Problems - Nautilus File Views

The need for a unified sort options Menu

The current implimentation of file views in Nautilus has problems which have been reported in the tracker. These problems range from consistency in UI between tile view and List view, to hidden sort options that are not readily discoverable by the user. The following is a rough list of UI problems that need a common, unified solution.

1. There is no easy way to sort list view unless columns are visible

While it's convenient to be able to sort by clicking on the column header, they are not always visible, which hides the ability to sort by those criteria. It is possible to do this in Tile view with the menu drop down, which features convenient radio button sorting options.

2. Icon and list views should share the same sort order

For consistency, when the user switches views from tile to list, the sort order should be preserved. But what if the user has selected "permissions" as the sort order in List View? There is no equivalent radio button for that sort criteria featured in the Tile view menu.

3. Limited space in the Tile View menu forces fewer options

At a glance, the most common options are included – however even this is inconsistent after the first four, because there is no way to change the sort order for Size and Type, even though extra options have taken up space for reverse order of Z–A, and likewise First Modified. there is no way to reverse the sort order of the other two options, and no space for any more options without making a list that's getting a bit too long already.

4. Sort options are a bit vague

Most of us would probably equate file size to number of MB the file takes up on the file system. However, to a user "size" could also refer to other things, such as the pixel dimensions of the document. Large file size does not always equate to large dimensions, so it would be useful to sort on either criteria. Likewise with File "type". Type could either refer to the extension of the file, or the media-type of file (video, image, text document, etc.). Sorted A–Z, these would have very differrent results. For example, if the user wanted to sort by type (media) to see all their images first (regardless of if they are jpegs, pngs, etc) they would be dissapointed with sorting by extention (a–z) which would cluster their images into little islands throughout the sort results rather than display all of them first, as one might very well want.

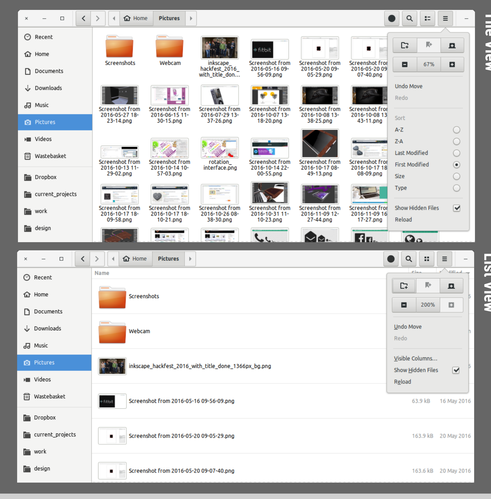
5. Not all the information nautilus collects about files appears in sort options

Nautilus is a powerful tool for finding what you need. It's even more powerful with advanced search capabilities included in 3.22 and above. Thus, it's beneficial to make it as usuful as possible to users to find what they are looking for, and be able to display desired information that is already collected by nautilus. Unfortunately, the list of sortable checkboxes for List Columns is pretty short. Especially compared to other file browsers. It makes sense to provide as many sort criterias as is possible without cluttering the navigation and options menus.

6. There is no way to see the sort criteria info on the icons in Tile View

Whereas it's quite easy to see and compare the sort criteria values in List View Columns, there's no good method of seeing things like file size on the icons in tile view. This makes it difficult to see the result of any sorting other than by file name.

Bug 142495 - No way to sort list view unless column visible
Bug 45659 - icon and list views should share the same sort order

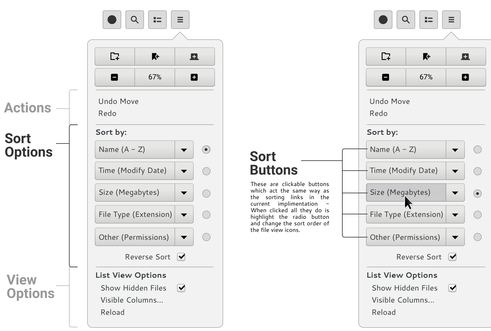


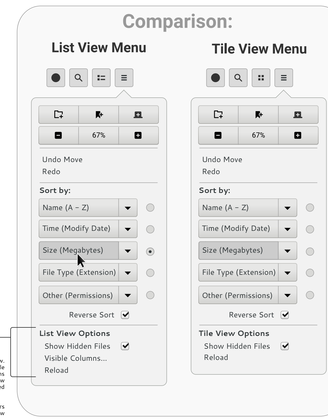
Solution, in a nutshell:

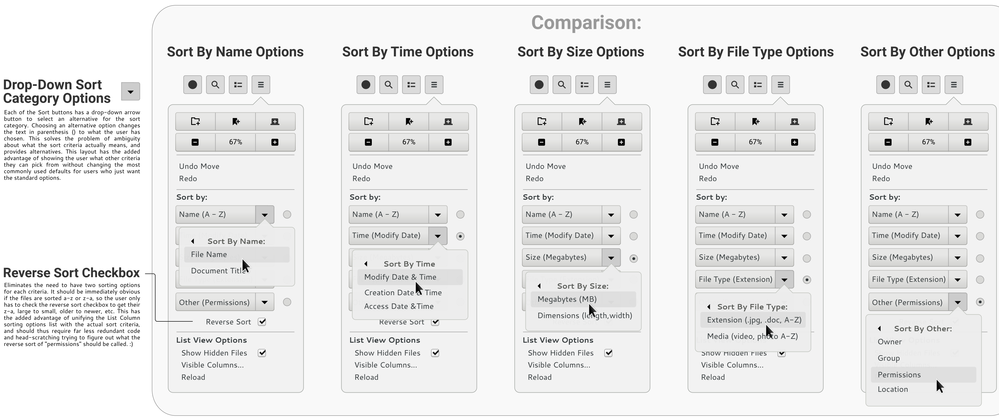
Make ☰ sort options the same for both Tile and List views.

Possible Solution - A Unified Sort Menu

Using the original sort criteria as categories for sorting options







Tile Modifications

Address problem of sort criteria information display on image tile in Tile View

List view has a layout that is perfect for seeing the values of each file in the sort criteria. Tile view needs a small change to be able to see these same values. By extending the base of the border and adding text, the user can still access the file names while seeing the sort criteria value for each individual file.

Icon Examples:

Pros:

- Solves the 6 problems listed above in a unified and relatively simple way.
- Does not hide the default (most common) sort options from the user
- Works the same way as the current setup, with added discoverable funcitonality.
- Bridges the gap between List View sorting options and those in Tile View.
- Puts the special extra options for List View and Tile view at the end, so the user sees the familiar options in both first.

Cons:

- Looks slightly more busy than previous version
- Presents user with more options, but do they really need them?
- Users may not see the "reverse order" checkbox right away
- Reload button is way at the bottom, which is a lot of mouse movement just to reload
- Changing the sort order in Tile View would affect the columns in List View. This may not be what the user wants/expects
- Tiles are already cluttered with file name information. Now you want to add sort criteria info as well? Insanity! :)