

Bug 115817, 24.05.18

Here is my suggestion on what to do with the Navigation toolbar:

1) What is the desired function which is not fulfilled by the Navigator window?

a) To judge from developers' discussion, the original idea was to offer a kind of 'history' function in LibreOffice (Writer).

I surmise that this is no useful function in the work on a single document. A Writer document is not like a set of web pages which can be accessed and displayed separately; nor is a certain passage in a document like a particular web page. The latter is accessed as a whole; but what is the extension of a text passage; and which exact spot in the document should be the target of such a leap? The browser visualizes the history in the form of a table each row of which identifies a page by features like its name or its favicon. There is no practicable way of visualizing the history of visited places in a document like that. Finally, the user can and does remember particular web pages he has seen before, but does not remember in which order he has accessed them; nor does this matter to him. A history function in Writer which would allow him to skip backwards step by step through the series of passages that he had touched before would not be helpful since he does not remember the order in which he touched those passages.

Net result: As long as no considerably better version of the 'history' idea comes up, forget about it.

b) A minimum version of such a function would be the following: User is working on some passage A of a (larger) document. Meanwhile, he needs to briefly look at, or edit, a passage B of the same text which may be quite distant. After doing this, he wants to get back to working on passage A. This is something that happens very often to me, so a Writer function supporting this maneuver would be quite helpful. (Needless to say, if A is the end of the document, no particular additional function is needed.)

2) Currently available solutions

a) While writing at place A, open another window on your document. There, go to place B. After being done with it, close this window, and you are back to A.

Advantages: If you have a large screen, you can posit the two windows side by side and look at A while working on B.

Disadvantages: Not everybody's screen is that large. Especially on a notebook, the second window will simply overlay the first one, so practically it is the same as if you were working in only one window. Moreover, since it is essentially unpredictable how LO will size and place the new window (see Bug 113288 on the impossibility of having LO remember this), you will first have to occupy yourself by configuring the new window before you can continue to work. Thus, in most situations, solution #a means decidedly overdoing it.

b) While working at place A, set a reminder there. Then go to B. After being done with it, navigate back to your reminder.

Advantage: This is pretty intuitive and straightforward.

Disadvantages: For a seemingly simple operation, it is presently far too cumbersome:

- In the Navigator icon bar, click on the 'Set Reminder' symbol.
- After being done with B: "To jump to a reminder, click the Navigation icon, in the Navigation window click the Reminder icon, and then click the Previous or Next button." (quoting from the Navigator Help page).
- And of course, if you then want to navigate by a different category, you have to reset the navigation category.

Moreover:

- Reminders are forgotten when the document is closed.
- When a reminder is set, it is added to a set of up to four previously set reminders. To navigate to the reminder last set, the idea is apparently to click on the 'previous' arrowhead. There is, thus, again a supposition that the user remembers in which order he set the reminders.
- Nor is there a way of deleting/overwriting earlier reminders in order to only keep the most recent one.

c) While working at place A, set a bookmark there. Then go to B. After being done with it, navigate back to your bookmark.

Advantage: Navigating back to A requires only clicking on the bookmark.

Disadvantages: Setting a bookmark requires many steps, among them naming it. Moreover, suppose you name it 'last_pos' (as I do). You cannot shift the bookmark 'last_pos' to a different place in the document (as you can in MS Word). What you have to do is first delete it and then define it again at the new place. You don't want to do all these steps only in order to mark the spot where you were writing. What I currently do is define a macro for it and activate it by a shortcut key.

3) Envisaged solution

Solutions #b and #c above both have positive features. Therefore, combine them, as follows:

- Reduce the Reminder function to its essence: Allow for just one reminder. If it is set, it replaces the previous reminder. (A user who does use more than one reminder [have you ever polled on this?] will be served by the bookmarks function.)
- Disconnect the use of the 'previous' and 'next' symbols of the Navigation toolbar from the Reminder function.
- Separate Reminder handling from (the rest of) the Navigation toolbar. You only need two icons: 'Set last pos' and 'Go to last pos'. They can be placed, e.g., in a third line of the Navigation toolbar. And please, assign two shortcut keys to these two mouse clicks.

Hope this helps.

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