

YAHOO! HACKS™

Tips & Tools for Living on the Web Frontier



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HACK
#65

Add a Content Tab to Yahoo! Messenger

With a bit of Registry hacking, you can add a custom content tab to Yahoo! Instant Messenger.

Yahoo! Messenger (<http://messenger.yahoo.com>) is more than just a way to have conversations with your friends. It's also a way to keep up with your favorite Yahoo! content. Across the bottom of the Yahoo! Messenger window, you'll find a series of *content tabs*. Each tab gives you instant access to some information you'd normally find on the Yahoo! web site, such as weather, stock quotes, news headlines, or your Yahoo! calendar. Figure 3-33 shows a series of content tabs in Yahoo! Messenger, with the Yahoo! Buzz tab selected.

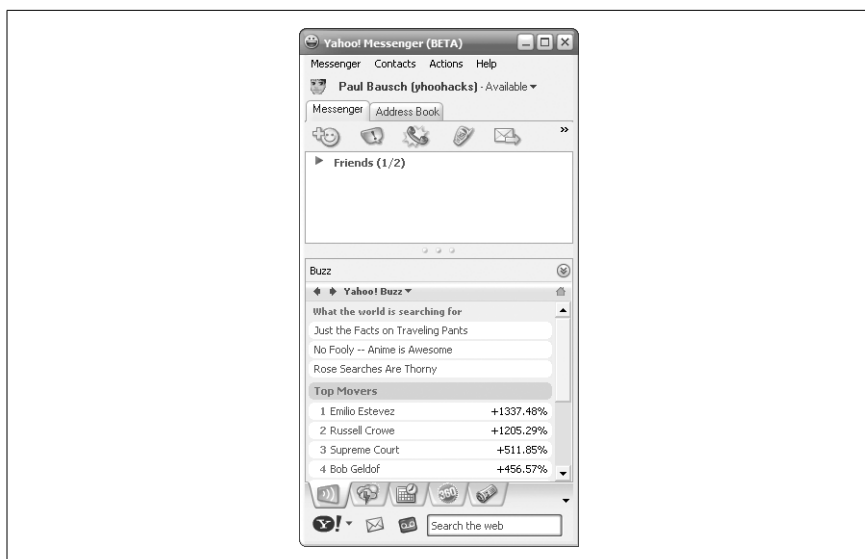


Figure 3-33. The Yahoo! Buzz content tab in Yahoo! Messenger

The Yahoo! Buzz tab gives you a quick summary of what you'll find at the Yahoo! Buzz site (<http://buzz.yahoo.com>), tracking trends in Yahoo! searching. You can customize which tabs appear in Yahoo! Messenger by choosing Messenger → Preferences from the top menu and selecting the Content Tabs category from the left pane. From there, you can choose from around a dozen different tabs to show or hide from your Yahoo! Messenger interface.



This hack describes the latest version of Yahoo! Messenger for Windows. At the time of this writing, the Mac version of Yahoo! Messenger has four content tabs, and there's no way to add custom tabs to the interface.

Add a Content Tab to Yahoo! Messenger

The choices you'll find in your Yahoo! Messenger settings are static, and you can't add or remove tabs you find from within the preferences interface. But this hack shows how to add your own content tab to Yahoo! Messenger by tweaking some settings behind the scenes.



Thanks to Marcus Foster at Yahoo! for sharing this method of adding a tab!

Inside Your Registry

All of the content tabs within Yahoo! Messenger are defined within the Windows Registry, a database that stores system settings. You can take a look at the settings for each of the tabs by viewing the settings in the Registry Editor. Start the Registry Editor by clicking Start → Run and typing `regedit`.



Be very careful when editing your Registry settings. If you change the wrong setting, you could do irreparable harm to your system. Just be aware that the Registry settings are vital to your system, and if you're not comfortable tooling around in sensitive areas, you might want to skip this hack!

