

FLICKR HACKS™

*Tips & Tools for Sharing
Photos Online*



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With a foreword by Caterina Fake, cofounder of Flickr

Flicker Hacks™

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HACK
#14

Make a Flickr-Style Tag Cloud

Adding a tag cloud to your web site is easier than getting a bad haircut!

If the illustrations in these next few pages look familiar, you've seen tag clouds before. *Tag clouds* are clusters of tags rendered with differently sized fonts to indicate the relative popularity of the tags in a dataset. Click on any of the tags to retrieve data matching that tag (such as photos).

Flickr used tag clouds first, followed by other Web 2.0 sites such as Technorati. Now, tag clouds seem to be ubiquitous, appearing on nearly every new web site that wants to join the Web 2.0 party. Perhaps that's why Jeffrey Zeldman proclaimed tag clouds "the new mullets."

Fortunately for those of us who are still mulletless, Dan Steingart has written a script that makes a tag cloud from the tags associated with your Flickr photos. The script is nearly ready to go and requires just a few minor modifications.

What You'll Need

To use Dan's script, you'll need your own Flickr API key [Hack #40].

You'll also need the `phpFlickr` scripts [Hack #41] (which also make authenticating other people a snap, although you won't need authentication for this hack). You can download these scripts from <http://www.phpflickr.com>.

To get started, install the `phpFlickr` scripts on your web site, as described in [Hack #41]. Then download and unpack Dan Steingart's `cloudTagFlickr` script, which is available from <http://www.allthingsalceste.com/cloudtagflickrphp/>.

The Code

In the `cloudTagFlickr.php` script, edit the following two lines to use your own username and API key:

```
$username = "flickruser"; //flickr user name here
$flickrapikey = "flickrapikey"; //key in here
```

The `phpFlickr` wrapper has an optional cache feature. If you want to use it, modify these lines to provide access information for a database on your server:

```
$cachingenabled = true;
$dbUser = "user"; //database user here
$dbPass = "pass"; //database password here
$dbAddress = "localhost"; //location of database
$dbTable = "table"; //location of table, will create one if it doesn't exist
```

If you do not want to use caching, turn it off by replacing this line:

```
$cachingenabled = true;
```

with this:

```
$cachingenabled = false;
```

Now, prepare a second file that makes use of *cloudTagFlickr.php* as part of a more complex web page. Call the file *testCloudTag.php* and add the following code:

```
<? require_once("phpFlickr/phpFlickr.php"); ?>
```

```
<html>  
<head></head>  
<body>
```

```
    This is a tag cloud.
```

```
    <center><table width=50%><tr><td>
```

```
        <? include "cloudTagFlickr.php"; ?>
```

```
    </td></tr></table></center>
```

```
    That was a tag cloud.
```

```
</body>
```

Upload both files (*cloudTagFlickr.php* and *testCloudTag.php*) to your web server.

Running the Hack

First we'll test just the *cloudTagFlickr* script, to make sure everything is copacetic. Invoke the script by typing its address into your browser:

```
http://www.yourwebsite.com/cloudTagFlickr.php
```

If all is right with the world and your karma, you should see something like Figure 2-15.

If you have problems, you might need to turn on PHP error reporting to allow you to see what's going on. I would suggest turning off the caching feature first and getting it working without caching, since that's simpler.

Once you get it working, try the second script, which includes the tag cloud as part of a more complex web page:

```
http://www.yourwebsite.com/testTagCloud.php
```

The result looks something like Figure 2-16.

For both of these scripts, you can pass a few options to modify the appearance of the tag cloud. Here are a few examples:

