

By Greg Shultz

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As you know, [Microsoft Windows 7](#) is just right around the corner. On October 22nd, you'll be able to finally get a copy of the new operating system and install it for yourself. When you do, you'll be able to experience firsthand all of the new and enhanced productivity features that you have been hearing so much about, such as the XP Mode, Jump Lists, Taskbar, Aero (Peek, Shake, and Snap), Search or Location-Aware Printing just to name a few.

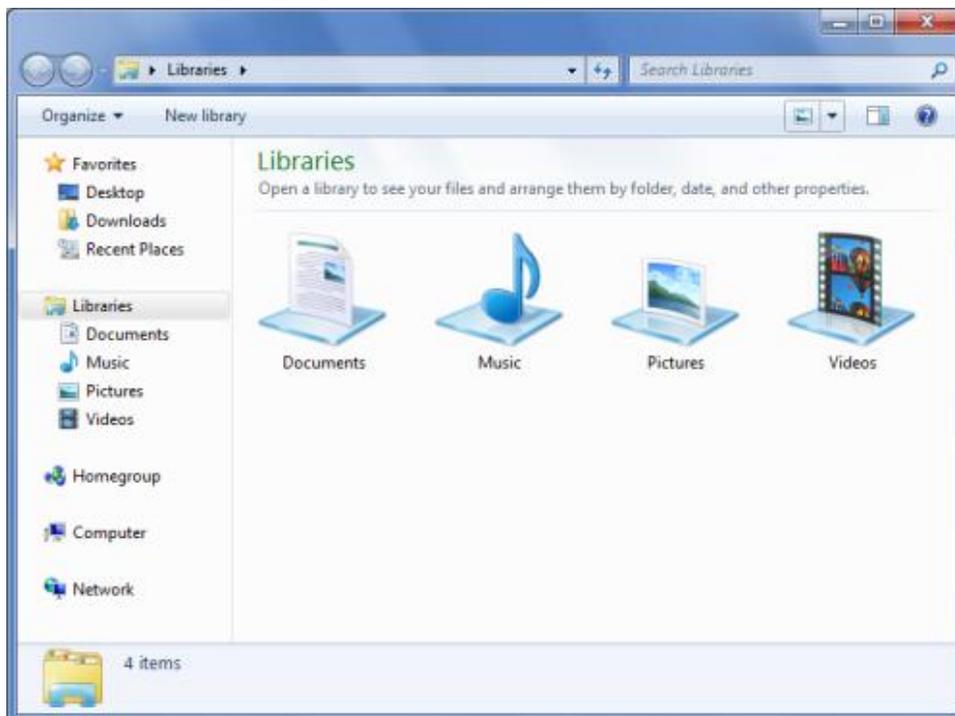
But there is another dramatic new feature that really hasn't received as much notice as some of the others but it will definitely change, for the better, the way that you think about, access, and organize the data files on your computer -- this new feature are the Libraries.

In this edition of the Windows Vista & [Windows 7 Report](#), I'll introduce you to Windows 7's new Libraries feature. As I do, I'll show you how to get the most out of the Libraries feature as you move into Windows 7.

What are Libraries?

You won't have to look far to encounter Windows 7's new Libraries feature. Just open Windows Explorer. When you do, you'll see the four main Libraries in Windows 7: Documents, Music, Pictures, and Video, as shown in **Figure A**. When you first encounter these Libraries, it is all too easy to simply brush them off because at first glance it would appear that Microsoft simply renamed the existing main folders to Libraries. However, Libraries are much more than just renamed folders.

Figure A



When you launch Windows Explorer, you'll encounter Windows 7's new Libraries feature.

In fact, Libraries are actually a super refinement to the Search Folders Feature introduced in Windows Vista, which as you may remember, started out as Virtual Folders, back during the development stages when Vista was known as Longhorn. The new Libraries feature is essentially what the Virtual Folders feature was supposed to have been. (Keep in mind that even though the Libraries are the main focus, Windows 7 system still has Documents, Music, Pictures, and Video folders)

