

ImageBlend 1.0

User Manual

CodeBlend

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1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

ImageBlend is a small and lightweight server software that can be used in order to publish images/photos in the Internet or to share images with a closed user group.

Everything that you need is integrated into the same package. For example, **ImageBlend** contains a build-in web server and a build-in database, which means that you do not need to use or install any external web servers or databases into your computer. This also means that the installation and usage of **ImageBlend** is extremely easy – installation takes about two minutes and the starting of the server takes about few seconds.

Because of the easy installation **ImageBlend** is suitable also for home users – you do not need to be an IT professional in order to maintain you own Internet image/photo service.

ImageBlend is not a free software in spite of that you can test it freely as long as you want. However, without a license you can have only ten users and maximum 300 images in your service. That's why you should purchase a license according to your needs.

See the **CodeBlend** homepage (<http://www.codeblend.fi>) in order to find more information about the licensing.

1.2 Usage

ImageBlend is designed to be used for the following purposes:

- 1) Image sharing
- 2) Image publishing and selling
- 3) Image collection

1.2.1 Image sharing

ImageBlend can be used in order to share images with other people through the Internet.

- **Home users** can easily share their images/photos with their relatives and friends.
- **Club users** (amateur photographers, travelers, sport clubs, fan clubs, horse/dog/cat clubs, etc.) can share their images/photos with other club members or other fans.
- **Company users** can share company images/photos (product photos, marketing photos, etc) inside the company or with partners (resellers, etc).
- **Traveling agencies and destinations** can allow their customers to share photos from their traveling destinations and in this way to promote their business.

1.2.2 Image publishing and selling

ImageBlend can be used also for commercial purposes. In this case the main motive is to make money with the images/photos. **ImageBlend** offers an excellent way for everybody to publish images through the Internet. Because you do not need to be an IT professional in order to maintain this kind of service you can also easily start your own image/photo business in the Internet.

- **Photographers** can publish their photo catalogs (i.e. previews of their photos) in the Internet. They can also allow registered users to download hi-quality photos.
- **Image owners** (web image galleries, adult sites, etc) can publish their image catalogs in the Internet. They can also allow registered users (= paying users) to download hi-quality images.

ImageBlend does not contain any on-line paying / buying features. However, it contains quite good user management. In other words, if you use **ImageBlend** for commercial purposes you have to take care of all payments and agreements by yourself, but you can use the **ImageBlend** user management features in order to control the service usage. For example, if you are a professional photographer you might give a service access to your customers and charge them when they actually use some of your photos. Charging can also be based on a membership agreement, which means that all your site members can freely use your images/photos as long as they pay their monthly membership fee.

1.2.3 Image collection

ImageBlend can also be used in order to collect images from photographers and image owners. In some cases this might help you to save a lot of money. For example, if you collect images/photos from amateur photographers you might get them freely, because amateur photographers usually only want that somebody sees / publish their photos even for free.

- **Magazines, newspapers, TV channels etc.** can collect photos from the photographers by allowing registered users to upload photos. This is easy way to get photos immediately when something has happened (accidents, breaking news, celebrities, etc).
- **Book and magazine publishers** can collect images/photos for their books and magazines. Sometimes this could be an easy way to collect free photos from amateur photographers - i.e. usually its enough that amateur photographers' names are published below their photos.
- **Image/photo services** can collect images from individual photographers or image owners and resell them to magazines, books, etc.
- **Image/photo collectors** can collect images as their hobby. For example, images of old cars, buildings, events, locations, etc.

2 Users

2.1 Introduction

All **ImageBlend** users have their own user account with the username and the password. The system administrator is responsible for creating and managing user accounts. There are two special user accounts that cannot be removed:

1. The system administrator account ("**admin**") is used for the system administration. This means in practice that the owner of this account is responsible for the following tasks:
 - a) Management of users accounts
 - b) Management of image folders
 - c) Acceptance of uploaded and published images

There is always at least one system administrator ("**admin**") account in place. However, it is also possible to define other accounts with the system administrator privileges.

2. The guest account ("**guest**") is used in order to enable the guest login into the service. If this account is enabled the login window contains the "**Guest**" button that can be used in order to login without any username or password. In this case the guest user has usually only rights to see image previews, but no rights to download original (hi-quality) images. You can modify the guest rights by modifying the guest user account. If the guest account is disabled then there is no "**Guest**" button in the login window and the guest login is not allowed.

2.2 User administration

The administration of the user account is done in the **User administration** page, which is shown below. This page is visible only to the system administrators.

The screenshot shows the 'ImageBlend' web application interface. On the left is a navigation menu with options: 'System administrator', 'ImageBlend', 'New user account', 'User administration', and 'ImageBlend'. The 'User administration' option is selected and highlighted in blue. To the right of the menu is a table titled 'User administration' listing user accounts. Below the table is a form for editing a user account, with fields for 'Last name', 'First name', 'Username', 'Password', 'Password confirmation', 'Email address', and various permissions like 'Account enabled', 'Image upload', 'Image download', 'Image accept', 'Folder accept', 'Folder administration', and 'Image list'. At the bottom of the form are buttons for 'New', 'Delete', 'Update', and 'Login as the selected user'. Red arrows point from text labels on the left to specific elements in the interface: 'User account list' points to the table, 'Selected user account' points to the 'User administration' menu item, 'User administration' points to the 'User administration' menu item, 'User account information' points to the form, 'New user account' points to the 'New' button, 'Delete user account' points to the 'Delete' button, 'Update user account' points to the 'Update' button, and 'Login as the selected user' points to the 'Login as the selected user' button.

| Username | Account name | Type | Number |
|-----------------------|--------------|---------------|--------|
| Administrator, System | admin | administrator | 0 |
| CodeBlend | admin | user | 2 |
| Guest | guest | user | 1 |
| Koskela, Markku | markku | user | 3 |
| Koskela, Markku | markku | user | 4 |

Annotations:

- User account list
- Selected user account
- User administration
- User account information
- New user account
- Delete user account
- Update user account
- Login as the selected user

All user accounts are listed on the user account list, which is shown above. By selecting one of the accounts on the list you can see its information on the bottom of the page. This is also the place where you can modify the current account information.

