

Thesis Project Proposal

Pile Cabinets

Introduction

“Most people store their papers (and other items) in a series of stacks or piles based on some common characteristic...Donald Norman (1994) calls this a pile cabinet. Only inside computers do people put the Project M documents inside the Active Clients folder, which in turn is stored inside the Clients folder, stored inside the Business folder.” –Alan Cooper, *About Face 2.0*

What if there was a way to create digital pile cabinets on the desktop, showing stacks of recent files, using screen grabs of the documents you are currently working on and layering them in thematic piles that can be easily browsed?

Aims of the Project

I’m hoping to create a prototype of just such an application, as a way of supplementing the current forms of file management and interactions with the desktop. Additionally, I hope to incorporate the research done for my thesis paper, *The Role of Metaphor in Interaction Design*, into the design of this application.

Methodology

The project would involve researching, scoping, prototyping, and testing this application. I plan to use a combination of product and user research, and will do some forms of observational and product research in the beginning of fall, followed by brainstorming and product concepts. By winter, I hope to have a prototype to test, followed by two rounds of testing and refinement.

Scope and Limits

My final deliverable will be an interactive, digital prototype, probably created in Flash. I hope to go through two rounds of testing and refinement.

Resources

Resources for this will be minimal. I should have little trouble recruiting test subjects.

Timeline

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| September | Observational Research, Product Research |
| October | Ideation, Personas, User Scenarios |
| November | Wireframes, Storyboards, Paper Prototypes |
| December | Poster |
| December-January | Prototype |
| January-February | Product Testing |
| February-March | Refinement |
| March-April | Product Testing |
| April | Refinement |
| May | Final Prototype and Documentation |

Partial References

Houde, S. and Salomon, G. "Working Towards Rich and Flexible File Representations"
Malone, T.W. "How do People Organize Their Desks? Implications for the Design of Office Information Systems."
Mander, R., Solomon, G., and Wong, Y. "A Pile Metaphor for Supporting Organization of Information"
Norman, D. *Things That Make Us Smart: Defending Human Attributes in the Age of the Machine*
Sellen, A. and Harper, R. *The Myth of the Paperless Office*, MIT Press, 2002.