

15 - Libraries

Modern computer users are storing more and more information on their machines. Digital cameras have made it super easy to take thousands of pictures. The internet has made it cheap and easy to purchase huge music collections and even video collections too. Libraries were introduced in Windows 7 to help manage users rapidly expanding file collections. Power users will often rave about libraries, but regular users frequently find them confusing. In Windows 10, the libraries have been hidden away, meaning that regular users may rarely encounter them. If you only have one hard drive on your PC, then you can skip this lesson if you like. Otherwise, read on for some handy tips for organising bigger media collections.

15.1 – Activating libraries

If you want to use libraries in Windows 10, you will need to enable them in the Navigation pane. To do this, open a File Explorer window and click on the View tab, then click on the Options button on the right of the ribbon. A Folder Options window will then appear. Select the “View” tab and then scroll down in the “Advanced Settings” section until you get right to the bottom. The window should look like the one shown in figure 15.1.

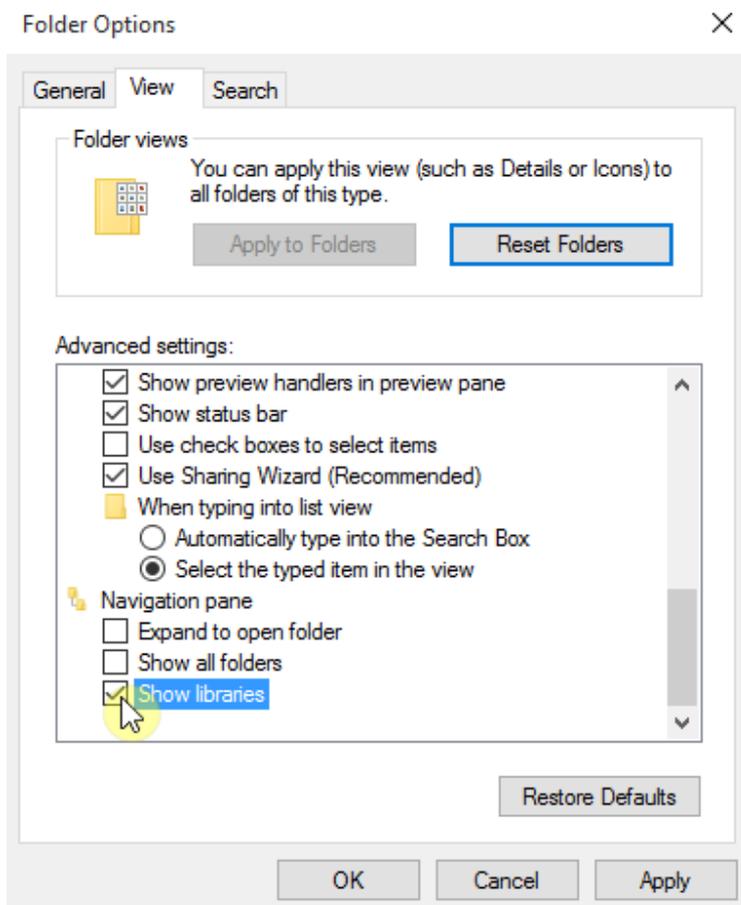


Figure 15.1 – Restoring libraries to the Navigation pane

Make sure the “Show libraries” option is selected and then click on “OK”. You will now be able to see a shortcut to your libraries in the Navigation pane.

15.2 – Working with libraries

When you access a library in File Explorer, or anywhere in Windows, it appears just like a regular folder. This is probably why beginners often find the concept to be confusing. Libraries can, in fact, show data from several locations on your computer. This can be useful on machines with two or more hard drives. On a machine like this, media files may be spread over different hard drives and in different folders. If you want to browse all your photographs or music together, you can put them in the same library even if they are not in the same folder. Figure 15.2 shows a Music library on a Windows 10 machine. The user has already added some music files to his computer and this can be seen in the example.

