyer directories, federal codes or Arizona courts.

But browser bookmarks are only one way to record favorite Web sites. Another approach is using a customized start page.

The easiest is to partially customize someone else's Web page. Many commercial sites allow you to enter your preferences, which then appear every time you visit the site. For example, you can choose from among major news providers (such as broadcasters and newspapers) and financial sites (such as stock brokers and financial advisers). There is now a partially customizable legal research page available at findlaw.com. You must register for this service, as with most custom page services.

How do you change your home or start page? In Internet Explorer, first go to the page you want as your start page. Then click on "View," then on "Internet Options," then "General." In the "Home Page" area, click on "Use Current." In Netscape Navigator, go to the page on which you want to start. Click "Edit," then "Preferences," then "Navigator." In the box, click "Use current page."

Why not use your own page listing your favorite sites? Software, including popular word processors, easily will convert plain text to a Web document. And the beauty of this approach is that you can access it from any computer. Most Internet Service Providers provide free server space for your home page. Just follow the ISP's instructions for uploading the file to its server.

Yet another almost effortless option to preserve bookmarks is a Web site that offers you a private (password-protected), personal page of your preferences. One example is Backflip (www.backflip.com), which allows you to export your bookmarks file to its server and to add more as you surf

BROWSERS NOT SHARING WELL?

What do you do if you have favorite sites bookmarked on Netscape, Internet Explorer and AOL? URL Organizer lets you list sites from these programs and open a bookmarked site in any browser with only one click (www.urlorg.com, $20).

Many freeware and shareware programs organize and manage bookmarks efficiently. For an example, visit *tucows.interwrx.com/bookmark95.html*.

merely by clicking. Although Backflip tracks your Internet travels, the service promises confidentiality.

Perhaps the most innovative approach is an alternative to bookmarking. Rather than record bookmarks, "Octopus" (www.octopus.com/home.htm) records your interests. It then allows you to create a customized "view" of the information you want. For example, rather than navigate to a financial site to get data on a stock, you select your stock and Octopus shows your "view" of that information, reaching out across the Web to retrieve the data. ▲

Questions or suggestions about bookmarks or anything else on the Internet? E-mail them to sidebar@home.com.

CREATING NETSCAPE FOLDERS:
1. Click "Bookmarks."
2. Click "Edit" and you will open your bookmark file.
3. Click "File" and "New Folder" and type in the name.

ADDING TO NETSCAPE FOLDERS:
1. Go to the Web site.
2. Click "Bookmarks."
3. Click "File Bookmark."
4. Click on the folder where you want to place that bookmark.

CREATING INTERNET EXPLORER FOLDERS:
1. Click "Favorites."
2. Click "Organize Favorites."

ADDING TO INTERNET EXPLORER FOLDERS:
1. Go to the Web site.
2. Click on "Favorites."
3. Click "Add to Favorites" and then select the folder.