All accounts contain the following information:

- **Account type.** The user account type can be “**administrator**” or “**user**”. Users that are defined to be “**administrators**” can administrate all user accounts and image folders. In addition they are responsible for the acceptance of the uploaded and published images. By default the system has at least one administrative user account (“**admin**”) that cannot be deleted or disabled. Usually you do not give administrative rights to other users unless you are sure that they are able to handle administrative tasks.
- **Last name, first name.** The user’s last name and the first name. If the user is a company/community then type its name into the last name field.
- **Username.** This is the user’s unique username that is needed in order to login into the service. The user’s username must be unique among all users. If you have hundreds of users the easiest way is to use the users’ email addresses as their usernames.
- **Password, password confirmation.** This is the login password of the user. If you are updating the user’s password you should type the new password into the both password fields. The password will be changed only if the both fields are the same.
- **Email address.** This is the email address of the user. It is very useful when you want to get contact to the user. Notice that the email address is the only contact information available in the user’s account.
- **Account enabled.** This field is used in order to enable or to disable the current user account. When the user account is disabled, the user cannot login into the service.
- **Image upload.** This field is used in order to define whether the user is allowed to upload images into the service. I.e. there are usually two types of users: 1) users who can upload and publish images and 2) users who can watch and download images.
- **Image download.** This field is used in order to define whether the user is allowed to download original (hi-quality) images from the system. When the system is used for commercial purposes it is quite typical that only paying users are allowed to download original images meanwhile everybody can see the (low-quality) previews of the images.
- **Image acceptance.** This field is used in order to define whether the user’s uploaded images must be accepted before they become visible to other users. The basic idea is that if you trust the user the system can automatically accept his/her images when they are uploaded into the service. However, if you do not fully trust to the user, you should make sure that all his/her images are accepted before they become visible to other users. Otherwise you might get a lot of unwanted images (porn, advertisements, etc) into your service.
- **Folder acceptance.** This field is used in order to define whether the user’s images must be accepted before they are published in the image folders. The basic idea is that if you trust the user the system can automatically accept his/her image publishing in the image folders. However, if you do not fully trust to the user, you should make sure that all his/her images are accepted before they become visible in the image folders. Otherwise images might be published in totally wrong image folders. If the user is owner of the folder where he/she tries to publish images then the images are automatically accepted for publishing.
- **Folder administration.** This field is used in order to define whether the user is allowed to administrate (create, delete, modify, etc) the folder hierarchy. If the folder administration is enabled then they user can administrate his/her own folders (i.e. the folder owner is the current user), but not any other folders. The folder owner can publish images in his/her own folder without the system administrators’ acceptance. However, if the images are not accepted into the service in the first place they will not be visible in any folder.
- **Image limit.** This field defines the maximum number of the images that the user can upload into the service. By setting an upload limit is a good way to make sure that the user does not keep the service just as a storage place for all his/her images without any intend to publish them, or to make sure that the user uploads only his/her best images into the service.

After changing the user's account information you should click the **'Update'** button in order to store these changes into the database.

The **'New'** button is used in order to create a new user account. When you click the **'New'** button a new user account is added into the user account list. After that you should update all necessary information (username, password, etc) related to the current user. Notice that when you create a new user account, the account is disabled by default.

The **'Delete'** button is used in order to delete the selected user account. However, you have to confirm the delete operation before it is executed.

The **'Login'** button can be used in order to login as the selected user. This is an easy way for the system administrator to see the user's account in the same way as the current user is seeing it.

2.3 User view

Users can modify some information in their user account. For example, they can change their login password or email address. This can be done in the **"My Information"** page, which is shown below.

The screenshot shows a web browser window titled "ImageBlend 1.0 / License: 0000-000000-0000 - Microsoft Internet Explorer". The address bar shows "http://127.0.0.1:9400". The page has a blue header with "ImageBlend" in large white letters. Below the header, there's a navigation bar with "John Doe" on the left and "Help" and "Logout" on the right. A left sidebar contains links: "Introduction", "Images & Albums", "Search images", and "My information" (which is highlighted). The main content area is titled "Doe, John" and contains a "User information" tab. Below the tab is a form with the following fields: Last name (Doe), First name (John), Username (demo), Password (****), Password confirmation (****), Email address (john.doe@codeblend.fi), and Image limit (1000). At the bottom of the form is an "Update" button. On the left side of the main content area, there is a large image of a person fishing on a rocky shore. The footer of the page says "Suomi" on the left and "Copyright (c) 2006 CodeBlend / Markku Koskela" on the right.

The basic principle is the same as is in all updateable pages in this service. I.e. if you change something in the page you have to press **"Update"** button in order to store changes into the database.

3 Images

3.1 Introduction

There can be thousands of images available in the **ImageBlend** service. Users can find images they want in two different ways.

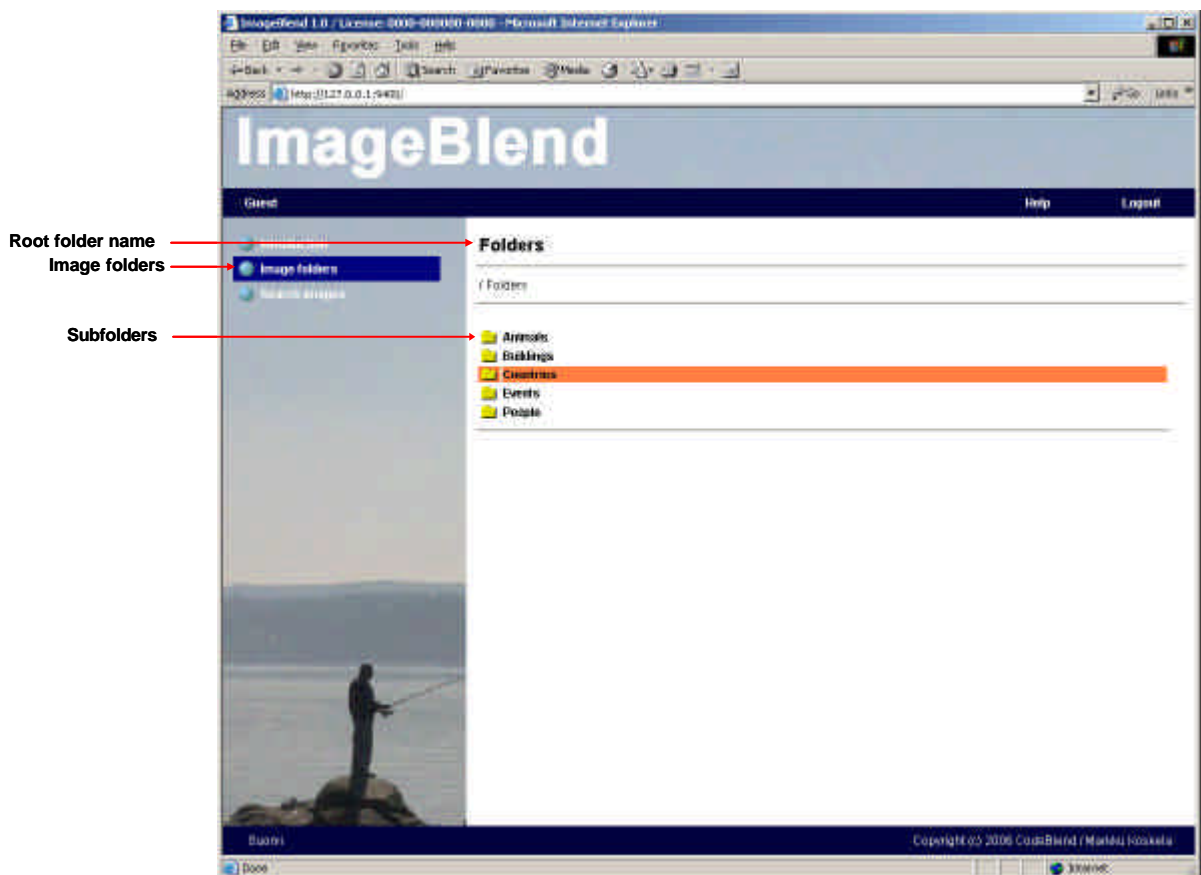
- 1) Images can be published in hundreds of different folders. These folders are arranged in a folder hierarchy that helps users to find correct folders. The system administrator is usually responsible of the management of the folder hierarchy.
- 2) Images can be searched by keywords. This requires that image owners have defined good describing keywords to their images.

