

# What is Flipper?

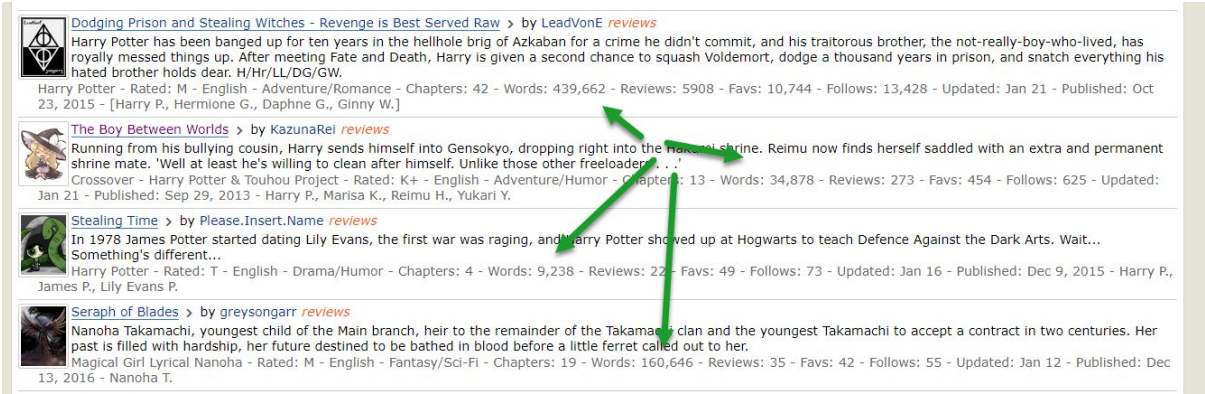
*Flipper is a hybrid of a fanfiction search application and a personal link tracker.*

## The problem.

If you’ve been actively reading fanfiction for a couple years, you are probably well acquainted with this problem: every sort filter you can use on the website you prefer mostly has stuff you’ve already seen or read. You could use a search by update date, but then you lose the “quality” metrics of a favourite filter and don’t *quite* solve a problem. If the fic you’re already done with gets updated - it is at the top again.

Alternatively, you can find a bunch of trusted user favourite lists or communities to follow, but then you are bound to them and lose on the stuff that they miss. And said userprofiles will likely also have a ton of fics you’ve already seen between the fics that you didn’t.

In short: whichever way you search, you have to re-read the fic metadata a lot, if you want to find anything new and noteworthy. It doesn’t help that said metadata has a tendency to wildly jump between fics, further making the process an annoyance. An example can be seen to the right. Lots of fun trying to see how long the fics above are. Or any other info, really.



## Quick and dirty.

Let’s see how Flipper tackles just this problem recreating the usual website search routine.

Demonstration: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T3\\_fWC35mTw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T3_fWC35mTw)