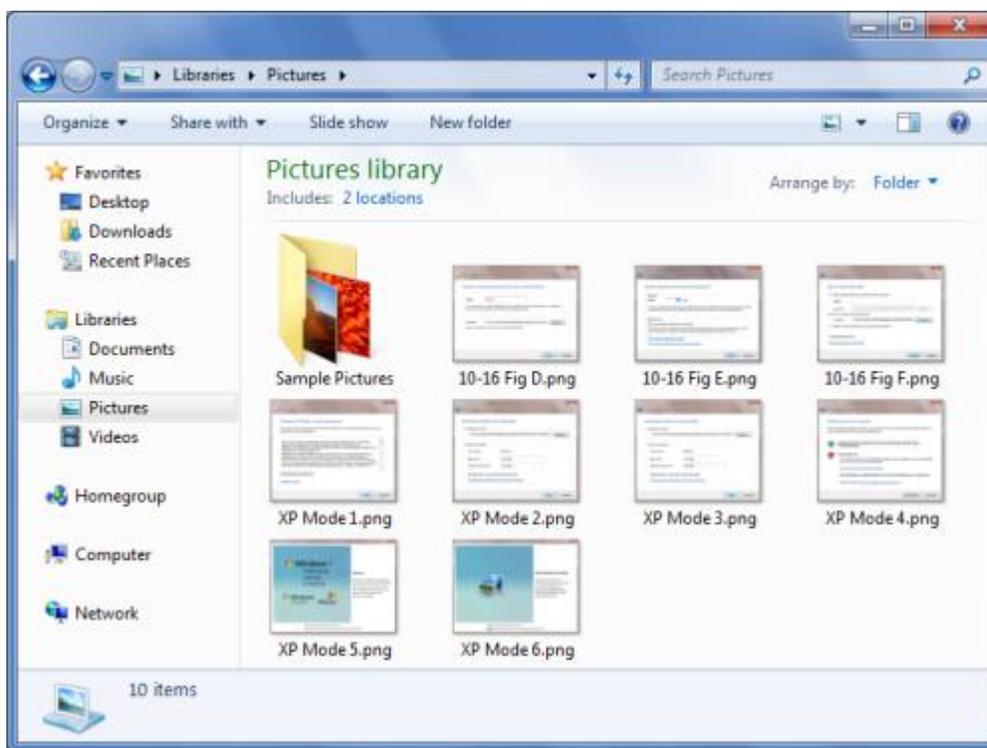
In any case, you can think of Libraries as collection points for files of a certain type that can exist in any number of locations. For example, I can customize the Pictures Library on my Windows 7 system to display all the pictures in the Pictures folder (or anywhere else) on my computer, on my wife's computer, on an archive folder external hard disk, and in a folder on our Home server. In this way I have a one stop access point for all the pictures on our network regardless of where they are located. I no longer have to go searching in multiple locations for the one picture that I want.

Now, while I've used Pictures and a home network to illustrate the Libraries concept, this new feature will work in a business environment as well. For example, you could customize the Documents Library such that it is a one stop access point for all the documents on your computer, your team member's computers, as well as on the server.

Taking a closer look

Now that you have a good idea of what a Library is, let's take a closer look. When you open a Library, you'll see a header which tells you how many locations that Library is currently configured to monitor. For example, the Pictures Library, as shown in **Figure B**, is by default configured to collect files from two locations.