3.2 Image folders

The basic principle of the image folders is the same as the principle of the file folders in your PC. **ImageBlend** contains two kinds of folders: 1) ordinary folders and 2) image folders. Ordinary folders can contain subfolders but not images. Image folders can contain images, but not subfolders. The basic idea is to make sure that images are published in the correct folders (i.e. in image folders). Otherwise someone probably tried to publish images in the root folder or in some other strange folders.

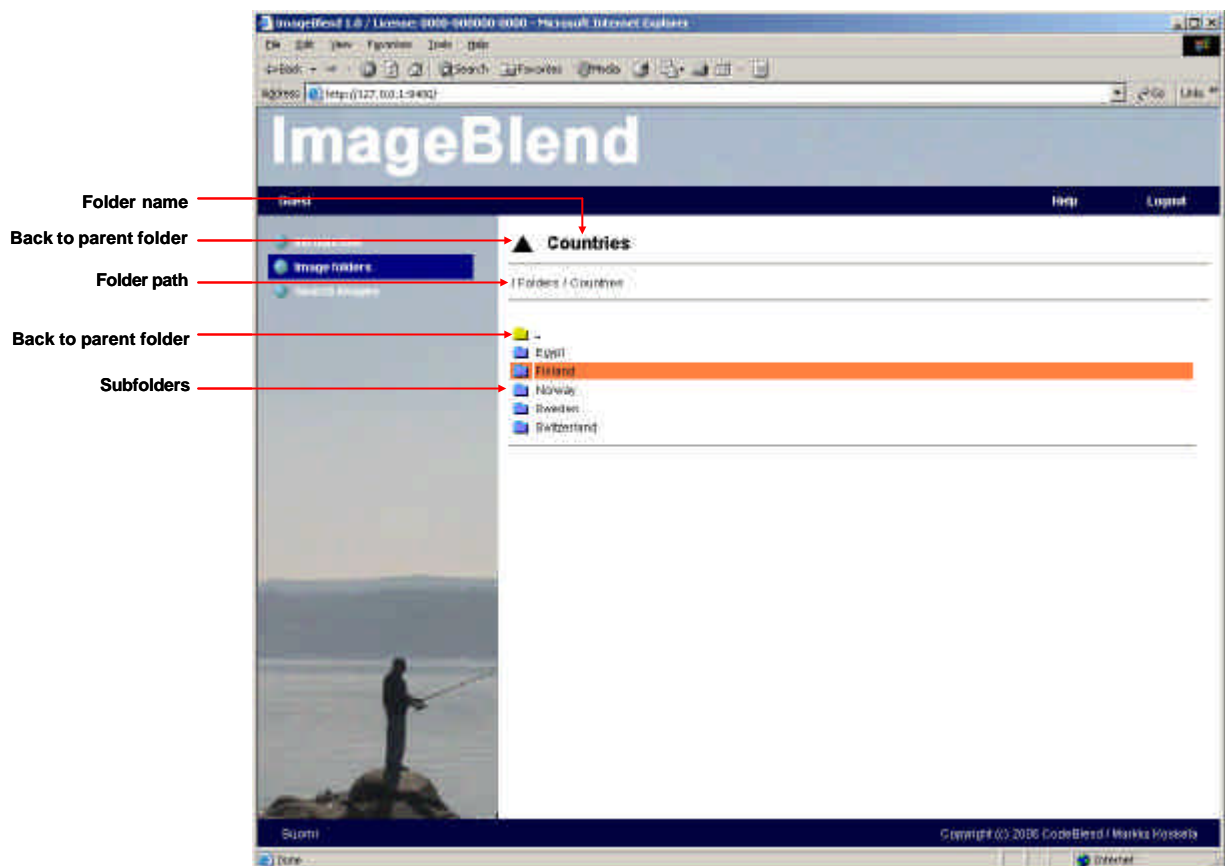
Image owners can publish their images in image folders. The same image can be published in several image folders. For example, an image of "Finlandia house" can be published in the image folders "Finland", "Helsinki", "Buildings", etc.

Users can see the folder hierarchy on the '**Image folders**' page. In this page they can move up and down in the folder hierarchy and see the images published in the image folders. The figure below shows the "root" folder that contains subfolders. None of these subfolders is an image folder, which means that they do not contain images, but they contain subfolders.



By clicking one of the subfolders above you will move down in the folder hierarchy.

The figure below shows the content of the “Countries” folder. As you can see this folder also contains several subfolders (“Egypt”, “Finland”, “Norway”, etc). However, in this case the subfolders are “image folders”, which means that they contain images.

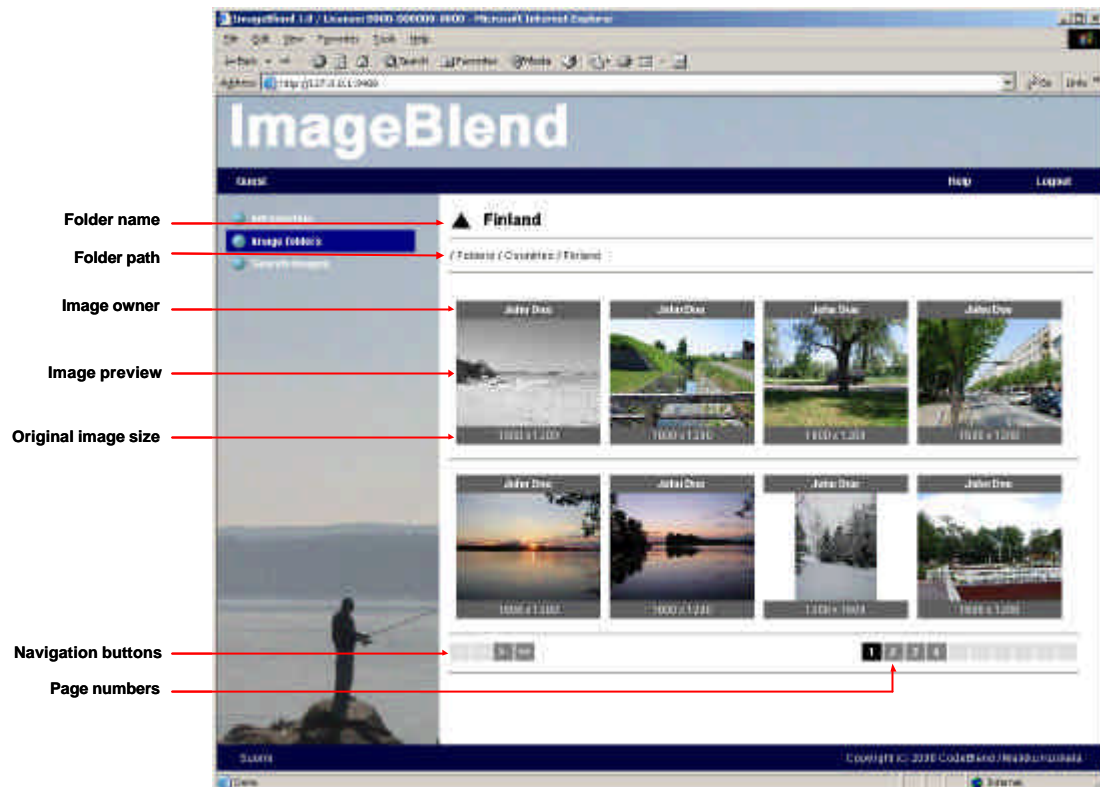


Only the topmost folder (“.”) on the folder list is not an image folder. By clicking this folder you can move up in the folder hierarchy (i.e. you will get back to the parent folder). Another way to get back to the parent folder is to click the up arrow near the folder name (“Countries”) or the parent folder name in the folder path (“/Folders/Countries”).