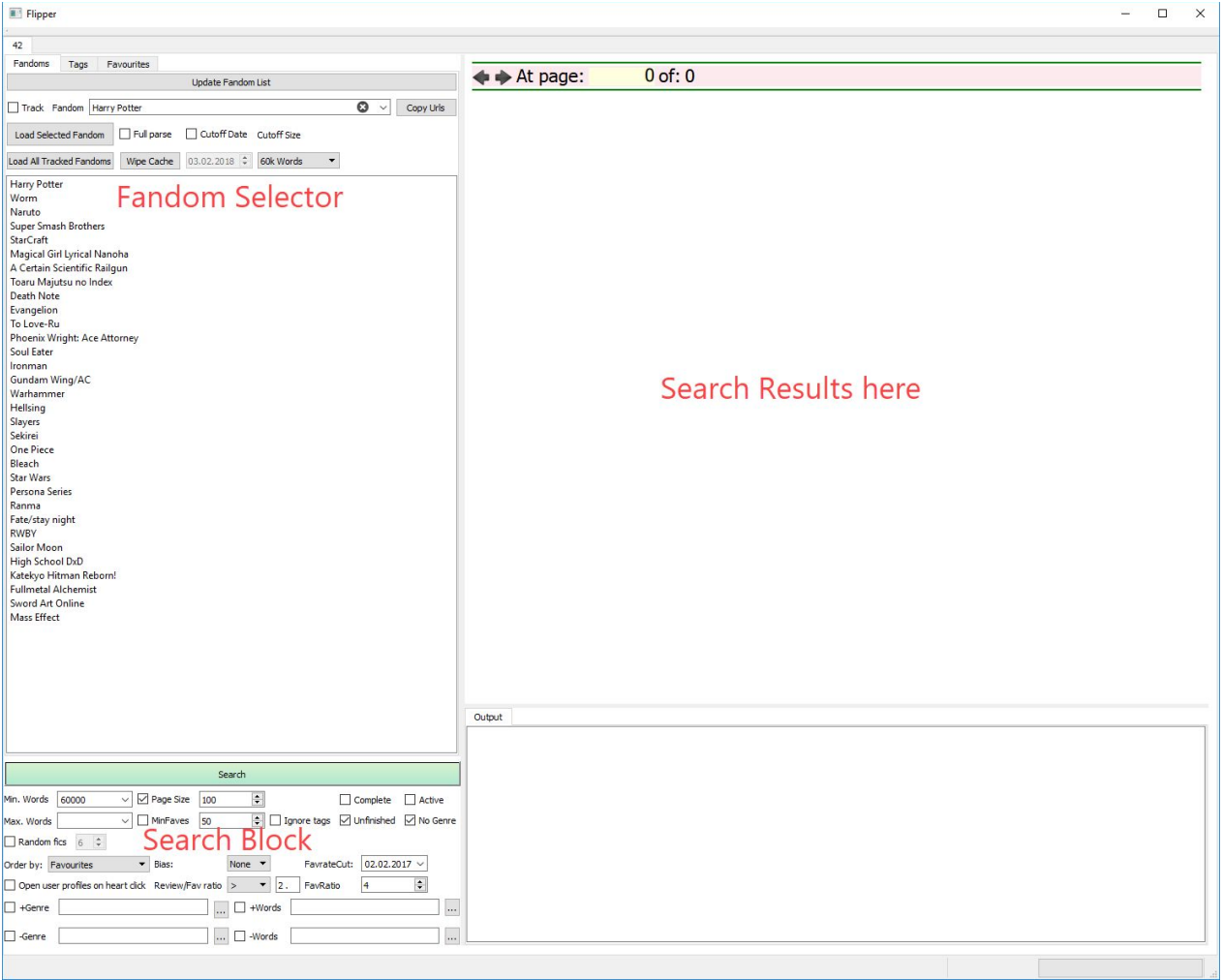
Actions from the video above:

First, select **Favourites** fic ordering in the search block below the fandom list.  
Then, select **Harry Potter** fandom as the fandom at the top of the app.  
Press the green **Search** button below the fandoms.

Search results will appear to the right of the search block. In those, you will see all the usual top fics (from FFN). Now, you’ve likely already read *Nightmares of Futures Past*. Lets get rid of it permanently. Click on the green **plus** button on the fic sheet. The **dropdown menu** will appear. In it, click on **finished**.

And, finally, refilter with the green **search** button again.

As you will see: *Isolation* is now at the top of the search results and *Nightmares of Futures Past* are gone. The fic will not appear in your default search results again.



## Explained.

So, what's the app really about? Flipper acts as a search engine replacement over the default website's search results (currently, FFN). It has its own internal database filled by repeatedly reading FFN's "Sort: Update Date" which lets it do searches in more ways than website allows (for example sort on wordcount on FFN)

As you search, you tag the fics you've read, currently reading or discarded, by different **tags**, iteratively cleaning the search results, so that only fics, you haven't seen already, are visible during default searches. And that's about it, really.

