eLearning & Distance Education

iDESIGN

File Management

Your desktop is NOT a mass grave of files

"Super Shakespeare" - Mathew McFarren

Shakespeare writes:

> Let me not, unto my komputer desktop,
>
> Pile receipts atop homework atop family piks

...or some approximation of the same. The point is that Shakespeare's truths are eternal, and this one is no exception to the rule. Especially when it is so easy, and there are so many tools which can help, to maintain order.

NAMING CONVENTIONS

The first step of file management is to provide every new, revised, shared, or discovered file with a name that is

- unique,

- indicative of whether the file is a finished product or merely a draft (in which case, it is important that the name reflects *which* draft), and

- comprehensible to a future you who will have forgotten all context which would help to explain why the file exists in the first place.

So long as you name your files well, you will be able to find them again if you perform a Spotlight (Mac) or Finder (Windows) search. As search engines become ever more capable, naming conventions become our primary means of organizing files, making additional file management less of a must, but still necessary.

DOCUMENTS, DOWNLOADS, PICS

Your computer comes with a built-in, skeletal infrastructure for organizing the files you store on it. You've seen these folders before: Documents, Desktop, Pictures, etc. Perhaps you use them compulsively. Perhaps you've taken great care to build on their foundation, organizing your pics and docs into further subfolders, such as "Pics From HI 10/1" and "Work Docs", which divide out and reach deep into the harmonious vestiges of your hard drive, carrying order to all the rural partitions of your information empire.

But then again, perhaps your desktop looks something like this:
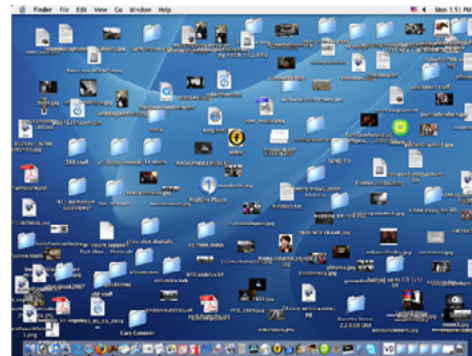
If you don't like using the structure provided by your operating system, build something which works for you. The alternative is chaos, especially in our increasingly collaborative, cloud-based computing world.

I save everything that isn't finished to the desktop, so that all the files I need for a live project are in front of me. However, as soon as I finish the project (or as soon as I have to leave that project and work on another), I organize the files into their appropriate folders in a "Design Files" subfolder of "Documents." The same with personal stuff, which I might prefer my coworkers not accidentally see.

Click the link below for some file management tools which may help, but above all cultivate the basic principles (Naming Conventions and Appropriate Filing), or watch your desktop disappear.

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