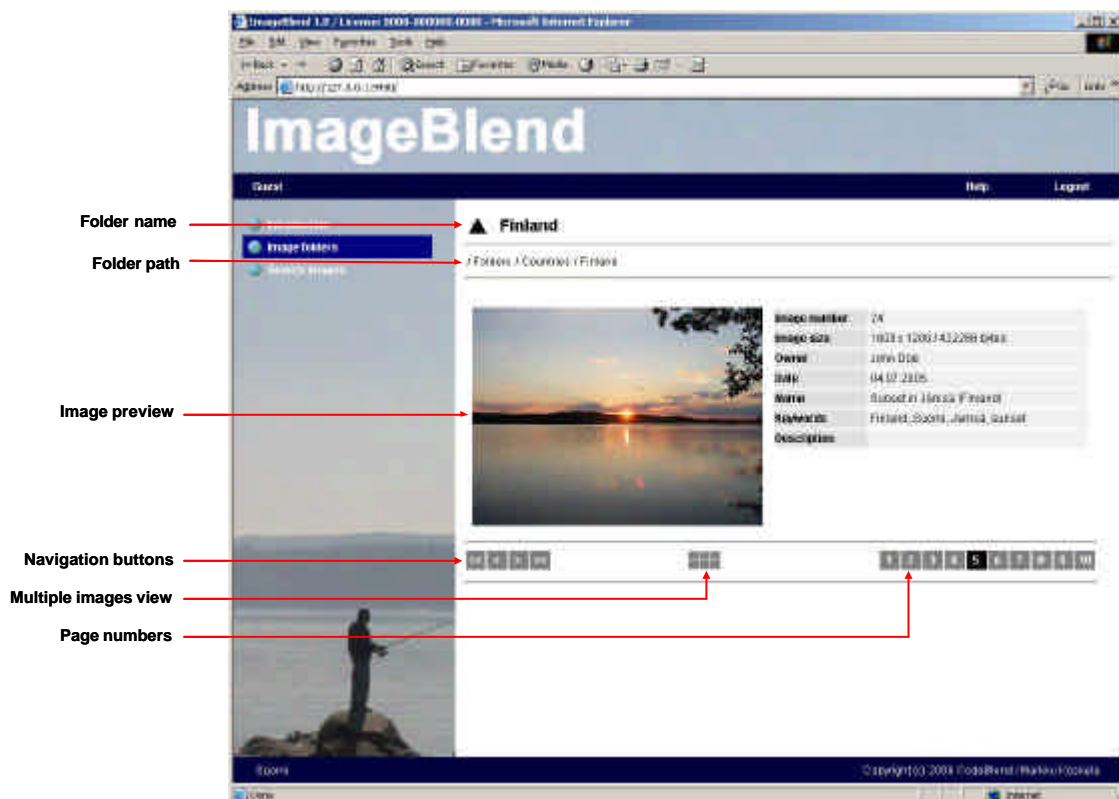
Whenever you use this service do not use the browser’s “Back” button – the result might be something unexpected. This is a common rule when using Web based applications like **ImageBlend**.

By clicking one of the image folders above you should be able to see the preview of the images published in the current folder.

The figure below shows the preview of the images published in the “Finland” folder. The images are divided into the several pages, which means that you have to use the navigation buttons or the page numbers on the bottom of the screen in order to see all images.

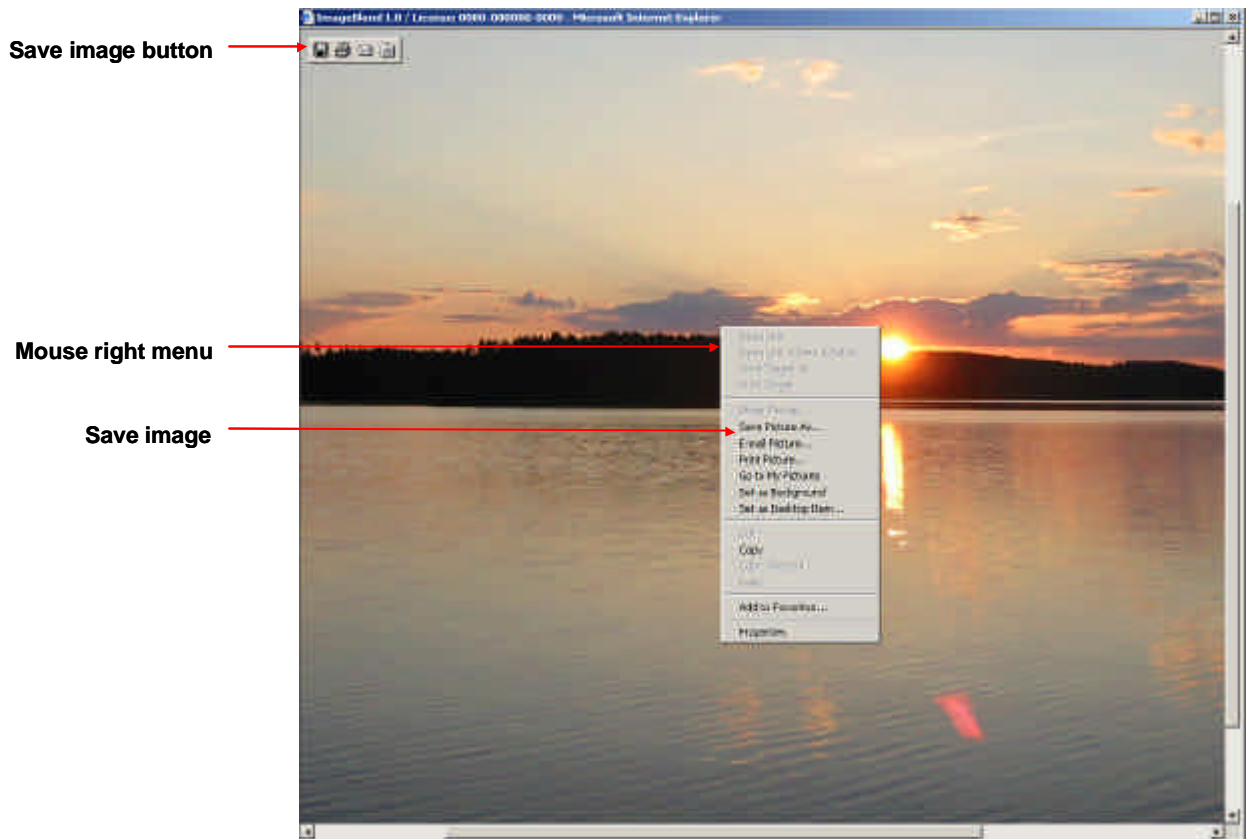


By clicking one of the images above you can see a bigger preview of the current images and also some additional information related to the image. This is shown in the figure below.