***Flipper is all about saving your time by letting you to avoid re-reading metadata of the same fics in search results over and over.***

Sure, it doubles down as a reading tracker (via tagging stuff) but the core you want to use it for is above.

## What else can it do? (*in addition to...*)

Okay. First of all. *Currently*, Flipper is a search engine for **fanfiction.net**. That will most likely change as I plan to add at least those sites eventually: Ao3, SpaceBattles, SufficientVelocity.

As a search engine for FFN it can do some stuff default searches on the site won't allow you

What Flipper **can** do:

1. Do generalized searches on no specific fandom
2. Search by custom wordcount range and descendingly sort by wordcount.
3. Search, excluding/including more than two words and/or genres.
4. Tag fics for reading organization and subsequently search on these tags.
5. Filter out user favourite lists from stuff you've already read.
6. Search for new and trending fics.
7. Search by wordcount/reviewcount ratio. (explained here: <https://animemonographia.wordpress.com/2016/09/08/best-practices-for-finding-good-fanfiction-on-fanfiction-net/> )
8. Automatically hide fics with too big review to favourite ratio.
9. Present fic meta information in a more readable state than original.
10. Build a list of favourite userprofiles to track
11. Create link lists. Both of search results and link lists of author userfavourites

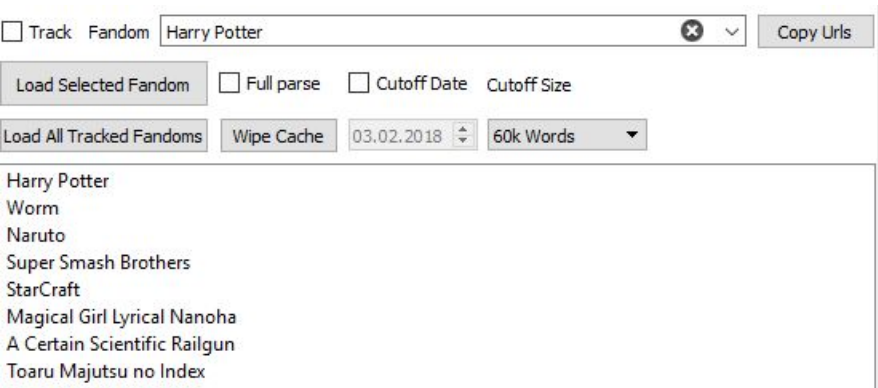
At the same time, a bunch of features FFN offers are currently out of scope for Flipper, as I deem them less important than the stuff I am currently working on.

What Flipper **can't** do:

- Search by characters and pairings. (can do indirectly by word search)
- Search for fics less than 60k words in size. (a solution to that will come later. Allowing to search for smaller fics will potentially overtax FFN servers and ban users on IP)
- Search in languages other than English.
- Download fics for offline reading. (subject to change if anyone is willing to inject it into the code on github)

Searching

First of all: the app comes preloaded with the database of some of the major fandoms.  
Whatever you see in the list below “Load All Tracked Fandoms”, when the Flipper starts, is pre-loaded and can immediately be searched.



If you press the green **Search** button immediately upon application launch without touching anything it will do a generalized search. Generalized searches don’t look within any particular fandom, instead they apply the active search filters to the whole of the database. (excluding tagged stuff)



currently

The current possible **search filters** can be seen to the right:

You can search between any custom **min/max words** (above 60k currently)  
You can search with minimum **favourites count**.