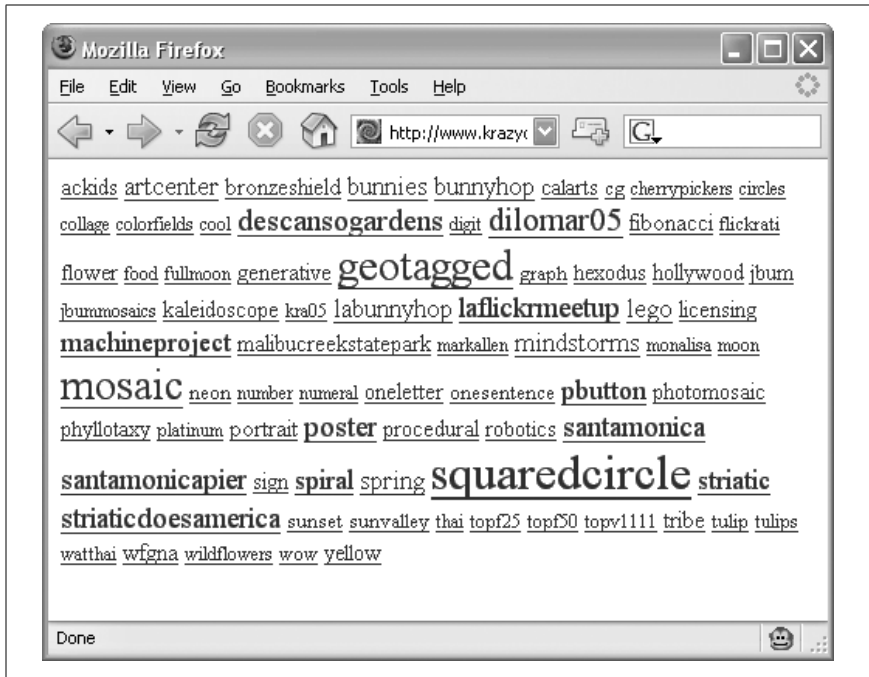


Figure 2-15. Testing `cloudTagFlickr.php`

- You can specify the name of some other user, like my friend Special:
`http://www.yourwebsite.com/testTagCloud.php?name=special`
- You can use the `minsize` and `maxsize` parameters to specify the range of font sizes:
`http://www.yourwebsite.com/testTagCloud.php?minsize=10&maxsize=64`
- By default, the tags are sorted alphabetically by tag name, but you can also get a random sort:
`http://www.yourwebsite.com/testTagCloud.php?sort=random`
or an ascending sort by size, which looks nice:
`http://www.yourwebsite.com/testTagCloud.php?sort=asc`
or a descending sort by size, which looks even nicer (Figure 2-17)::
`http://www.yourwebsite.com/testTagCloud.php?sort=desc`

Dan has also added some nice coloring options, such as grayscale:

`http://www.yourwebsite.com/testTagCloud.php?color=greyscale`

and a hot/cold color gradient:

`http://www.yourwebsite.com/testTagCloud.php?color=hotcold`

Figure 2-18 shows a final cloud tag with a random sort and hot/cold coloring.

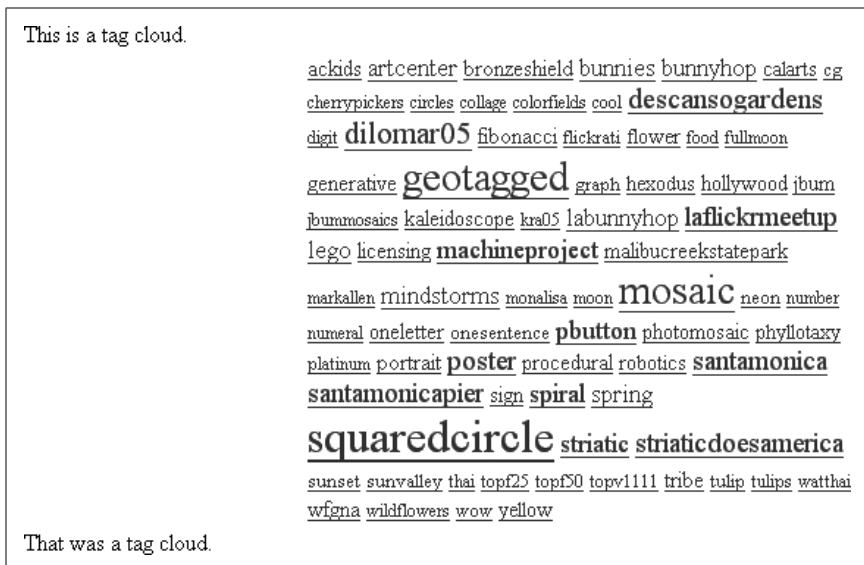


Figure 2-16. Testing `testTagCloud.php`



Figure 2-17. Tag cloud with descending sort

More recently, Dan has added a new option, `threshold`, that allows you to filter for more common tags. For folks who have posted enormous numbers of photos, this makes the tag clouds much more manageable.

Figure 2-19 shows an example using Fubuki's rather large photostream, which contains far too many tags to be shown without a tag threshold:

<http://www.yourwebsite.com/testTagCloud.php?name=fubuki&threshold=40>

Now that's a pithy tag cloud!



Figure 2-18. Tag cloud with random sort and hot/cold coloring

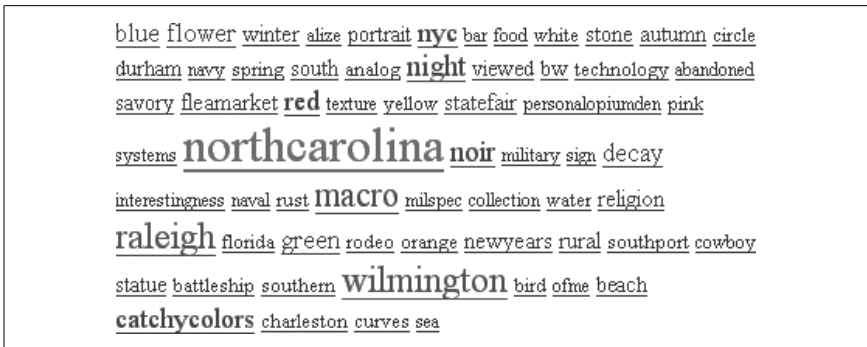


Figure 2-19. Essence of Fubuki, tags matching over 40 photos

See Also

- “Authenticate Yourself” [Hack #40]
- “Authenticate Users” [Hack #41]