By clicking the image above you should get the original (hi-quality) image. If nothing happens you do not have rights to download original images.

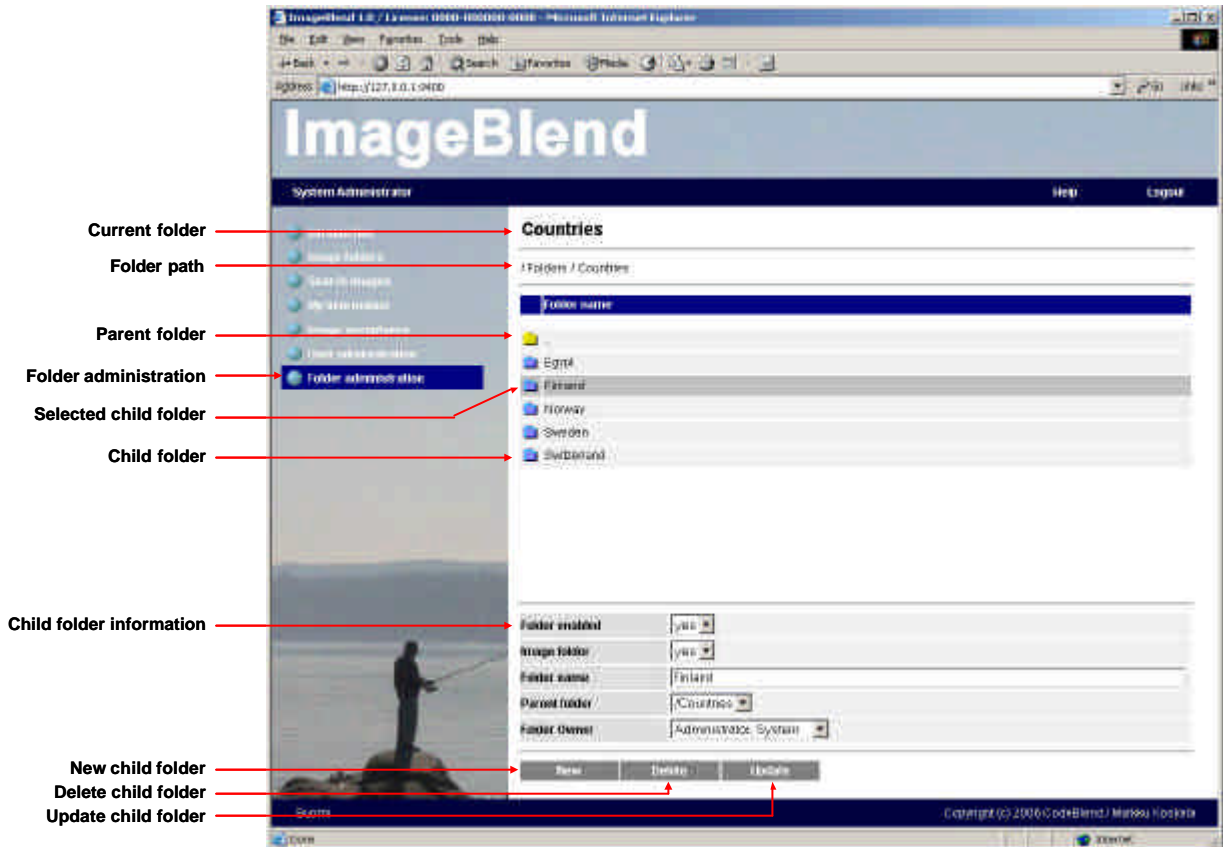
The figure below shows the original image, which was opened into a new browser window. If you want to store this images into your hard disk you can use the “Save” button in the browsers toolbar. Or by clicking the right mouse button you should see the popup menu that you can use in order to save the image (=> Save picture as ...).



3.3 Folder administration

Usually the system administrator is responsible for creating and managing the folder hierarchy. However, it is also possible that other users can manage some parts of the folder hierarchy. For example, the system administrator can create a folder for a photographer and allow him/her to create subfolders into this folder.

The administration of the image folders is done in the “**Folder administration**” page, which is shown below. If you cannot see this page then you do not have any administrative rights to the folders.



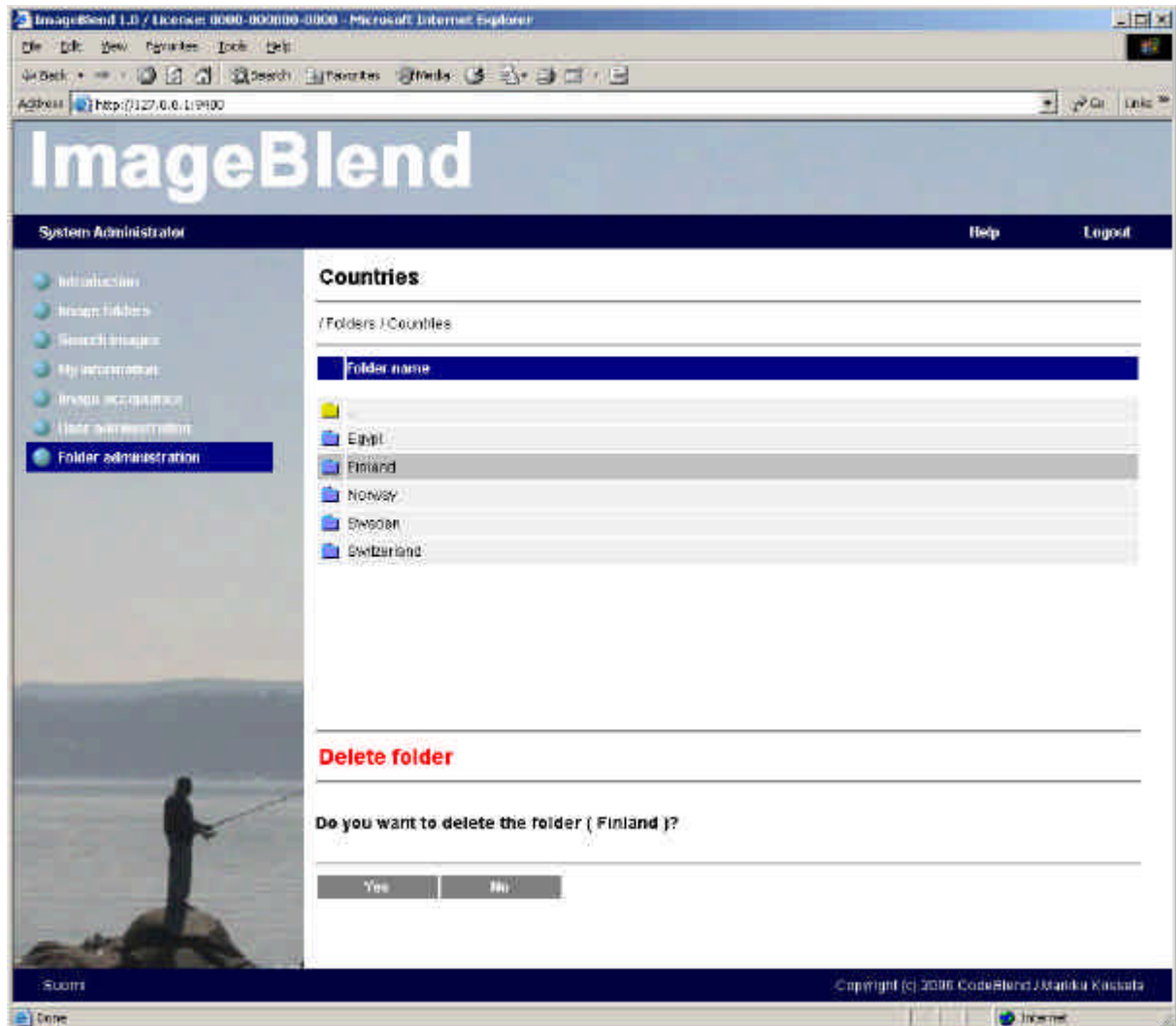
By clicking one of the child folders (subfolder) in the child folder list you can see its information on the bottom of the page. This is also the place where you can change the folder information. For example, you can change the folder status, type, name, parent folder or owner. If you disable the child folder it means that the folder is not visible to other users. If you want to store images into this child folder you should set the “**Image folder**” field to “**yes**”. On the other hand, if you want to create child folders into this folder you should set the “**Image folder**” field to “**no**”.