With the registry editor open, browse to the following key: `HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Yahoo\Pager\View\`. Beneath the View key, you'll find a series of registry keys with the prefix `YMSGR_`. These are the available content tabs, and you can highlight each to see the system settings. [Figure 3-34](#) shows the Registry key for the Yahoo! Buzz tab, with its system settings in the right pane.

The important settings to note are Display Name, Display Bmp, and content url. The first two set the tab name and icon. And because each tab display is simply a web page, the content url value is where you'll find the page for a particular tab. In fact, you can visit any tab page in Internet Explorer including the Yahoo! Buzz content tab at <http://tools.search.yahoo.com/ym/buzz>.

The key to adding your own tab to Yahoo! Messenger is creating a new Registry key with content url set to a URL of your choosing. And the easiest way to create a new key with all of the proper settings is to copy an existing key. Inside the Registry Editor, highlight the `YMSGR_buzz` key, right-click, and click Export. Save the key as `YMSGR_buzz.reg`, and you'll be set to create your own tab.

So, what type of web page makes a good content tab? The best content tab page will be compact, with its contents viewable in a small space. Most pages probably won't fit very well into a content tab, and you'll have to

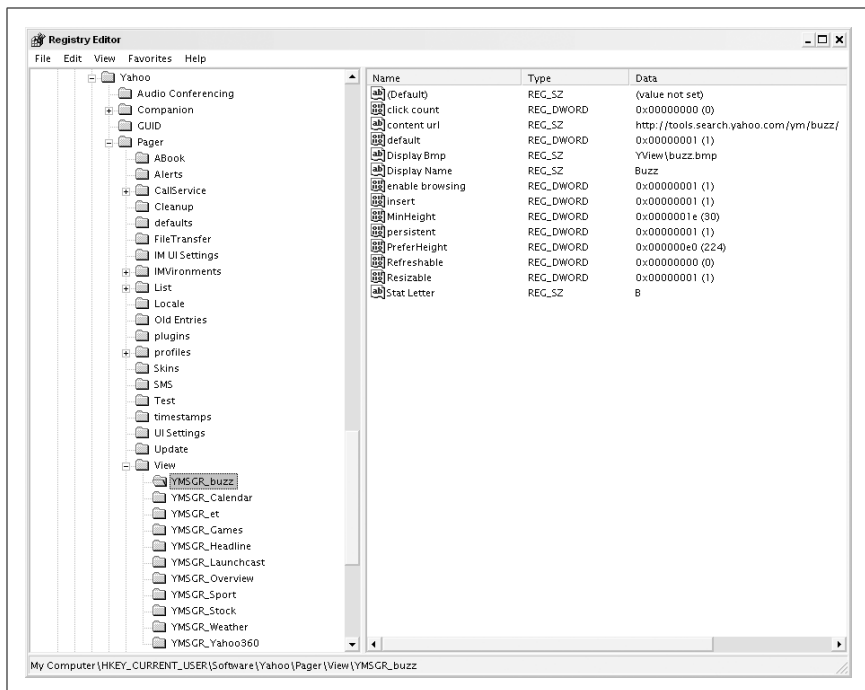


Figure 3-34. Yahoo! Messenger content tab settings in the Registry

design a page specifically for use within Yahoo! Messenger. If you've already added a [Yahoo! Bookmarks sidebar \[Hack #30\]](#) to your browser, you'll know there's already a page available to display your Yahoo! Bookmarks in a small space. There isn't a Bookmarks content tab currently available in Yahoo! Messenger, but the following Registry changes will add one.

The Code

Copy the `YMSGR_buzz.reg` file and to a new file and name the new file `YMSGR_bookmarks.reg`. Open the file in Notepad and make the following changes to the Registry settings within. Note that the changes are in bold.

