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INTERNET CONNECTION

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Remembering Web addresses has never been easy. For almost as long as the Internet has been a popular, everyday destination for people, users have also been forgetting the addresses of websites they need to visit. Bookmarks, which lived on the local computer, helped users to easily access frequently used sites. And bookmarking sites, like Delicious (www.delicious.com), helped users to access their bookmarks across multiple computers. But for some users, bookmarks and bookmarking sites fell out of favor. Thanks to constantly improving search engines, many people were able to simply search for the site they wanted to access and find it as quickly as they could retrieve a bookmark.

As more work gets done on mobile devices, where, depending upon the device, searching and typing might represent some time, effort, and bandwidth constraints, many people are finding a use for bookmarking sites once again. Perhaps more importantly, some research has shown that use of social bookmarking tools, where users can see each other's bookmarks and also tag them (a tag is a user-created subject heading using an uncontrolled vocabulary), might correlate with innovation, as social bookmarks can facilitate a flow of ideas (Gray, Parise, and Ilyer 2011). This article will present a quick overview of the various bookmarking options, both social and private, available to users.

Delicious is perhaps one of the more popular bookmarking sites. Created in 2003, it was purchased by Yahoo! in 2005. In late 2010, rumors had Yahoo! shutting the service down; instead, it was sold to Chard Hurley and Steve Chen, the creators of YouTube, in September 2011 (Wortham 2011). Interestingly, Yahoo! has its own bookmarking service that is accessible via the Yahoo! toolbar.

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Delicious has not changed much under its new ownership, still allowing users to save links to sites, and to tag them, making retrieval easier later. A new feature is the ability to create stacks, which are publicly viewable collections of links not unlike what librarians might call a pathfinder. The idea of the new Delicious is not just to capture links, but also to allow people to curate and share them. In addition to listing links, Delicious offers browser-based tools to make it easier for a user to create and access their Delicious bookmarks across computers. There are also Delicious clients for smartphones that provide similar functionality. The idea is that a user's bookmarks are stored in a cloud, and Delicious is facilitating retrieval. Where a Web search for a page might not be too much work on a desktop computer, on a mobile device the process can sometimes be labor-intensive. A bookmarking tool like Delicious makes it easier for the users to connect to their links, without having to create (and re-create) a set of bookmarks on every device they use.

Delicious is not the only bookmarking option, though. Pinboard, found at www.pinboard.in, is similar to Delicious, providing much of the same functionality, including the ability to tag bookmarks. However, where Delicious is free, Pinboard charges a one-time fee, based upon the current number of Pinboard subscribers. As more users join Pinboard, the price goes up. As of this writing, it is $9.65 to join. Like Delicious, Pinboard offers browser extensions to make accessing bookmarks across machines a bit easier, although, also like Delicious, the Web interface is always available. Pinboard does not have an officially supported mobile client, but it does have a mobile version of its Web interface.

Although perhaps not one of its more well-known services, Google has its own bookmarking service that allows users to capture and tag sites, as well as publicly share links. Like Delicious and Pinboard, Google Bookmarks (www.google.com/bookmarks) works with a browser bookmarklet or with browser extensions. While Google Bookmarks are always available via the Web interface, there is no official client for iOS or Android as of this writing, although there are some third-party smartphone clients.

Diigo, available at www.diigo.com, is yet another bookmarking tool that also supports tagging. Diigo aims to be more than a bookmark repository, also including annotation and screen-capture tools designed to facilitate the gathering and sharing of research. Like the other tools discussed, there are browser extensions and toolbars available. Diigo also has a smartphone client. While very powerful and very flexible, it might be overwhelming for someone who just wants quick access to his or her bookmarks across computers and devices. Diigo also has a Read Later button that allows users to bookmark pages for later reading.

This Read Later approach is another way to manage links across multiple computers. Often, people don't intend to consistently return to something they've bookmarked. Instead, they just want to be able to look at it at a more

convenient time. In scenarios like this, something like Delicious or Pinboard might be more tool than the task requires.