Changing the parent folder means in practice that the child folder is moved to another location in the folder hierarchy. The “**Folder owner**” field defines who can manage this folder and its subfolders. The system administrator can manage all folders, but sometimes it is useful to give own folders to some of the image owners. After that the folder owners can create their own subfolder hierarchy.

Every time you change something you have to press “**Update**” button in order to update changed information into the database. Otherwise changed information is not stored and it has no effect to the system. It is good to notice that the “**Update**” button appears only when you have changed something and disappears when information is updated into the database.

The “**New**” button is used in order to create new child folders into the current folder. In this case the new folders are child folders of the current folder (“Countries”) – not child folders of the selected child folder (“Finland”). After child folder creation you should change its name and other information. For example, when you create a new folder it is invisible to other users (i.e. it is disabled). That’s why all new folders must be enabled before they come visible to other users.

The **"Delete"** button is used in order to delete the selected child folder. It is good to notice that folders that have child folders cannot be deleted. This means in practice that you have to delete the folder's child folders before you can delete the actual folder. You have to also confirm the deletion before it is done. This is shown in the figure below.



Moving up and down in the folder hierarchy is quite simple. If you want to move down you first select the child folder from the child folder list. After that you see the child folder information below. Click the same list entry again and the current folder is changed to the selected child folder. If you want to go up then you just click once the parent folder ("..") in the folder list or the name of the parent folder in the folder path.

3.4 Image search

As was mentioned earlier, another way to find images from the service is to search them by keywords. Users can search images on the “**Search images**” page, which is shown below.