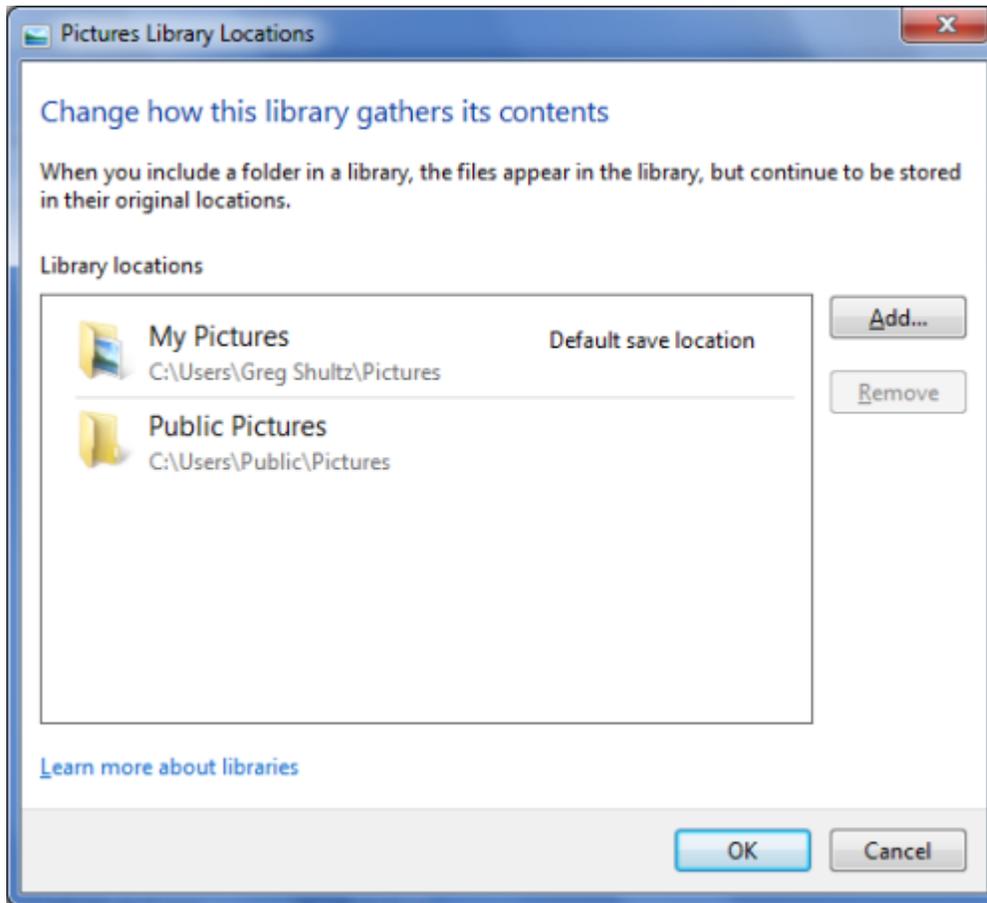
Figure B



By default, each of Windows 7's Libraries is configured to collect files from two locations.

When you click on that link, you'll see the Pictures Library Locations dialog box, as shown in **Figure C**. As you can see, the two default locations come from the Pictures folders in my user account and the Public account. You'll use the Library Locations dialog box to add and remove locations, as well as keep tabs on which locations are in the Library. (Each of the other three Libraries has a similar Library Locations dialog box.) The