Windows Registry Editor Version 5.00

```
[HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Yahoo\Pager\View\YMSGR_bookmarks]
"Display Name"="Bookmarks"
"Display Bmp"="YView\ybang.bmp"
"default"=dword:00000001
"insert"=dword:00000001
"enable browsing"=dword:00000001
"Stat Letter"="B"
"click count"=dword:00000000
```

Add a Content Tab to Yahoo! Messenger

```
"persistent"=dword:00000001  
"content url"="http://my.yahoo.com/tearoff/sites.html"  
"MinHeight"=dword:0000001e  
"PreferHeight"=dword:000000d1  
"Resizable"=dword:00000001  
"Refreshable"=dword:00000000
```

The key name has been changed to `YMSGR_bookmarks` and the display name is set to Bookmarks. There isn't a custom icon for the Bookmarks tab (because it doesn't exist yet), so the icon has been changed to *ybang.bmp*, a generic Yahoo! icon included when you install Yahoo! Messenger.



If you want to go the extra mile for your custom content tab, you could create your own icon to display it. Use the icons in the `YView` directory of your Yahoo! Messenger installation as a guide.

Finally, the `content url` setting points to your Yahoo! Bookmarks minimalist display URL.

Running the Hack

Click Save in Notepad to save your modified Registry file, and then double-click `YMSGR_bookmarks.reg`. Confirm that you'd like to add the settings to the Registry, and you should receive a message that the contents were added. Restart Yahoo! Messenger and keep in mind that even if you close the Yahoo! Messenger window it can still be running in the taskbar. You'll need to completely restart the program and then bring up the Content Tabs category in your Preferences. You should see the new option to add a Bookmarks tab, as shown in [Figure 3-35](#).

Highlight the Bookmarks tab, click the Show button, and click OK to close your Preferences. You should see the new tab along the bottom of Yahoo! Messenger. Click the Bookmarks tab with the generic Yahoo! icon, and you should see your Yahoo! Bookmarks appear in the content pane, as shown in [Figure 3-36](#).

Of course, a custom content tab doesn't have to be Yahoo! content as in this example. Because content tabs are simply standard URLs, you could easily create your own pages and have instant access to your own custom information while you're chatting with friends.