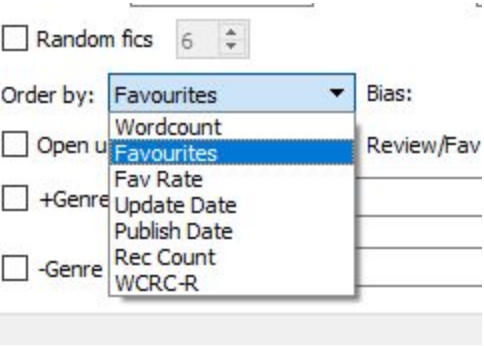
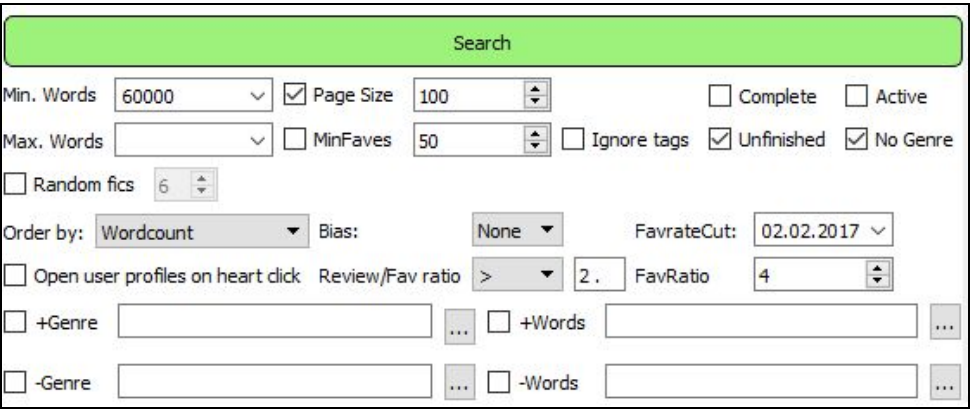
You can search/exclude by multiple **genres**. Insert them one after another, separated by a whitespace  
You can search/exclude by **words**. Insert them one after another, separated by a whitespace  
Both words and genre filters require the respective tickbox to the left of them enabled to work

You can filter filter on **story status**: finished, unfinished, active (within year), lacking genre

- You can **sort** fics based on different criteria.  
In addition to the usual Favourites, Published and Updated there are a couple custom filters of note.
1. First you can **sort on wordcount**. Why FFN doesn’t allow it I have no idea but it was what initially started the Flipper
  2. You can sort on the **ratio of Words/Reviews. WCRC-R**
  3. You can sort on the **rate of favourites acquisition** within a certain period (trending fics, basically) **Fav Rate**
  4. You can sort by the amount of **mentions of the fic in your userfavourites list. Rec List**
  5. *(additional filters coming when someone suggests them)*

You can hide/show fics with a certain **ratio of Reviews/Favourites** called **Bias** in the filter

You can get a list of **random fics** using the current search options (it’s more useful than you’d think)



## Sort modes explained

A little bit of an explanation is needed to properly understand the available sort options.

WCRC-R was picked from this article [Best practices for finding good fanfiction on fanfiction.net](#)

It is a statistic that infers the quality of fanfiction by how much reviews the fic has per word.

Personally, I find the results of such a filter questionable, but having more ways to slice the fandom never hurts.

Closely related to that is the **Bias** option to the right of the sort ordering.

Essentially it allows you to filter out the fics with too high **ratio of reviews per favourites**.

It's not strictly necessary, but if you've ever tried to infer fic quality from review count you probably noticed, that bad fics have an interesting tendency of having lots and lots of gushing reviews from all the same people per every chapter. It often results in such fics having much more reviews than favourites.

By setting Bias to **hide** fics with certain ratio of reviews to favourites you filter out these.

**Note:** not all of the fics with this property are bad, but most of them are (from my experience)

**Fav Rate** is the trending fics filter. By setting Favrate Cut and FavRatio you can search for fics that

**“Started no longer than X days ago and have at least Y favourites per day running”**

Essentially, recent fics worth checking out.

**Rec count** is a bit complex and works in tandem with Favourites tab.

By adding multiple authors whose favourites you like to this tab you are essentially building your recommendation list.

The more authors there, the more fics in the list and when there are authors in this tab, sorting on “Rec count” orders fics by the amount of times they are present in the favourite lists that you added.

