

Project Contexts to Situate Personal Information

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ABSTRACT

The Personal Project Planner prototype works as an extension to the file manager to provide people with rich-text overlays to their information (folders, files and also email, web pages, notes). Rich-text, document-like project plans can be created which then provide a context in which to create or reference the email messages, electronic documents, web pages, etc. that are needed to complete the plan. The user can later locate an information item such as an email message with reference to the plan (e.g., as an alternative to a mostly context-free search through the inbox or sent mail). The Planner explores a possibility that an effective organization of project-related information can emerge as a natural by-product of efforts to plan and structure the project.

Categories and Subject Descriptors

H.5.2. [Information Interfaces and Representation (HCI)]: User Interfaces—Evaluation/methodology; —User-centered design

General Terms

Human Factors

Keywords

Personal information management, contextualized search, personal project planning, re-finding & re-use of personal information.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the **Personal Project Planner** users can construct a document-like outline for a personal project such as “house-remodel” (see Figure 1).

The Planner provides the following features:

- Support for a “**drag & link**” action of excerpting. Select text of interest, drag (or copy) and then drop (or paste) into a project plan. A link to the source of the drag (or copy) is automatically created. Often we are mainly interested in only a small part – sometimes only a phrase or sentence – of the email message, web page, report, article or other document that we are reading but we might like to get back to the rest of the information item later on.

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- Support for “**create & link**”. A link to the newly created item (e-document, email message) is automatically placed at the insertion point in a project plan. The project plan provides a context for the newly created item.
- Ordering of elements. Users can order headings, subheadings and links of a project plan however they like. People depend on ordering as a way to establish priorities and to direct their attention to “first things first”.
- Notes. Users can include notes just as they would in a document. Notes can, for example, be used to provide clarification for an associated heading..



✦ kitchen

✦ counter tops

- ✦ new-tech alternatives
 - granite is expensive .. check out other
- ✦ find out what the budget allows
 - [quick questoin about budget for col](#)
- ✦ lower cost granite
 - some good web sites...
 - [Granite has recently become the rr kitchens. Granite is both durable ar](#)
 - [Unlike marble, granite is a relatively unaffected by most chemicals](#)

figure 1. A plan built in the Planner also organizes project-relevant information.

2. Planner Architecture

Behind the scenes, the Planner is able to support its more document-like outline view by distributing XML fragments one per folder. For a given folder, the Planner assembles fragments on demand to present a coherent view including notes, excerpts, links and an ordering of subfolders. The distribution of XML fragments in association with folders has more general application in support of a variety of views into personal information such as views of work flows, decision trees and tabular views. Views can readily be enhanced through the use of pictures and graphics.

3. Conclusions

The Planner aspires to an essential integration in which personal information is naturally organized and managed as an outgrowth of a person's efforts to plan a project.