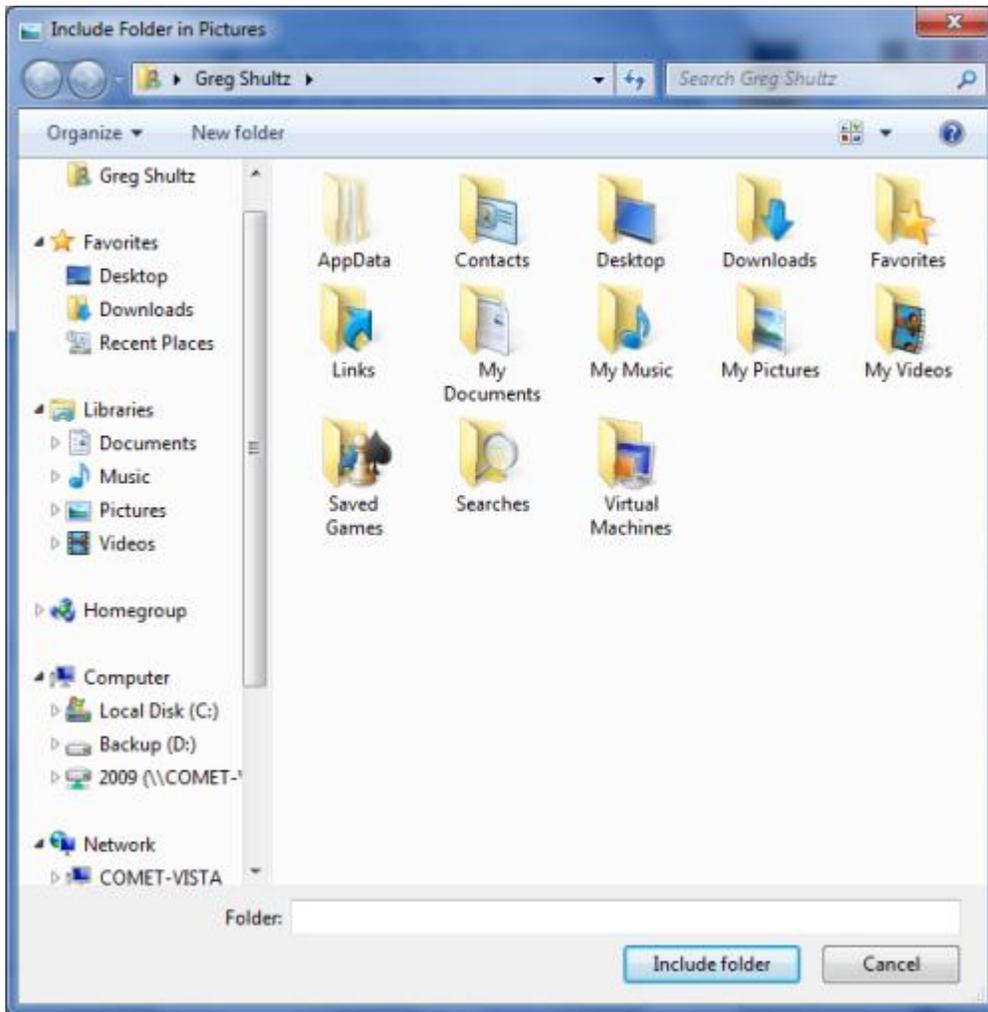
Figure C



The two default locations come from the Pictures folders in the current user account and the Public account.

When you click the Add button, you'll see the Include Folder in Pictures dialog box where you can add folders from any location to which you have access, as shown in **Figure D**. However, it is important to keep in mind that for folders to be successfully added to a Library, they must be able to be indexed by the local machine, indexed by the remote Windows machine, or on a server with files that are indexed by Windows Search. Folders that can't add be indexed, cannot be successfully added to a Library.

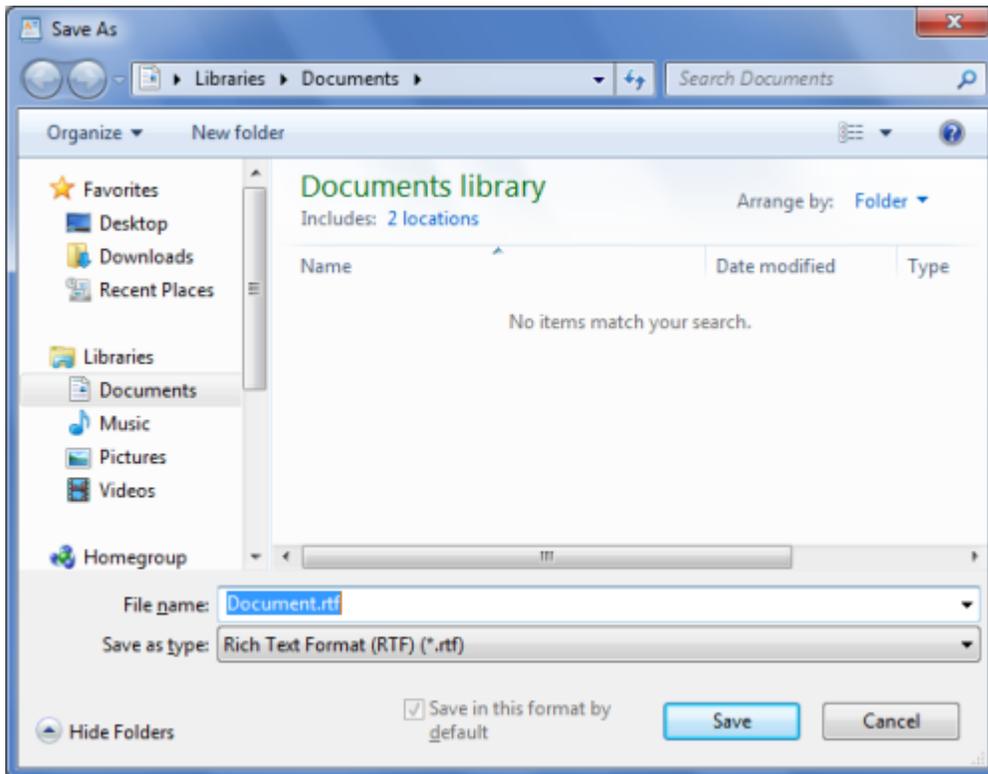
Figure D



The Include Folder in dialog box allows you to add folders from any location to which you have access.

As you can image, the Libraries will also show up as the default location in the Open and Save As dialog boxes for applications that are designed for Windows 7. **Figure E** shows the Save As dialog box for WordPad.

Figure E



Libraries will also show up in the Open and Save As dialog boxes for applications that are designed for Windows 7.

What's your take?

What do you think about Windows 7's Libraries feature? Do you think that they will, once in for all, solve the problems associated with keeping track of your files? As always, if you have comments or information to share about this topic, please take a moment to drop by the [TechRepublic Community Forums](#) and let us hear from you.

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