Bias:  ▼

Review/Fav ratio  ▼

FavrateCut:  ▼

FavRatio  ▼

Fandoms	Tags	Favourites
<input type="button" value="Add Current Author"/>		<input type="button" value="Remove Current Author"/>
<input type="button" value="ReLoad"/>	Author: <input type="text"/>	<input type="button" value="Get Fav Links"/>
<input type="button" value="Open"/>	Url: <input type="text" value="https://www.fanfiction.net/u/5501797"/>	<input type="button" value="Open Faves"/>



**Selecting the fandom to search on** can be done in two ways:

1. The combobox at the top of the app. It has auto completion so just start typing and it will suggest stuff
2. Selecting it from the listview that keeps track of the last fandoms you've searched in.  
It's below the combobox and fandom load buttons, and gets updated each time you do a search.  
Either new fandoms are added or the existing get rearranged.

**Note:** clearing the “Fandom” edit of any fandom allows searches within whole database. So you can totally look for “Anything over X words and with X favourites”

**Note:** to remove the fandom from quick access list, right click it and choose “**Remove fandom from list**”

**Note:** Flipper comes with fandom names pre-loaded but it doesn't mean you will be able to immediately search within fandoms not initially in the quick list. For that you will have to press the “**Load fandom**” button while the one you are interested in is selected in the edit.

This button is the mechanism of keeping Flipper up to date with fanfiction.net.

It loads the search results for that fandom from the website (and it's crossovers) into your database.

Note that the time required to load a fandom is proportional to its size.

For, say, Harry Potter. It takes approximately half an hour to load everything from scratch. (which is why it's pre-loaded)

As the app loads pages you can check the status in the Output window at the bottom.

Once **Done** and a green tick mark has appeared, you can start searching within that fandom.

*Initial loads for large fandoms can take quite some time.*

The screenshot shows the Flipper application interface. At the top, there is a "Track Fandom" section with a dropdown menu showing "toaru Majutsu no Index" and a "Copy Urls" button. Below this is a "Load Selected Fandom" button, a "Full parse" checkbox, a "Cutoff Date" checkbox, and a "Cutoff Size" dropdown menu. There is also a "Load All Tracked Fandoms" button, a "Wipe Cache" button, a date selector showing "03.02.2018", and a word count dropdown showing "60k Words".

The main list of tracked fandoms includes: Harry Potter, Worm, Naruto, Super Smash Brothers, StarCraft, Magical Girl Lyrical Nanoha, A Certain Scientific Railgun, and Toaru Majutsu no Index.






The "Output" window at the bottom shows the following text:

```
Scheduling fandom: Date:090217 Name: ToHeart
Scheduling section:/anime/ToHeart/
Scheduling section:/crossovers/ToHeart/2845/
Loading the fandom: ToHeart
CACHE: Min Update: Url: https://www.fanfiction.net/anime/ToHeart/?srt=1&lan=1&r=10&len=60
CACHE: Min Update: Url: https://www.fanfiction.net/ToHeart-Crossovers/2845/0/?srt=1&lan=1&r=10&len=60
Finished the job
Inserted fics: 0
Updated fics: 0
Duplicate fics: 0
```

At the bottom right, there is a green checkmark and the text "Done!".


## The search results

Once you've selected the option to search with and pressed the Search button the search results will appear to the right. The elements of fic sheet in order of appearance:

- 1)  Url copy button. Sends the url into your clipboard
- 2) Fic title. This is clickable and opens default browser
- 3) Rating indicator (T,M...)
- 4) Fic activity indicator     
Grey means fic hasn't been updated for at least a year  
Yellow is for stuff updated in the last year  
Green is for fics updated in the last 30 days
- 5) Fandom(s)
- 6) The chapter you are at. Can be set manually, obviously
- 7) The summary
- 8)  User favourites matches. How much times the fic is present in user favourites lists that you keep track of.
- 9) Wordcount.
- 10) Character list.