In addition to tools like Diigo integrating a read-later function, there are also sites that facilitate the marking of sites to be read later. One is Instapaper, found at www.instapaper.com. The other is Read It Later, found at www.readitlaterlist.com. Both allow users to save in one click pages they would like to read, allowing the users to return to the site later, to read what was saved. Both also have mobile clients to allow users to read previously saved articles, but also to save articles they encounter on their mobile devices. Both services also store copies of whatever is being saved, allowing the user to read the bookmarked site, even if the site is not available. Both services are very simple and similar to each other. Perhaps the most noticeable difference is that Instapaper allows users to move articles into folders, while Read It Later keeps everything in a single list (although the beta interface looks like it will support tagging).

For users not interested in the smartphone component to keeping bookmarks synced, there are some browser tools that can make syncing bookmarks easier. For instance, Firefox has a built-in ability to sync bookmarks, as well as browsing history and passwords. To use this functionality, users just need to visit the Firefox options menu and create a Firefox Sync account. To add more computers, users activate the sync on the Firefox installation they wish to keep synced. For example, a user might want to keep his or her Firefox bookmarks synced across work and home machines. There is no mobile client for the sync, but Firefox does have an Android version of the browser that can be synced against other versions of Firefox.

Google Chrome has a similar syncing feature that is also a part of the browser. The sync works with bookmarks, but also with extensions and browser preferences, and uses the Google Account credential to sync the data. It works much like the Firefox sync, where a user would need to activate the sync on a Chrome browser to have access to their bookmarks. However, the bookmarks would not be a part of Google Bookmarks, as one might expect. The Google Chrome browser sync is found under the options menu.

Users of the Safari browser also have a sync option. Apple's iCloud service (www.apple.com/icloud) allows users to sync many parts of their systems, like music and photos, to other desktop/laptop machines (both Windows and Mac) or to iOS devices. But one specifically syncable component is bookmarks. Using iCloud, which has a free service tier, one could keep one's bookmarks synced across Safari browsers and mobile devices running iOS.

The Opera browser also supports bookmark syncing. Downloadable at www.opera.com, Opera allows users to create accounts and then sync data, including bookmarks, across multiple machines and devices. In addition to having a desktop version of the browser, there is also a mobile version that

runs on various phones, tablets, and mobile devices, including both Android and iOS devices. XMarks (www.xmarks.com) is another bookmark syncing tool that works with Web browsers. It is cross-browser and cross-platform, meaning it can sync Safari links on a Mac against Internet Explorer links on a Windows machine, which is unlike the other browser tools discussed previously. Xmarks also has a Web interface for when a user is on a machine without the browser software installed. It is free as a browser tool, but there are charges for mobile clients. As of this writing, the cost is $12 per year for what is considered to be the premium edition of Xmarks.

As users rely on more types of devices to accomplish their daily work, it can be a challenge to keep everything synced and easily accessible. For users who are interested in not just capturing links but also organizing them, tools like Delicious, Pinboard, Google Bookmarks, and Diigo provide a way to do so, while maintaining access across multiple devices. For users who just want to keep track of links they intend to read or process at a later date, less robust tools like Instapaper and Read It Later might be better choices. And for users who want their browser bookmarks to be available in different instances of browsers, any of the browser syncs might be what is needed. The challenge of syncing bookmarks is not a lack of tools or technology. The real challenge is trying to determine which tool is appropriate, given a user's browser choices, mobile device choices, and bookmarking goals. As Wal (2011)reminds us, "It is important to use all of the steps in the [information] ecosystem for a few weeks. Make them a part of a routine. Many people find when they set up these systems, they are great at feeding one or two of them, but never get into a habit in the consumption and reuse stages." As with most technology tools, the challenge of syncing bookmarks is not in finding bookmarking services, but rather in implementing them.

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