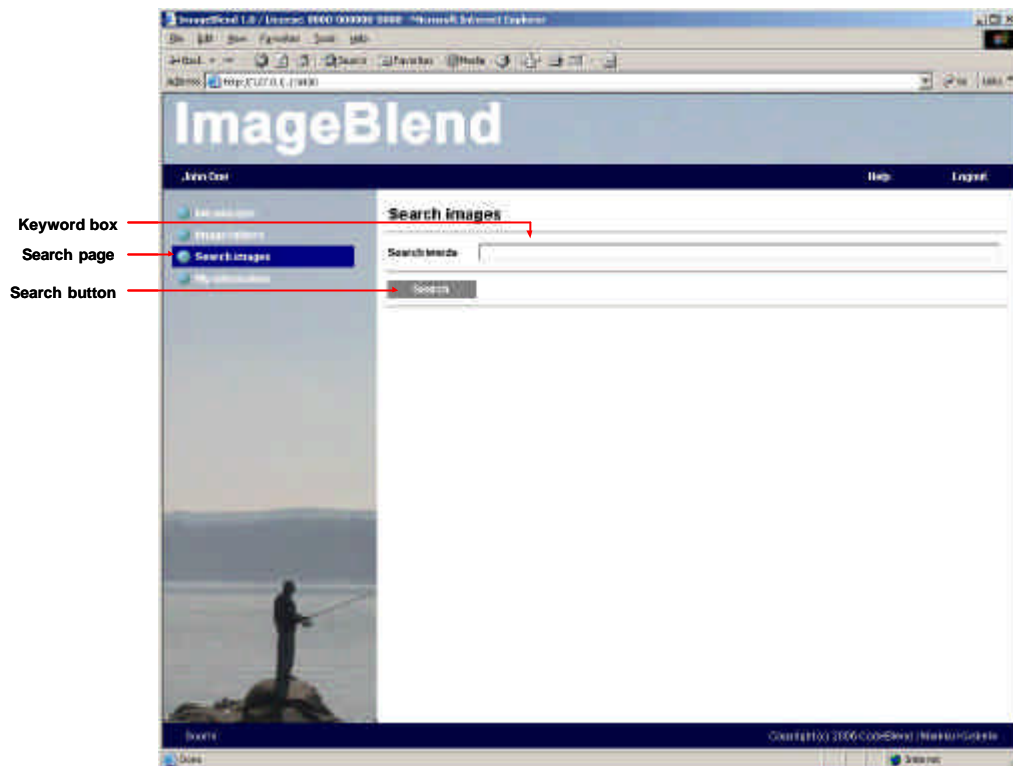
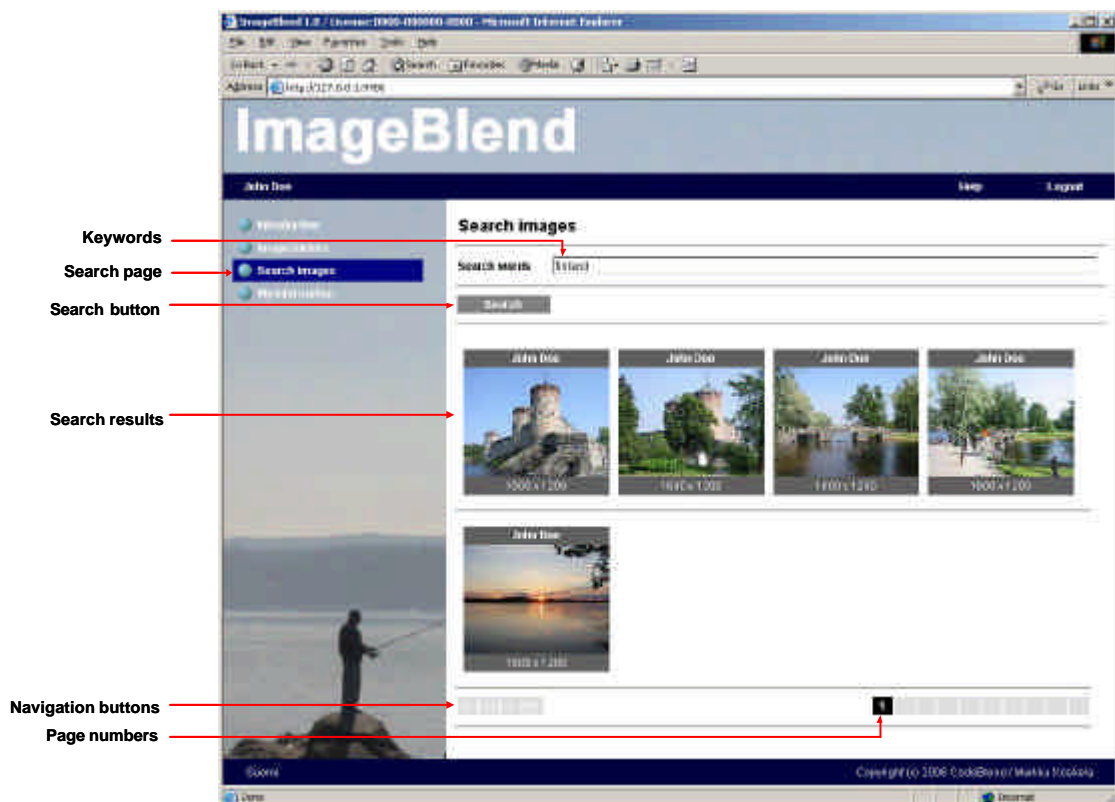
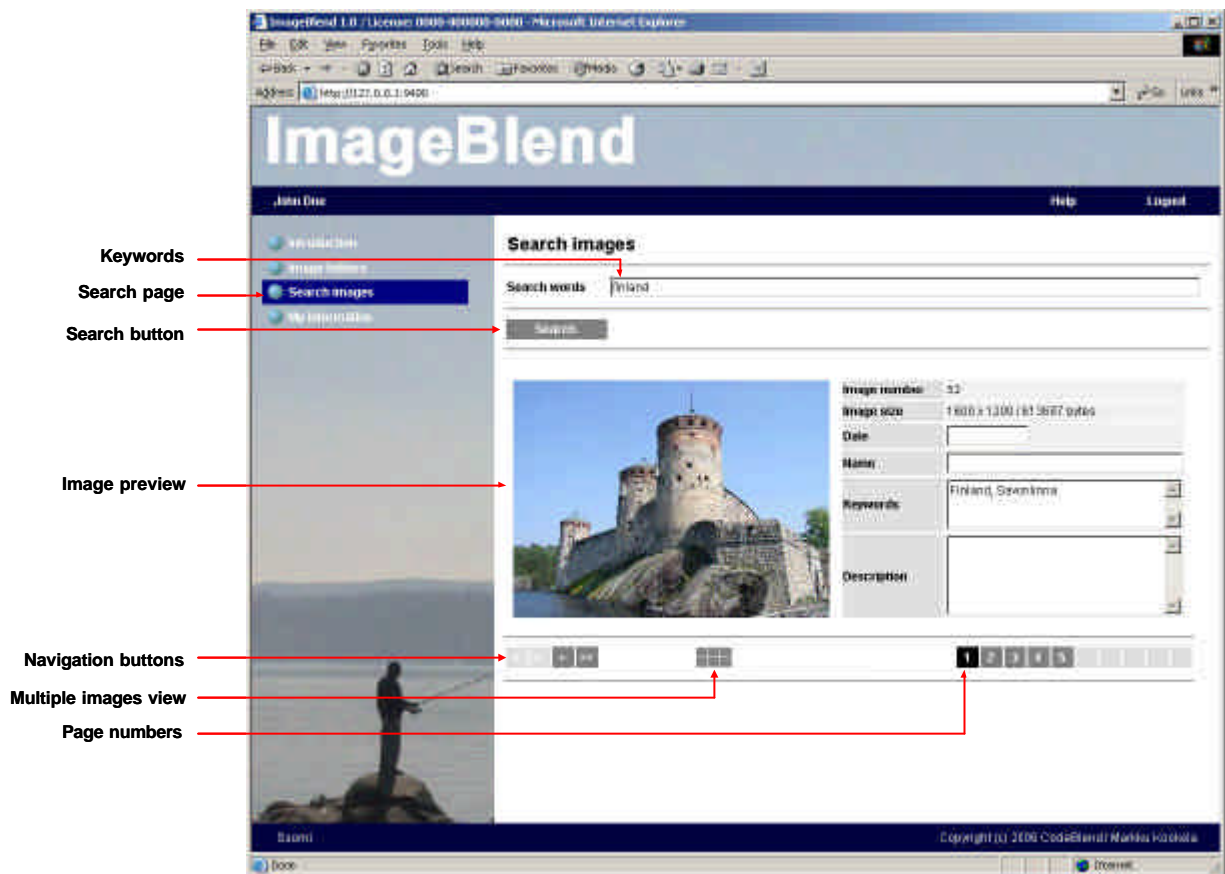


Image searching is a very simple operation. The user writes keywords in the “**Search words**” box and clicks the “**Search**” button in order to execute the search. After that **ImageBlend** compares these words to the image keywords in the database and returns images that contain all searched words. The result of a search is shown in the figure below.



By clicking one of the result images the user can see more details about the current image. This is shown below. If the current user is also the owner of the current image he/she can also update the image information in this page. Also the system administrator can update the image information in this view. Actually, this is very good place for the system administrator to check that keywords are used correctly. For example, if the system administrator has search images by using the word “castle” and the result images have nothing to do with a castle he/she can remove the “castle” keyword from these images or ask image owners to do so.



By clicking the image above the user should get the original (hi-quality) image in the same way as in the folder view. If nothing happens the user do not have rights to download original images.

4 Image uploading and publishing

4.1 Introduction

Some of the users are able to upload images into the service and publish them in image folders.