On the right of each fic page there is a block for genres and tags.

Display mode can be changed by clicking on “tags” and “genres” respectively.

Clicking on the green plus button  opens up tag selection interface where you can add one or more tags to the fic to organize your reading. Note that every tagged fic will disappear from default searches.

There is a separate control option to see tagged fics (more later)

Under the Genre/Tag block are the indicators of how long ago the fic has been published and last updated.

Note: by default the search results are separated into pages of 100.

This can be changed by changing the “Page Size” in the filter options (or unticking the page size entirely)

Stepping forwards and backwards between the pages can be done at the top via arrow controls.

Note that yellow section is editable and you can set the exact page to go to and press Enter.

At page: 1 of: 4

---

**The Subspace Emissary's Worlds Conquest**

**T** Super Smash Brothers
 At chapter: 0 Of: 220

REWRITTEN Chapter 6: Having succeeded on their first assignment, the duo arrives at an unfamiliar location that used to be crowded with people...

Words: 4061129 Lucario, OC

Genre  
Humor  
Fantasy

Tags +  
Pub:05/03/2008  
Inc:18/10/2016

---

**SSBB Oneshots**

**T** Super Smash Brothers
 At chapter: 0 Of: 183

A whole load of one-shots featuring the SSBB characters :D. Hopefully funny, hopefully good! Enjoy the various mishaps of your favourite characters! Officially complete, with an extra little chapter now XD

Words: 146864

Genre  
Humor  
Friendship

Tags +  
Pub:14/03/2010  
Upd:14/03/2011

---

**Kirby and his Smasher Friends watch DEATH BATTLE**

**M** Web Shows & Super Smash Brothers
 At chapter: 0 Of: 69

After the start of the 4th Smash Bros. Tournament, the fighters begin to settle down within Smash Mansion. Then suddenly, Kirby and his friends discovered mysterious package comes to their front door and it's full of DVDs they plan to watch. They will discover how much the combatants in the show have in common with them and the other smash fighters.

Words: 469639 Kirby, Ness, Pikachu, Yoshi

Genre  
Humor

Tags +  
Pub:06/08/2016  
Upd:20/12/2017

---

**One Piece: A Smash Adventure**

**T** One Piece & Super Smash Brothers
 At chapter: 3 Of: 138

Post Enies Lobby, Luffy and the gang continue their quest to fulfill their dreams, but what happens if they went into another world? A new adventure begins. OnePieceXSSB crossover. Rated T for swearing. This story is COMPLETE!

Words: 1032133

Genre  
Adventure  
Humor

Tags +  
Pub:28/04/2007  
Upd:15/01/2010

---

**Attached**

**M** Super Smash Brothers
 At chapter: 0 Of: 20

Samus and Zelda both feel alienated from the rest of the world, but for very different reasons. They find in each other a counter to their feelings of isolation, and so much more. Shoujo Ai, Yuri.

Words: 127886 [Samus A., Zelda/Sheik]

Genre  
Romance  
Drama

Tags +  
Pub:06/04/2007  
Upd:14/06/2010

---

**The Game**

**T** Super Smash Brothers
 At chapter: 0 Of: 71

You just lost. A collection of humorous random one-shots about life at Brawl with some short arcs throughout, mostly following the older teenagers around as they go through various and not so average problems of life. Originally a completely random

Genre  
Humor  
Friendship

Tags +

At page: 1 of: 4

## Keeping your searches up to date

Flipper doesn't query fanfiction.net each time you do a search. Instead, it uses its own database of saved metadata. Therefore, unless you manually update the fandom information, no new fics will appear in your searches.

There are two ways to do it. First was already discussed: you just select a fandom and press "Load Selected Fandom". This updates both pure fandom and the crossover section. It works but it's suboptimal as if you are reading multiple fandoms you will have to press load on each of those.