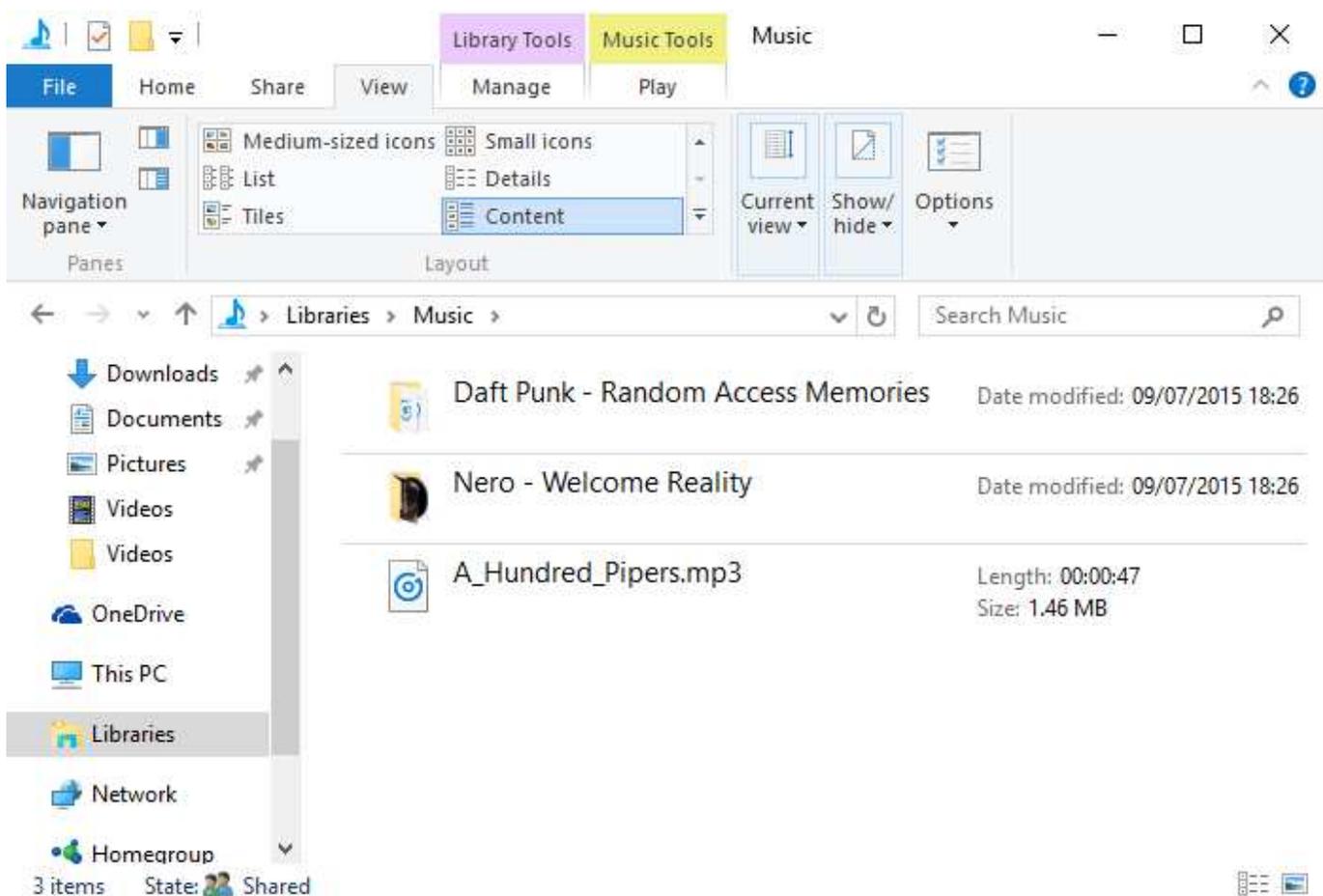


Figure 15.2 – File Explorer in a Music library on a Windows 10 machine

In Windows 10, libraries only contain one location by default. In Windows 8 and Windows 7, there were two locations for each of the libraries. For the Music library, this would be the users own music folder and the public music folder. If you have upgraded to Windows 10 from Windows 7, then your libraries should still include those two locations.

Note that if you have set up OneDrive (see [lesson 32](#)) your OneDrive folders will be included in the libraries automatically.

To see which locations are included in a library, click on the Library Tools tab on the ribbon, then click on “Manage Library”.

