The Electronic Bookshelf

Premise: That it will be possible, in the near future, to take rolls of E-Paper, place them on a wall, display images of shelving and book spines, and be able to touch an item on the shelf and have it displayed on a local screen. This can be simulated using poster sized photos of the books on shelves augmented with an, as yet, unidentified touch technology

Why bother: I have over 100 university and work books that are cluttering up my overflowing bookshelves and that I rarely use, but which I am reluctant to get rid of entirely because in some sense they represent me, and what I am and where I've been. An electronic bookshelf would let me retain the books with few constraints on where it could be placed. I believe that many people feel similarly about parts of their book collections.

What would be needed: To test out the idea, you'd need some books that can be scanned and whose spines can be photographed (I have these and the scanner to do it – I don't mind cutting the books up to put them through the scanner); the poster sized photos of the shelves and book spines (easy and cheap to get produced on a photo web site; touch sensors to pick up which item is being selected; software for the touch technology; communication technology to connect the touch technology with WIFI; and software running on the controlling PC.

Is this a more generalisable idea? Yes! I have many years worth of mementos which I'm sorting out, discarding unwanted stuff, scanning or photographing the things I want to keep, and then either throwing away or placing especially precious or unusual items in display folders or cabinets. I'd like to be able experience the items I've kept rather than have them inaccessible in a box in the loft or in a folder on a bookcase. E-Paper on a wall could make all that material visible. The Electronic Bookshelf could become the Electronic Pinboard and/or Display Case. I believe that this too is something that many people could make use of.

Paul Wilson, v0.2 - 16Dec2013