



Eliminating Tedious Searches for Essential Information

COMPUTERS MAKE STORING INFORMATION EASY, BUT SOMETIMES FINDING IT IS DIFFICULT. A SMALL UTILITY PROGRAM THAT'S FREE FOR BOTH PERSONAL AND BUSINESS USE CAN HELP.

I'm going to make a wild guess: You're probably not a file clerk and it's likely you have never been a file clerk. You may even consider the job of a file clerk to be unskilled labor, but it's not. Filing information is easy. Finding it later is the hard part. A competent file clerk can do both.

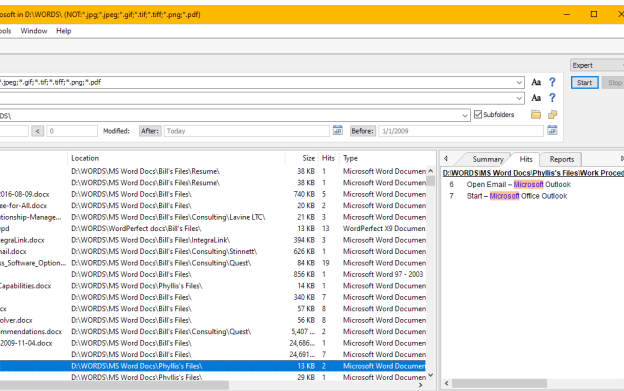
The Old Way

DECADES AGO, IN THE EARLY DAYS OF PERSONAL COMPUTERS, I HAD A JOB THAT ENTAILED DEALING WITH A LOT OF INFORMATION. KNOWING NOTHING ABOUT PROPER METHODS FOR FILING, I SIMPLY STUFFED FILE FOLDERS INTO CABINETS IN THE ORDER I DEALT WITH THEM.

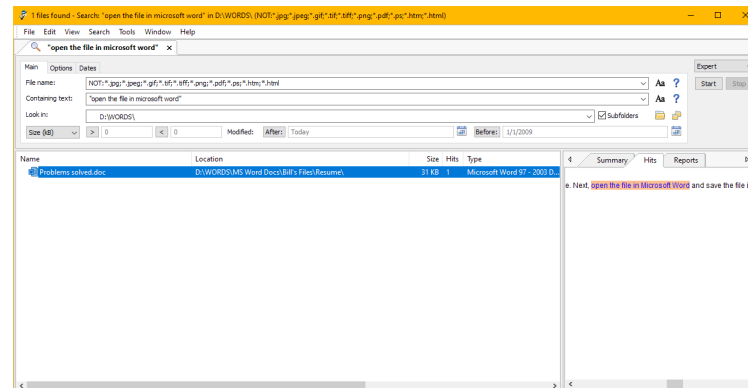
That sounds like a recipe for disaster, but I had a computer on my desk and a database application on the computer. I numbered each folder and used the number as the primary key for a data file.

There were two other fields, name and description. I might also have had a date field. The name contained a snippet of text (*Finagle & Sons Printing*, for example) and the description provided more detailed information about what was in the folder (such as "1987 invoices, *Today's Parts Manager*, and budget").

The database allowed me to quickly find the information needed by returning the file number when I searched for text in the name and description fields.



THE MORE INFORMATION YOU HAVE, THE FASTER AGENT RANSACK WILL FIND THE FILE YOU'RE LOOKING FOR. KNOWING THAT THE FILE CONTAINS "MICROSOFT WORD" RETURNS 350 POSSIBLE FILES FROM A COLLECTION OF MORE THAN 3600 FILES. KNOWING THAT THE FILE I'M SEEKING CONTAINS THE PHRASE "OPEN THE FILE IN MICROSOFT WORD" RETURNS JUST ONE.



The New Way

FILING CABINETS ARE LESS COMMON NOW AND MUCH OF OUR INFORMATION IS STORED ON COMPUTERS.

Some people try to create hierarchical directories, but it's difficult for even the best organized people to maintain a system like that so that we can quickly find `needle.doc` in `D:\haystack`.

The Windows Search function is on the Task bar unless you've hidden the icon (as

I have) or you can launch it by pressing the Windows key and typing the first few characters of what you're seeking. It's capable of finding apps on the computer or suggesting web searches, but less helpful in finding folders and useless if you're looking for a file.

The File Explorer has a search function, but it looks only at file names by default. This can be modified by changing the indexing options in Settings, but the system indexer slows the computer.

