

Bookmark Managers: Programs vs. Web Services-Computer Information

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The rapid development of the World Wide Web in recent years has led to an explosive growth of information on the Internet. Our contemporary lifestyle would be unimaginable without access to such a super-abundant cornucopia of valuable information and web surfing has now become an everyday occupation for even the most diverse sections of society.

This rapid expansion of web resources raises some new issues for all of us. How could you possibly remember; after a long search, the address of that crucial web page? How will you be able to return to the page without repeating a tedious web search through hundreds and thousands of pages?

The answer is obvious, you need a program that will allow you to easily create and manage a database of web resources. Of course, this database must be quick, intuitive and convenient to use.

One way to resolve this problem is to use your web browser's bookmarks feature. Bookmarks are a popular term for the lists of web page links stored in web browsers, although they are called 'Favorites' in Internet Explorer. These web browser bookmark systems have some severe limitations. For example, each bookmark list will only be compatible with a specific web browser. If you use several different web browsers you will have to manage the bookmark system in each one. Web browser bookmark lists may become cumbersome to use when your bookmark list grows beyond a few items. Important features missing from web browser bookmark systems include:

- Powerful search functions;
- Synchronization of bookmarks between different computers;
- Detection and automatic deletion of duplicate bookmarks;
- Checks for availability of bookmarked web pages.

Specialist programs and web services that store and organize bookmarks are now available and they offer a comprehensive solution to these problems. They are called bookmark managers or bookmark organizers (in this article both terms have the same meaning). The difference between online (web-based) bookmark managers and standalone bookmark managers is in the location of the stored bookmark database and in the way that the database is accessed. Web services called 'online bookmark managers' store the user's bookmarks on their remote servers and their bookmarks may be accessed from any browser. A standalone bookmark organizer is simply a program which runs on your local computer. It stores the bookmark database on a hard disk and allows access through its own built-in interface.

Here are some examples of web-based bookmark managers:

iKeepBookmarks.com - <http://www.ikeepbookmarks.com>

LinkaGoGo - <http://www.linkagogo.com>

Murl - <http://murl.com>

You can find more links to online bookmark managers here:

http://dmoz.org/Computers/Internet/On_the_Web/Web_Applications/Bookmark_Managers/

Bookmark management software can be found here:

Link Commander - <http://www.resortlabs.com/bookmark-manager/linkcommander.php>

Linkman - http://www.outertech.com/index.php?_charisma_page=product&id=5

Powermarks - <http://www.kaylon.com/power.html>

Any software catalog will contain plenty of links to bookmark managers. For example:

<http://www.snapfiles.com/shareware/misc/tools/swurlorg.html>

Offline and online bookmark managers each have relative advantages and disadvantages due to their differing methods of database storage and access.

An online bookmark manager does not depend on any particular computer. If you have an Internet connection you can access your bookmarks from any computer in the world. You don't need to synchronize the bookmarks on your home/work PC or notebook because they will all access the same bookmarks database. With an online bookmark manager you can access your bookmarks even when you are in an Internet cafe! Another advantage is that most of them are free. They will cost you time, though, because you access your bookmarks via an Internet connection. More importantly, most of the web interfaces are not as convenient as software based bookmark managers and don't have so many useful features. For example, they can't search for and delete duplicate database items. Here are some of the other potential disadvantages of using online bookmark managers:

- 1) You risk losing all your bookmarks if, for some reason, the web service closes down.
- 2) There is a danger of unauthorized access to your private bookmarks because your bookmark manager server may not be secure against hackers.

The advantages and disadvantages of offline bookmark managers are almost exactly opposite to those of online bookmark managers and will be discussed next.

Any offline bookmark manager is tied to the computer on which it is installed. It stores your bookmarks in a database (which usually has its own proprietary format) that is located on one of the hard drives. To use your bookmarks on several computers you will need to install the program on each computer and find a way to synchronize the bookmark databases. Most of the currently available bookmark organizers do have a database synchronization feature. Also, there are now devices with high data transfer speeds (e.g. flash drives) that can store an independent bookmark database and allow it to be shared between several computers.

Another disadvantage of bookmark manager software is the price. There are some free programs out there, but they don't have a great number of features and technical support is often weak or unavailable. The programs that require payment are inexpensive, though, usually costing from \$20 to \$40. The user licenses of such programs will normally allow you to install the programs on all of your computers.

In my opinion, the disadvantages of standalone bookmark managers are minimal compared to their advantages. The location of both the program and database on the same computer guarantees you fast access to your bookmarks and high security from hacker attacks. The convenience of the program interface and the number of useful features are limited only by the power of the computer and the skills of developers.

So, how should you organize your bookmarks? Should you use an online or offline bookmark manager? I don't think there is a definite answer. It all depends on your preferences and working habits. If mobility is your priority, if you travel often and wish to access your bookmarks no matter where you are and from any computer, then you should consider an online bookmark manager. If speed, ease of use, security and functionality is most important to you then an offline bookmark manager might be a better choice.

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