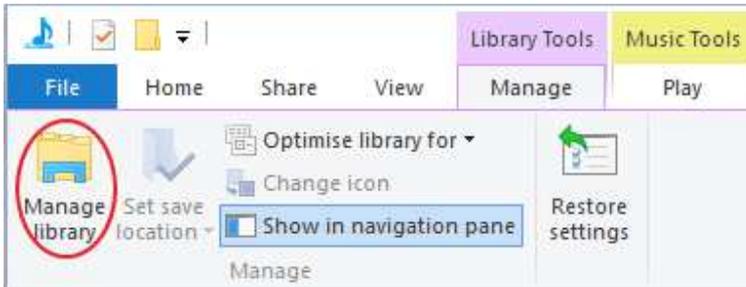


Figure 15.3 – Use the ribbon under “Library Tools” to access the Manage library button

The window shown in figure 15.4 will then open.

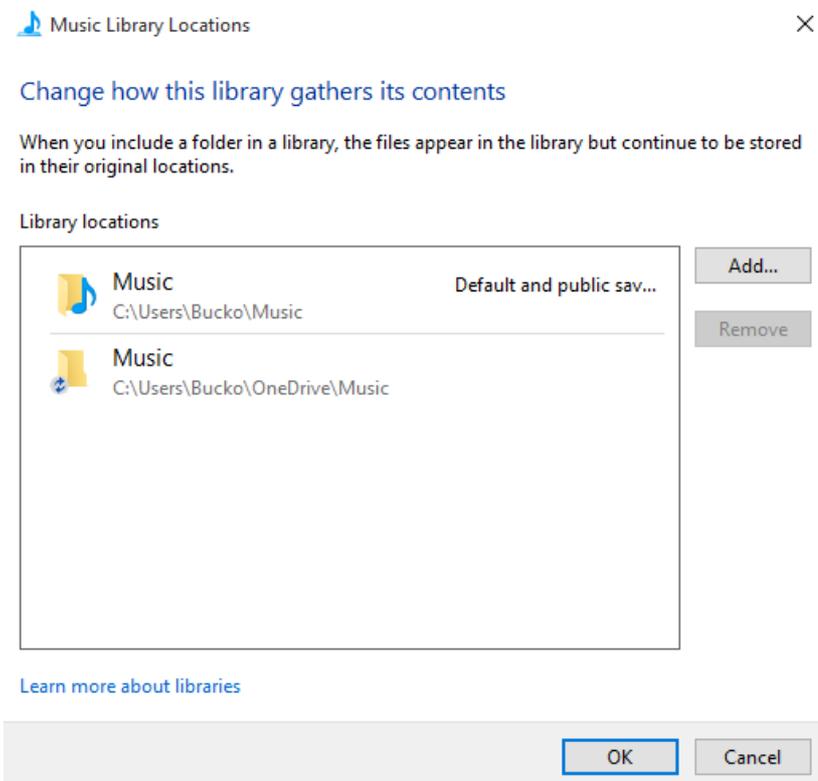


Figure 15.4 – Folders included in the Music library

In figure 15.4 we can see that the library contains two folders. To add a location, click on the “Add...” button. You can then browse to any folder on any storage location on your PC (well, almost any location, there are some exceptions that we will discuss in a moment). When you have located the folder you want to include in your library, click on “Include folder”. Figure 15.5 shows a Music library with content added from a secondary hard drive.