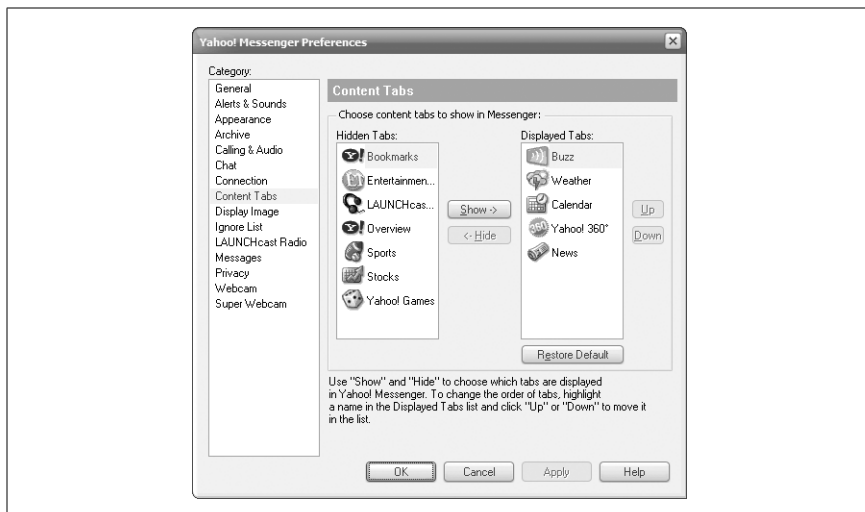


Figure 3-35. Adding a new content tab in Yahoo! Messenger

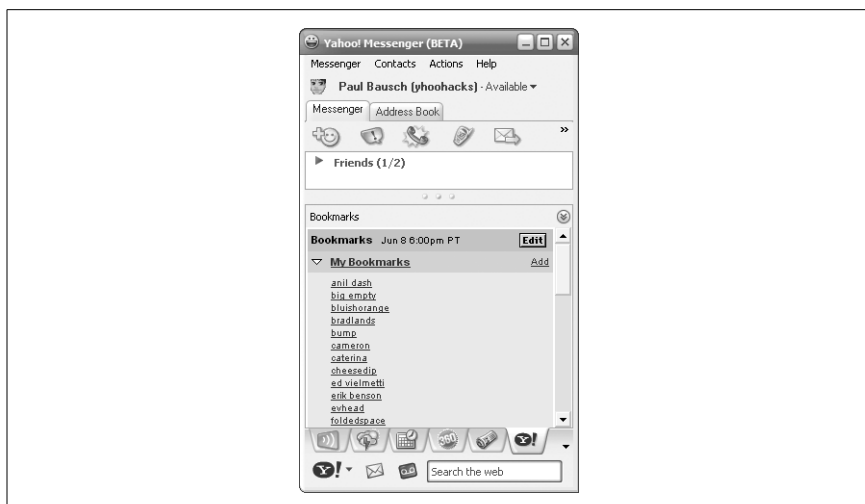


Figure 3-36. The Bookmarks content tab in Yahoo! Messenger

Hacking the Hack

Sites specifically designed for mobile devices like cell phones and PDAs work extremely well as Yahoo! Messenger content tabs. If you can track down a URL for a mobile site, you can create your own tab. For example, Yahoo!'s photo-sharing service Flickr [Hack #67] has a mobile site available at <http://flickr.com/mob>. Change the key and display names in the Registry file, and set content url to the Flickr mobile URL. Once you run the file, restart

Add a Content Tab to Yahoo! Messenger

Yahoo! Messenger and add the new tab. You'll end up with the content shown in [Figure 3-37](#).

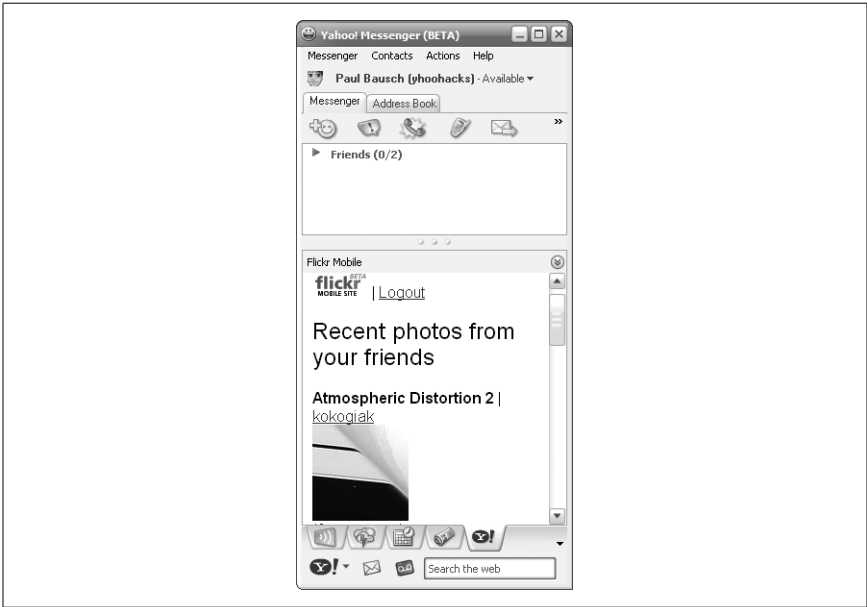


Figure 3-37. Flickr mobile in a Yahoo! Messenger content tab

With the Flickr tab in place, you can easily keep tabs on the photos your friends are posting without opening up a web browser.

Yahoo! also has a mobile site (<http://wap.aa.yahoo.com>); you could easily set up a Yahoo! tab and have access to all your personalized Yahoo! content in a single Yahoo! Messenger tab.