Instead, consider Agent Ransack Lite. It can find the file you're looking for even if your computer has several disk drives on which the file may be located, even if you can't remember any part of the file's name, even if you don't recall what kind of file it is, and even if you can't remember which application you used to create it.

Agent Ransack will do the job if you can remember just a few words that you're certain are in the file. More information will make the search faster.

Today's computers have a lot of disk space. My primary computer has nearly 100,000 large images that came from digital cameras or that I've scanned from old negatives. The last time I looked, the computer had more than four million files that consume about 6 terabytes. Limiting any search to a subsection of that

data can reduce an all-day project to one that takes just a minute or two,

Searches can look at a single directory, a directory and its subdirectories, multiple directories with or without specific subdirectories, and multiple directories on multiple drives. Include and exclude filters allow users to create precise search criteria.

The fastest possible search will occur when you're looking for a specific file name or a file for which you know part of the name and the general location.

Searching for Key Words

SPECIFYING FILE NAMES AND TEXT CAN INCLUDE AND EXCLUDE SPECIFIC WORDS.

Wildcards are permitted. A search for "work*.doc?" will find all doc and docx files that begin with "work"; "*work*.doc?" will identify any doc or docx file that contains the word "work" anywhere in its name. The * indicates none, one, or multiple characters.

Searches can be limited by file size, creation date, modification date, and access date using a specific date or a date range. Searching by date works best when the modified or last access date is used because some files pick up incorrect creation dates when they're moved from an old computer to a new one.

Even before a search ends, Agent Ransack begins displaying files that meet the search criteria in its left panel. Selecting any file in the left panel will display text from the file in the right panel.


Agent Ransack is fast and often finds files that the Windows search tool misses. Although it may seem that this is a complex program to use, Mythicsoft has provided an excellent help file so that anyone who's willing to read a bit can start using it like a pro.

There's also a simplified user interface for those who don't like reading instructions. Even the basic user interface offers far more flexibility than the built-in Windows search function.

A paid version of Agent Ransack costs \$60, and its additional features are useful primarily for IT support departments. If you have a lot of compressed files (ZIP, JAR, 7Z, RAR, and TAR, for example) and need to be able to search inside those files, you'll need the paid version.

Agent Ransack has an alias, *File Locator*, that Mythicsoft created when certain customers said *Agent Ransack* sounded too invasive. The applications differ only in name.

Agent Ransack is the ideal solution when the file you're looking for won't come out and play. If you sometimes spend a lot of time locating missing files, Agent Ransack will delight you.

To learn more, download the free version, or purchase the pro version, visit the [Mythicsoft website](#). 

How Would You Respond To This Call?

SCAMMERS USE EVERY COMMUNICATIONS MEDIUM AVAILABLE TO STEAL YOUR MONEY OR TO STEAL YOUR IDENTITY AND THEN STEAL YOUR MONEY.

Email, instant messages, and phone calls are the most common choices, but occasionally crooks use postal mail and even faxes. Here's the transcript of a call that was automatically rejected by my cellular service provider, Google-Fi:

It seems to be someone is trying to hijack your identity and try to steal your social security number and personal information if it's not fixed right away, then your computer will become obsolete and all of that credential information may get compromised. If you are the one who is using Microsoft Windows in your computer, then please press seven now to speak with security team now. Please check if we called you by mistake. Thanks.

The call used a text-to-speech application that converted poorly written text to badly rendered speech. It's clear that the text was not written by someone who speaks English natively.

Question number one should be *Would Microsoft use a poorly written text-to-speech script?* The obvious answer is that they would not.

Question number two could be *Wouldn't Microsoft use a professional announcer to record a message such as this?* Again, the answer is obvious: Yes, they would if Microsoft attempted to contact users by phone with security warnings.

So that leads to a third question: *Does Microsoft attempt to contact users by phone with security warnings?* The clear answer is NO. Microsoft does not contact users by phone unless a support person is following up on a call initiated by the user.

Microsoft also does not contact users by email, phone, text, or fax to warn about security issues. Neither do consumer-grade security application providers, computer manufacturers, Homeland Security, the FBI, CIA, or SMERSH (which no longer exists, anyway).

The Best Way to Respond to Calls Like This

THE PROPER RESPONSE IS SIMPLY TO DISCONNECT THE CALL.

But if you're still not sure, use any search engine to look up the number the call claims to be from. You may find that it has been reported frequently to the Federal Trade Commission for computer scams.

That's really not necessary, though, because of the numerous red flags contained in the message itself — starting with the first eleven words. 