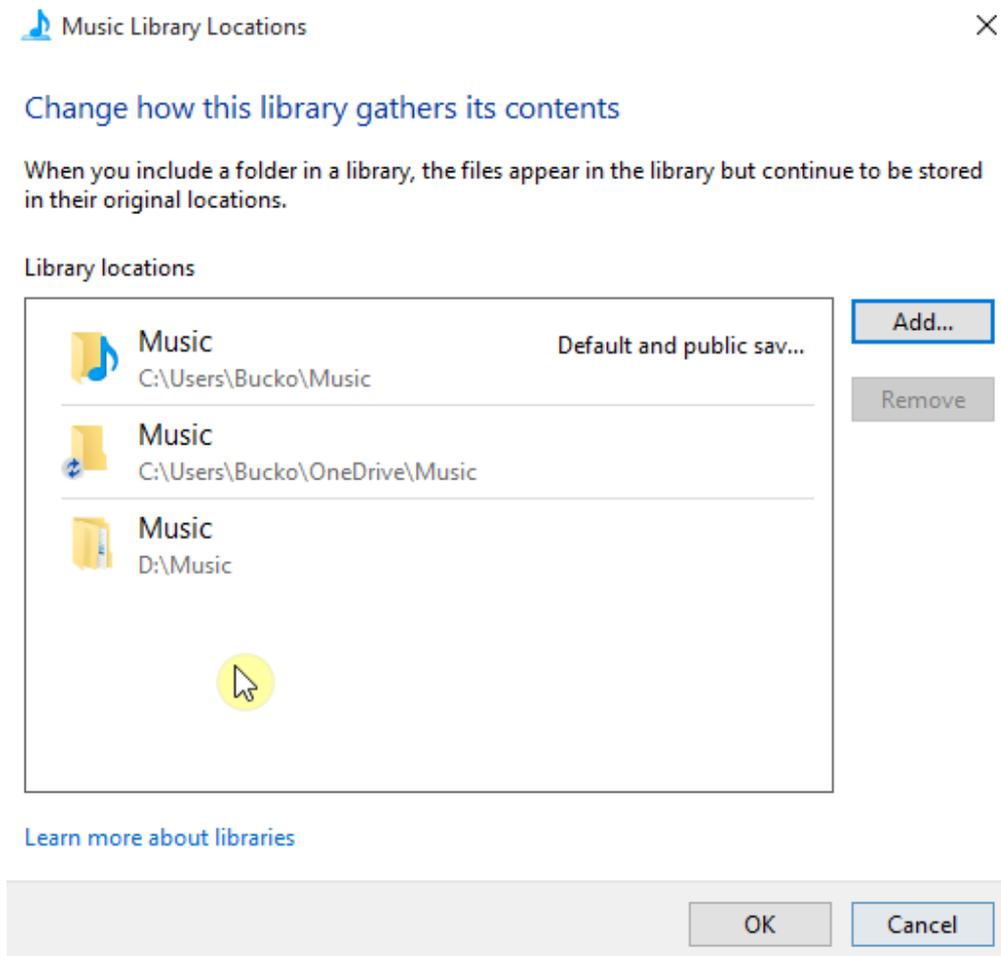


Figure 15.5 – A Music library with an extra location added

Now, when the user browses to their Music library, they will in actual fact be getting a combined view of the “Music” folder at ‘C:\Users\Bucko\Music’, the OneDrive music folder at ‘C:\Users\Bucko\OneDrive\Music’ and the folder at ‘D:\Music’. So in effect the library will show the content in all three of these folders. If you’re not sure what that means, you can take a refresher on file paths in our prerequisite skills section, either on your Superguide DVD/Download or in the PC basics section on Top-Windows-Tutorials.com.

Figure 15.6 shows the newly configured library open in File Explorer.

