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### WinFS: A New Storage Subsystem for Windows

May 2004



Users want to store more in their PCs all the time, whether it's e-mail, PowerPoint presentations, music or family pictures. The ever-falling price of storage gives the owner of even an entry-level PC 40, 60, or 80 gigabytes of hard disk space to get lost in -- and that's just what many people do.

In the excitement of uploading pictures to the Web or in the rush of work, users create and store hundreds of files -- and then forget where they put them. In an ideal world, users would create and maintain orderly hierarchies of folders and subfolders. But in reality, few people have the time and the discipline to do so. As a result, they spend hours tracking down that photo of sunrise over Machu Picchu, the second revision of the reorganization plan at work or the e-mail with the new address for their college roommate.

#### A New Way to Save

These are the problems WinFS is designed to solve. WinFS is an active storage subsystem targeted for Longhorn that allows users to move beyond the traditional model of folders and subfolders if they wish. In Longhorn, Microsoft expects most users will instead find it easier to organize and retrieve items based on properties such as "author" or "title." Using advances such as extensible XML schemas and information agents, WinFS will automatically capture the metadata that will make it easier for users to find the information they need.

Rather than folders and subfolders, the prime organizational unit will be the "dynamic set," or Auto-List, which is a collection of items that include not only files but other information such as e-mail messages that do not necessarily exist in a file form. These dynamic sets can be grouped visually into "stacks" according to a specific property such as author.

Today, most users search for and organize their files with a tool such as File Explorer. WinFS will replace this with new specialized content-centric libraries with specialized user controls such as a preview area, content-relevant tasks, filters and filter controls that make it easier to find, organize and be productive with data.

In the case of documents, a user would have the following features at his or her disposal:

1. A document library and within it, high resolution previews or thumbnails of the documents;
2. Easily accessible document-specific tasks such as e-mail, print, sign or share the document, and;
3. Document-specific filters, like author, date signed, or rights of access.

Microsoft is currently developing guidelines for how to exploit the rich capabilities in WinFS for database, help functions, e-commerce and reference and entertainment applications. With WinFS, the goal is for no user to be lost in their hard drive again.

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[Microsoft WinFS Home Page](#)

[Article in MSDN Magazine about WinFS](#)

[Link to PDC \(Professional Developers Conference\) Talks on WinFS](#)

Have a question? Want more information? Contact the writers and editors at [oemedit@microsoft.com](mailto:oemedit@microsoft.com).

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