If you want to load a bunch of fandoms simultaneously it's better to use "**tracked fandoms**" functionality. Basically, you select the fandom in the combobox at the top of the app and tick the "Track" checkbox to the left of it. Once that is done, the fandom is added to tracked list and you can use "Load All Tracked Fandoms" to load all of those simultaneously. Obviously, it will be proportionately slower as Flipper will have to traverse more and more pages the more fandoms you track.

Note: updating fandoms does not reparse the whole of that fandom on ffn. Unless you select other options it will only fetch updates since the last successful fandom update.

**Note:** Flipper comes with a bunch of fandoms preloaded up to the beginning of February 2018.

If FFN adds an additional fandom you can always update your random list with "**Update Fandom List**" button. But you really, REALLY don't need to press it all that often. And fandoms are already preloaded anyway.

## Tags revisited

To revisit the fics you've tagged (perhaps as *reading*) you will need to navigate to the **Tags** pane of the app. By clicking on respective tags you are effectively doing a search on tagged fics only. Multiple tags can be selected at once.

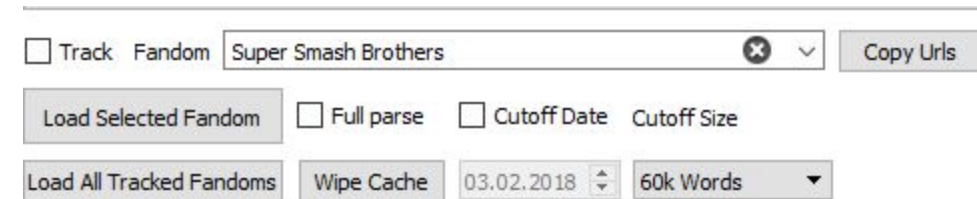
Note that ***filter block and fandom selection still apply***. So if you have 300k+ words selected in wordcount filter but all the fics you've tagged are less than that - the search will return nothing.

The reverse is also true: by navigating away from the tags pane you do not automatically reset them. You have to click them again to reset each one individually.

## Tag management

Flipper comes with a bunch of pre-set tags for you to use, but you can always add new ones or delete unneeded. Type the name of the tag into the block to the right and press respective button.

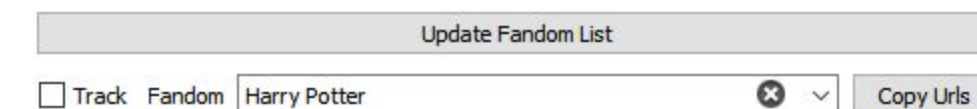
**Note:** Alternatively to using tags block, to see the tagged fics, you can tick the "**Ignore tags**" checkbox on the filter panel. With this option selected, any searches you do ignore the tags, set to fanfics, and return full results.



☒ Track Fandom Super Smash Brothers

☐ Full parse ☐ Cutoff Date Cutoff Size

03.02.2018 60k Words



☒ Track Fandom Harry Potter



Fandoms Tags Favourites

☒ Tag Filters:

[Limbo](#) [Meh](#) [Unknown](#) [fandom abandoned](#)  
[accumulating](#) [deleted](#) [finished](#) [read\\_queue](#) [reading](#)  
[wtf](#)





Filtering user favourites lists

Tagging workflow not only helps you with search results. It has an added benefit of filtering out stuff from user’s favourites. To do that, navigate to **Favourites** tab.

- What you need to do is:
- 1. Add a user url into Url: editbox.
  - 2. Press **Add Current Author** button.

Flipper will work for a while (depending on how big author’s favourites section is). While it’s working you will see the indicator at the bottom like the one to the right.

After the user’s page is loaded, their name will be added in the list below the url. Now you can click ‘**Open Fav**es’ button. The author’s favourites will be displayed in the usual search results area with stuff you’ve tagged earlier already filtered out.

**This way, whenever you open userfavourites you will only see new stuff that you haven’t read yet.**

As an added benefit, adding multiple favourite pages in the list lets you sort search results on an additional parameter.