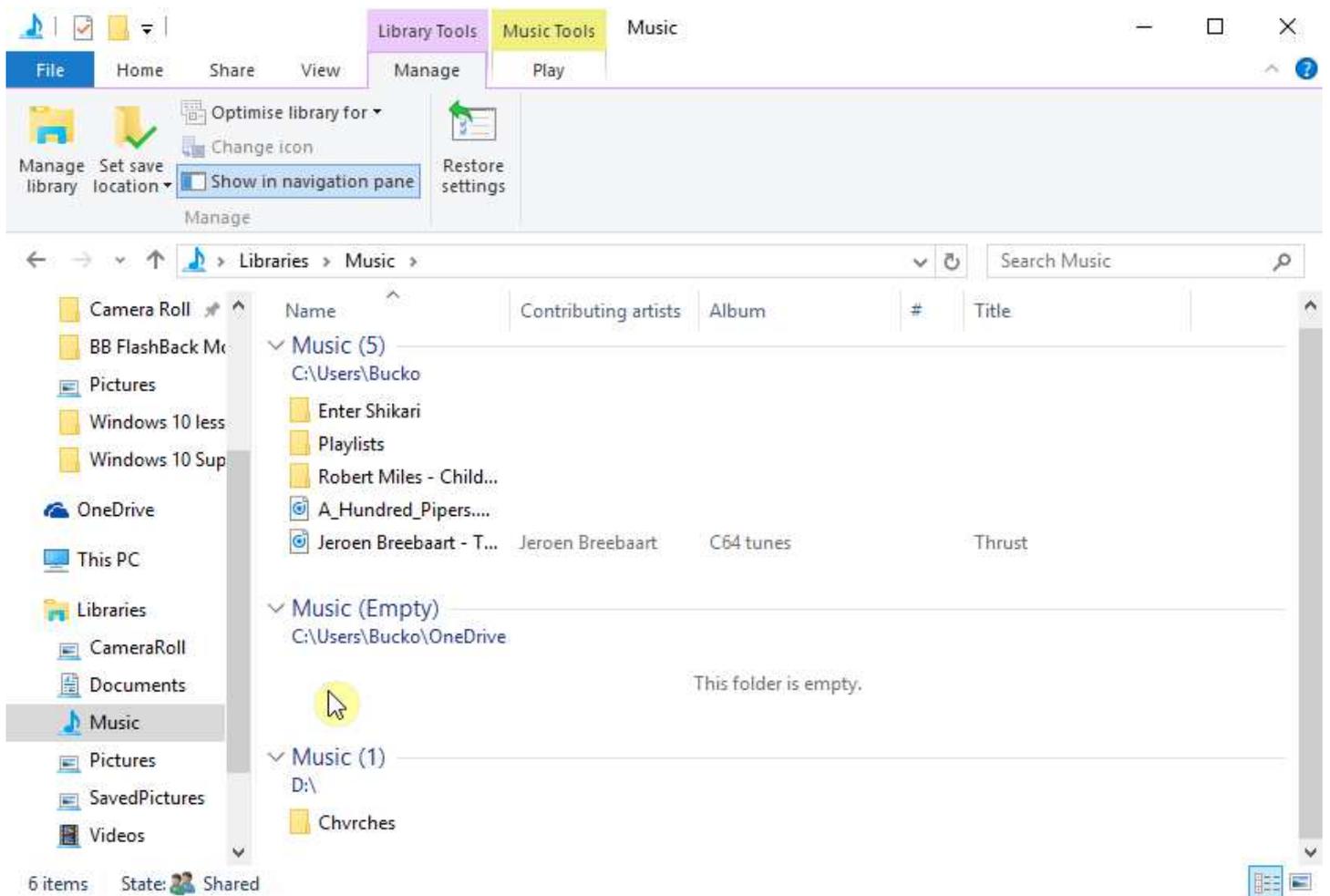


Figure 15.6 – Browsing a library with three locations included in File Explorer

Music folders you add to your music library like this will also be available instantly in the music libraries in the Groove Music app and in Windows Media Player.

Notice in figure 15.5 that the top folder is marked as the “Default and public save location”. What does this mean? Since we can work with our libraries like any other folder, if we were to copy or move a file into this library from somewhere else, the file would actually be placed into the My Music folder, since that is the “Default save location”.

The idea of the public save location was to make it easier for users to share files. Public sections of a library can be accessed by all users of the PC, while the regular private sections are only accessible to the user who is currently logged in. Public save locations are rarely used now and Microsoft may phase them out entirely in the future.

You can change the default and public save locations easily. Simply open the Manage library window (figure 15.5) and then right click on a folder in the list. A menu will then appear with the option to set the public or default save locations to this folder.

You can add several more locations to your libraries if you want to. As well as folders on local hard drives, it is possible to add network storage locations or even a removable hard drive. As mentioned earlier, there are some

restrictions on what kind of locations can be added to libraries. Unfortunately, USB thumb or stick drives are not supported and you can only add network locations that are indexed and available off-line (this basically means their contents are mirrored on your computers hard drive). For more information about what files and folders can be included, open the Manage Library window again (figure 15.5) and click on the “Learn more about libraries” link at the bottom of the window. A help and support page will then open, from here, click “What types of locations are supported in libraries?”.

15.3 – Sorting data in libraries

When working with libraries in File Explorer, they behave almost exactly the same as regular folders. Figure 15.6 shows a Music library with several folders added to it. Notice that the File Explorer window shown in figure 15.6 is showing us the path to the folders included in the library (C:\Users\Bucko and D:\). To view your libraries like this, you will need to use the “Group by” button on the View tab of the ribbon. We discussed the Group By options briefly in [lesson 12.4](#). Figure 15.7 demonstrates this button.

