

Bookmark Managers

One size does not fit all

By Dennis M. Kennedy

Lawyers who use the Internet regularly are well aware of two major difficulties. First, finding the information you want can be difficult. Second, returning to that information once you have found it can be even more difficult, especially since the Internet is a fluid medium and webpages can change or even disappear.

This article focuses on the second problem: How can you remember and return to great information once you have found it? I have struggled with this question for quite some time and have three recommendations for you.

Bookmark Basics

By way of background, Internet browsers (Microsoft's Internet Explorer and Netscape's Navigator) include a feature that allows you to store and create shortcuts to websites that you have previously visited. I'll refer to these shortcuts as "bookmarks," but they are also known as "favorites."

In essence, when you visit a webpage that you like, you "bookmark" it and store it in a bookmark list. The next time you want to return to that page, you simply go to your bookmark list, find the bookmark for that webpage, click on it, and you will be returned to that page. You can also organize bookmarks into various folders.

As you collect bookmarks, however, they can become unorganized and difficult to use, thereby defeating their purpose. Many legal professionals end up with hundreds of bookmarks in multiple folders, and one catch-all folder containing even more bookmarks.

Stop the Bookmark Madness

I've struggled with bookmark management for years and have looked at a number of solutions ranging from stand-alone programs to homegrown solutions. I have three suggestions that may help you make your

bookmarks more manageable and improve your use of the Web: bookmark managers, online bookmark tools, and an impressive new program called Clickgarden.

Bookmark Managers

Historically, bookmark management solutions have taken the form of small database applications. A good example of this approach is the well-regarded Powermarks (www.powermarks.com). These tools incorporate your bookmarks into a small database that you can use to search and otherwise manage your bookmarks. If you like working with databases and using keyword searches, I consider these tools quite powerful. These types of programs do have one notable drawback—they are separate from the browser, and they can turn your use of bookmarks into a two (or more) stage process.

Online Bookmark Tools

A more recent development has been the online bookmark tool, such as Backflip (www.backflip.com) and Blink (www.blink.com). I've used Backflip on a regular basis for the last few months. Backflip acts as both a website and a Web application. You export a copy of your bookmarks up to the Backflip website. Your Backflip bookmarks remain password-protected (although you can share them with others if you wish). You save webpage addresses (URLs) to Backflip rather than using the bookmark function. When you save a URL, Backflip enables you to describe it and assign it to an existing or newly created category.

When you want to relocate a page, you go to www.backflip.com, log in, and see all your bookmarks presented in well-organized folders. Backflip bookmarks reside on the Internet and you can access them no matter what computer you use.

Backflip, not surprisingly, works best with a fast Internet connection. Even with a fast connection, reorganization of folders and moving bookmarks to new folders can feel a bit cumbersome and slow, but it can be a good solution, especially for mobile users.

Clickgarden

I'm excited about a new program called Clickgarden (www.clickgarden.com) because it addresses the way I actually use the Web. (Disclosure: Clickgarden, Inc. is a client of Thompson Coburn LLP, the law firm at which I work.) Clickgarden tackles the bookmark problem by actually enhancing the browser. Clickgarden serves as a suite of useful Internet tools integrated into the Internet Explorer browser. It consists of three core tools: (1) browsing tools, including a simultaneous search of multiple search engines; (2) security tools, including ad and cookie blockers, encryption, and deletion tools; and (3) organization tools.

In its organizer mode, Clickgarden enables you, with the click of a mouse, to collect webpages in folders of your own choosing called "collections." You can collect a copy of the page, with or without graphics and with or without ads blocked. You can collect the entire webpage or any portion of a page and even add your own highlights or annotations on the copy of that page.

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In the collection folders, you will see a thumbnail image of that page. This image allows you to return to the actual page or simply use the copy that you have created, in case a page changes or becomes unavailable. Using the image rather than simply a URL or text summary is a blessing to those of us who remember better visually.

You can send these collections to other people who use Clickgarden. You can also add other non-Internet documents, including word-processing documents and spreadsheets to the collection folder. This gives you a handy way to create a research folder that includes all relevant documents as well as Internet research. The collection folders even offer a good way to make presentations that use webpages.

Clickgarden presents a great way to get around the limitations of the standard bookmark management approaches and lets you

harvest, use, and manage the information and knowledge that you have gathered from the Internet. The Clickgarden approach should appeal to many lawyers, even though Clickgarden is not a legal-specific product.

The standard version of Clickgarden is \$49.95 and may be downloaded from the Clickgarden website. Clickgarden also contains other powerful security and browsing tools.

Conclusion

If your bookmarks have overwhelmed you, tools like Backflip, Powermarks, and Clickgarden can improve your Internet experience. One may fit your style. If, like me, you have looked for a tool to really help you tame the Web, you must try Clickgarden. It may eventually become the best solution for lawyers looking for ways to integrate information that they find on the Internet and

elsewhere into one central location. That's a goal many lawyers who use the Internet have long sought.

This article originated in The TechnoLawyer Community, a free online community in which legal professionals share information about business and technology issues, products, and services, often developing valuable business relationships in the process. To join The TechnoLawyer Community, visit www.technolawyer.com. ◆

Dennis Kennedy (dkennedy@thompsoncoburn.com) is an attorney who writes and speaks frequently on Internet and legal technology topics. He practices in the Intellectual Property and Information Technology Department at Thompson Coburn LLP in St. Louis. Kennedy has collected many of his articles on legal technology at www.denniskennedy.com/lprimer.htm.