If you select the option above and press “Search” while the favourites list is populated you will see search results that are slightly different than normal. See to the right. **The Heart icon, with the number 2** means that there are two user favourites profiles in you list that contain this fic. This way you can find fanfics that are popular among the user favourite lists you follow.

To reload favourite lists select a list and press “**Reload**” or press “**Reload Whole List**” from below the list of favourites.

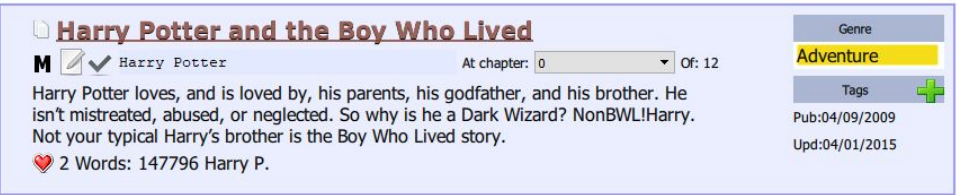
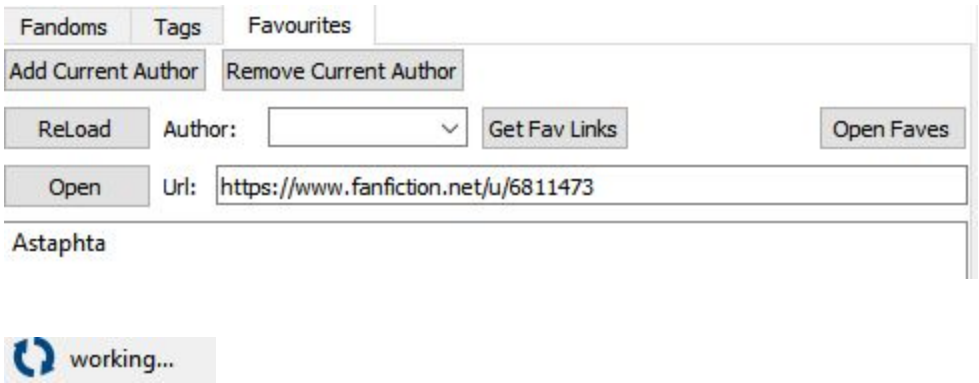
**Note:** favourite pages tend to be considerably bigger than search pages on FFN so do not be surprised if reloading takes a bit of time.

If you want to open a merged list of user favourites for the whole list, press “**Open Whole List**”

**Note:** as usual, sort ordering and search filters apply. So you probably want to reset those prior to pressing “Open”

Updating Flipper

**Note:** if you later want to update Flipper to a newer version, you will have to **Export Tags** in the old one, take the resulting **TagExport.sqlite** file, put it into the new version and press **Import Tags**.





## Backups

Upon starting for the first time each day, Flipper will zip a copy of your current database into backups folder.

(until ten backups exist, then it will start rotating them)

It shouldn't take too much time, but if you are annoyed by it, you can disable it by editing **settings.ini** file

What you are looking for there is **doBackups=true**

Simply change true to false.

## Additional stuff

Not as important but sometimes useful (in no particular order)

On the Fandoms tab:

- 1) **“Copy urls”** on Fandoms tab copies the urls of all the currently filtered fics into your clipboard.
- 2) **“Full Parse”** is used when you want to reparse the whole of the selected fandom(s) from the beginning.  
Use sparingly as it is both long and normally unnecessary. Mostly used to fix fandoms if there's been a program error
- 3) **“Cutoff Date”** serves much the same purpose as full parse except you can set the limit at which flipper should stop looking for fics to update.

On the Favourites tab:

- 1) **“Copy author urls”** copies all of the favourite lists urls into your clipboard.  
Not the favourites themselves but the links to userprofiles.
- 2) **“Get Fav Links”** actually copies ALL of the favourites of the currently selected url into your clipboard.  
This button completely ignores what's been tagged.

And that's basically it. Have fun searching.