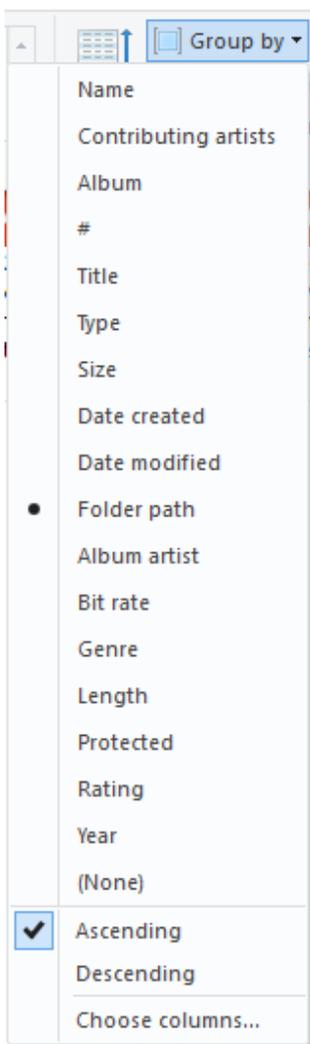


Figure 15.7 – Choosing a different grouping for a library folder

You can also use the “Sort by” button, which is to the left of the “Group by” button to sort the files different ways. If you don’t see these buttons, try making your File Explorer window wider using the window sizing techniques we covered in [lesson 5.2](#). Windows 10 gives you dozens of ways to view the data in your libraries and folders, there are far too many possibilities for us to cover here, so experiment and find the views that work best for you.

15.4 – Pictures library

The Pictures library behaves in much the same way as the Music library. Figure 15.8 shows a typical Pictures library.

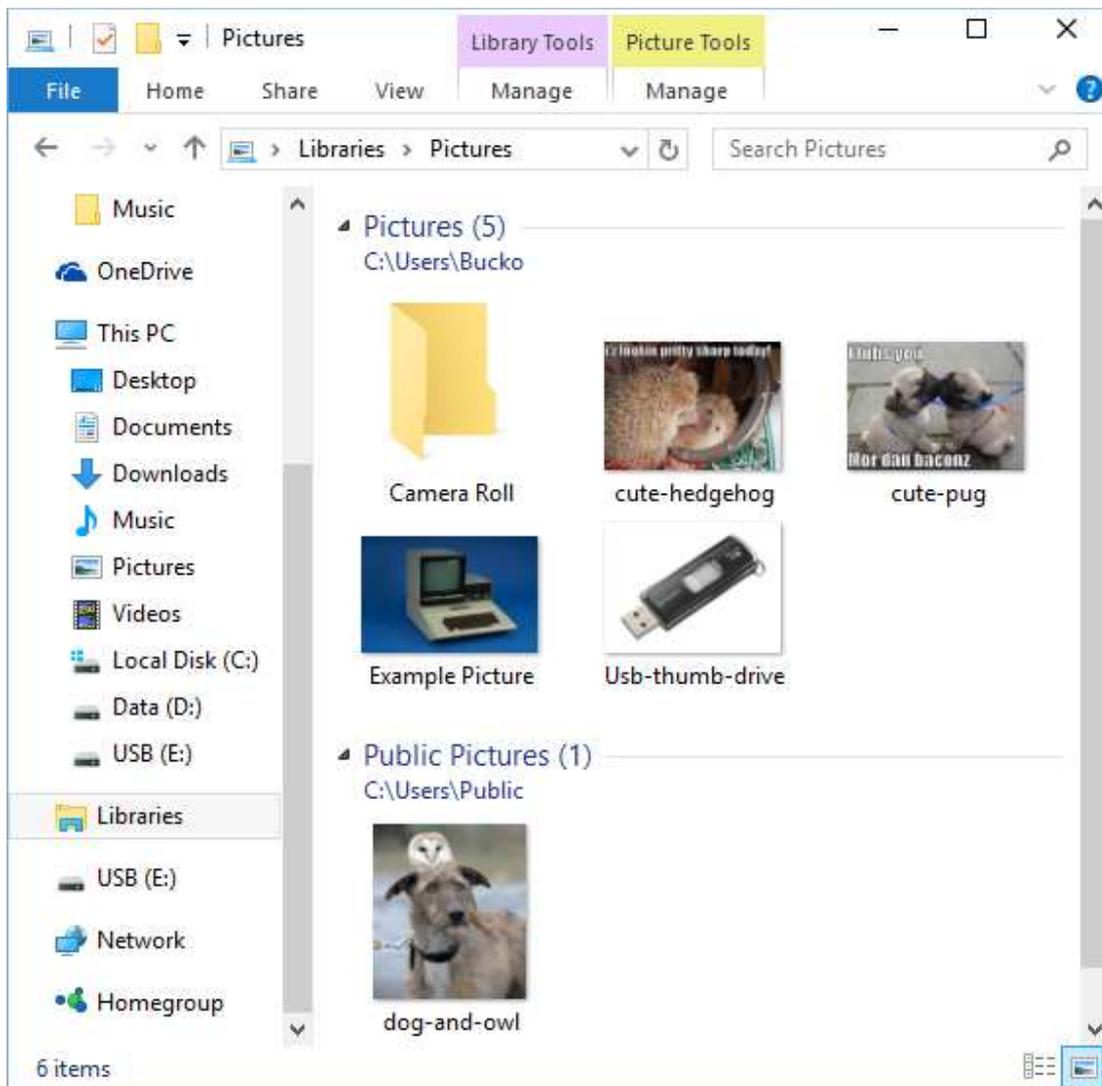


Figure 15.8 – A Pictures library

The Pictures library shown in figure 15.8 has two locations, the users personal pictures folder and the public pictures folder. This was the default configuration for libraries in Windows 7 and 8. If you don’t have a public folder in any of your libraries, you can add it again easily if you want to. Simply open the Manage library

window (figure 15.3/15.4) then add a new location (by clicking the Add... button) and browse to C:\Users\Public. There you will find several folders named “Public Documents”, “Public Pictures” etc. Simply add the appropriate one to your library and you’re all set. Remember you can set the default and public save locations by right clicking on any location in the Manage library window.

Just like with the Music library, data in the Pictures library can be sorted by using the Group by and Sort by controls on the ribbon. Of course, we can also use the folder views, Preview pane and Details pane with all our libraries just like we did with regular folders in [lesson 12](#).

Any picture folders you add to your Pictures library will also instantly be available in the Pictures app.

15.5 – Open file/folder location

When working with libraries, you can instantly go to the actual file or folder location by using “Open file location” or “Open folder location” on the context menu. Figure 15.9 shows an example of this.

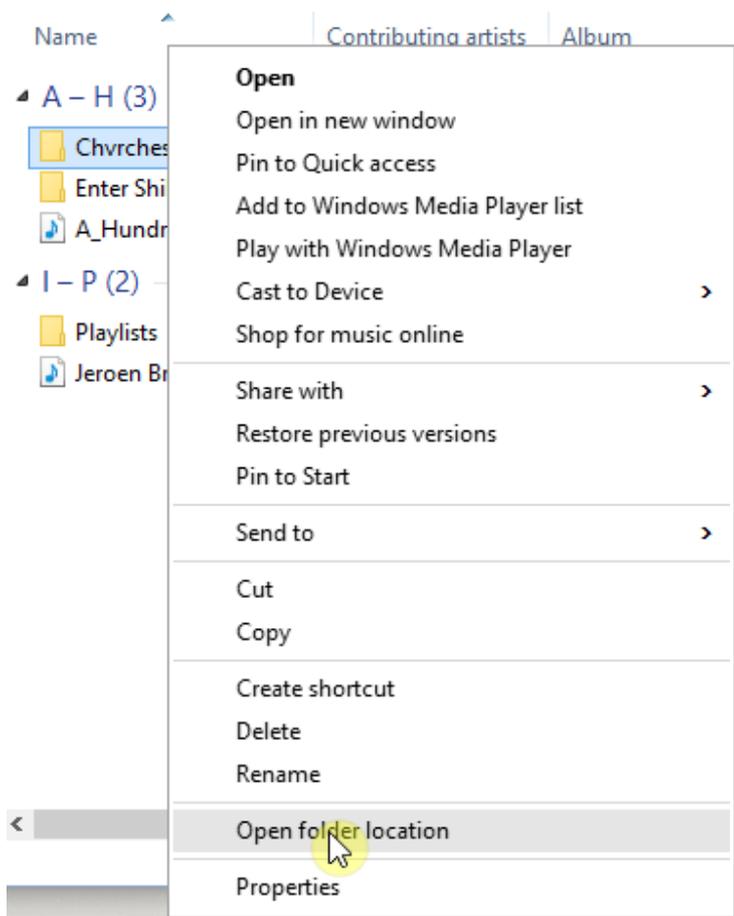


Figure 15.9 – Use this context menu option to jump directly to a folders location on your computer

Certain operations can only be carried out when you open the folders true location in File Explorer and not when viewing the file or folder in library view.