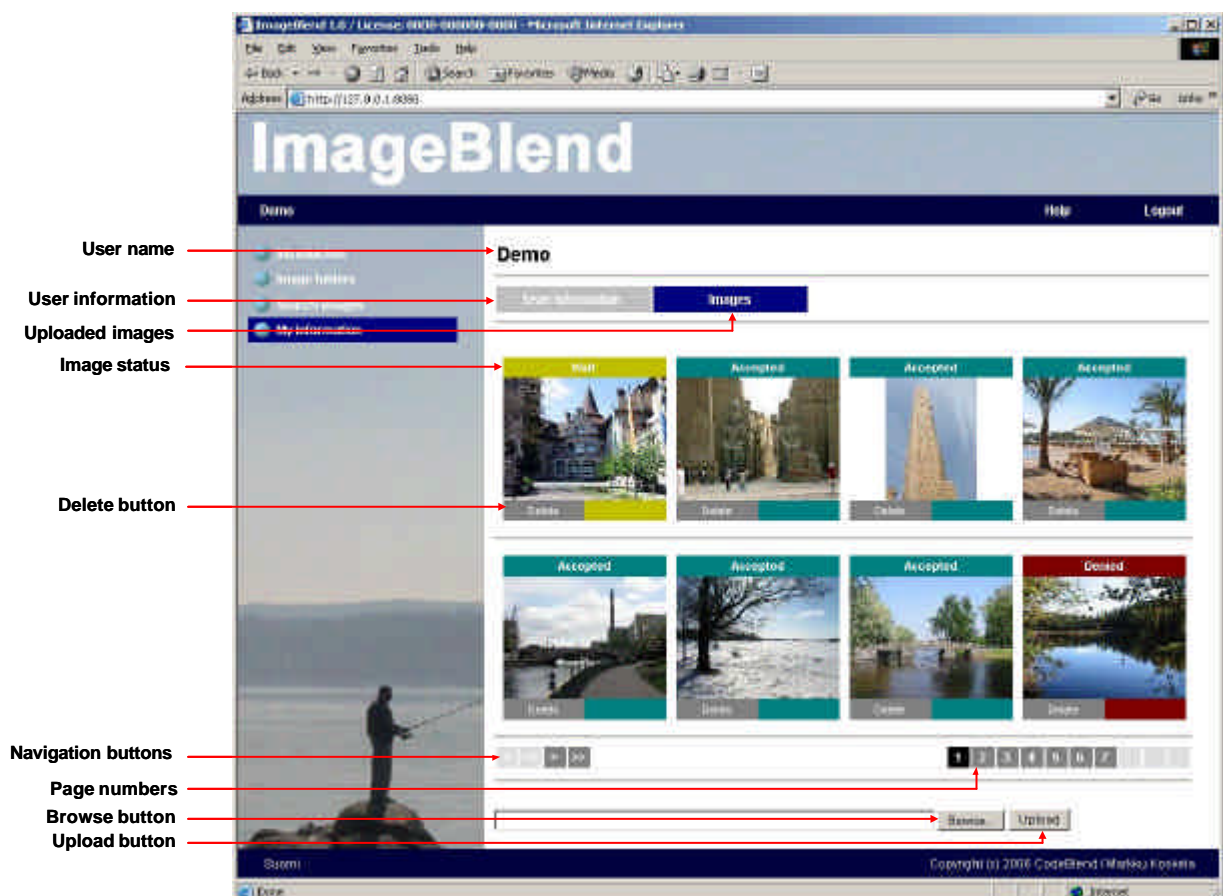
Image uploading is a process in which images are transferred from the user's PC into the ImageBlend server. The reverse process is **image downloading** in which images are transferred from the ImageBlend server into the user's PC.

Image publishing is a process in which uploaded images are published in image folders. After that other users can see the published images in the image folders.

It is important to understand that the system administrator controls the visibility of the images in the service. This means in practice that images do not become visible to other users until the system administrator has accepted them.

4.2 Image uploading

As was mentioned earlier the image uploading is a process in which an image is moved from the user's PC into the **ImageBlend** server. If the user is allowed to upload images into the service he/she should see **'Images'** tab in the **'My Information'** page. This page is shown below. In this page the user can upload new images into the service or delete existing images. The page shows all images that the user has already uploaded into the service. It also shows the status of each image i.e. has the system administrator accepted images or not, or are they waiting for the acceptance.

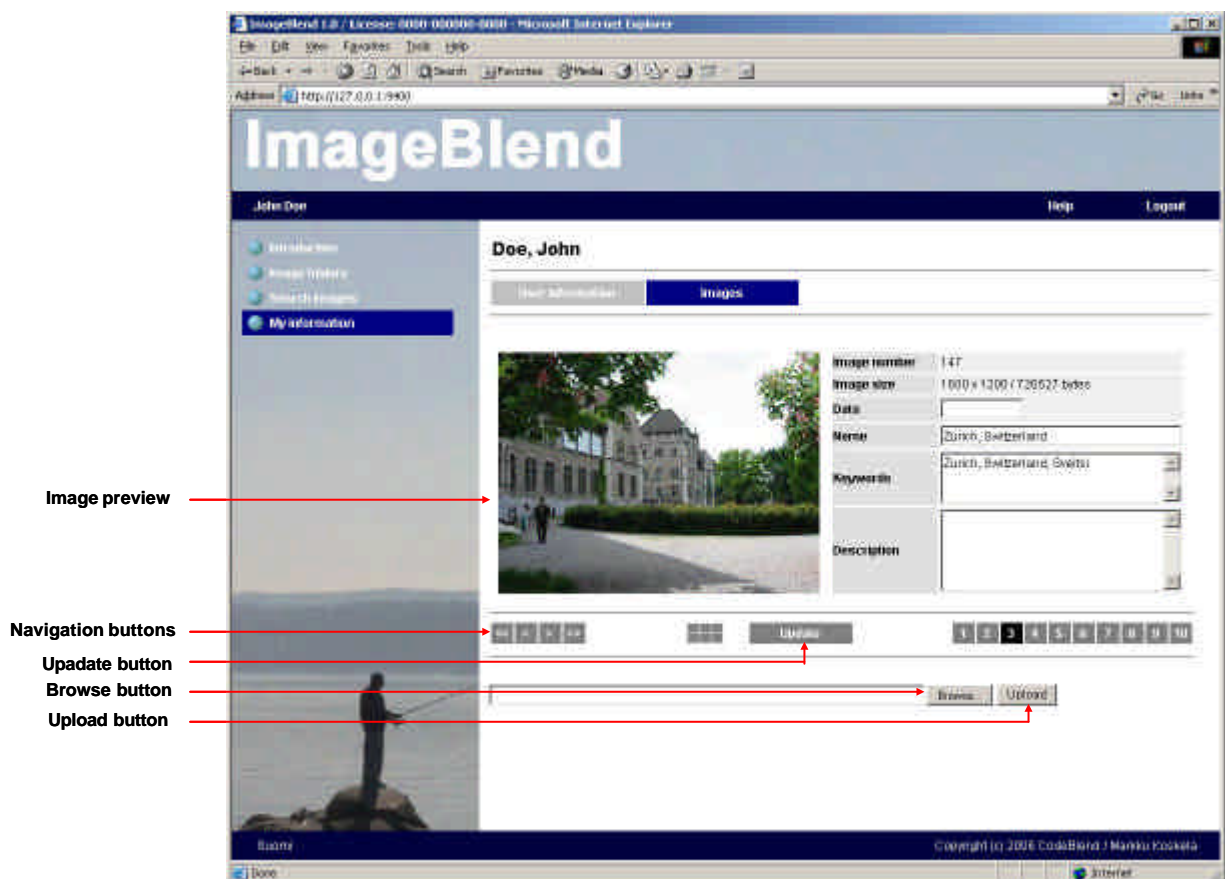


The image uploading is very simple process. Just click the **'Browse'** button and select the image file that you want to upload into the service. After that click the **'Upload'** button and your web browser sends the image file to **ImageBlend**. At the moment **ImageBlend** understands only JPEG images (".jpg"). Do not try to upload any other image types.

If the image uploading was successful you should see a new page, which contains a preview of the current image. In this page you can also modify information (name, keywords, etc) related to the current image. You can get into the same page anytime you want just by clicking the preview image. In the other words, if you want to modify image information just click the image and you will be moved to a page where you can modify this information.

After uploading an image into the service you should also update information related to the current image. For example, you can tell when and where the image was taken and what's in it. You can also define some keywords that are used during the image search. The image search is the easiest way to find images as long as image owners define good keywords for their images. Unfortunately it is quite difficult to make sure that all image owners use keywords in the same way. That's why the service providers should give some instructions how they want keywords to be used in their service. Quite good rule is that keywords should describe the image content, location, event and time. For example, an image of "Finlandia house" might contain keywords like "Finland", "Helsinki", "Finlandia house", "independence day", "2005" and "concert".

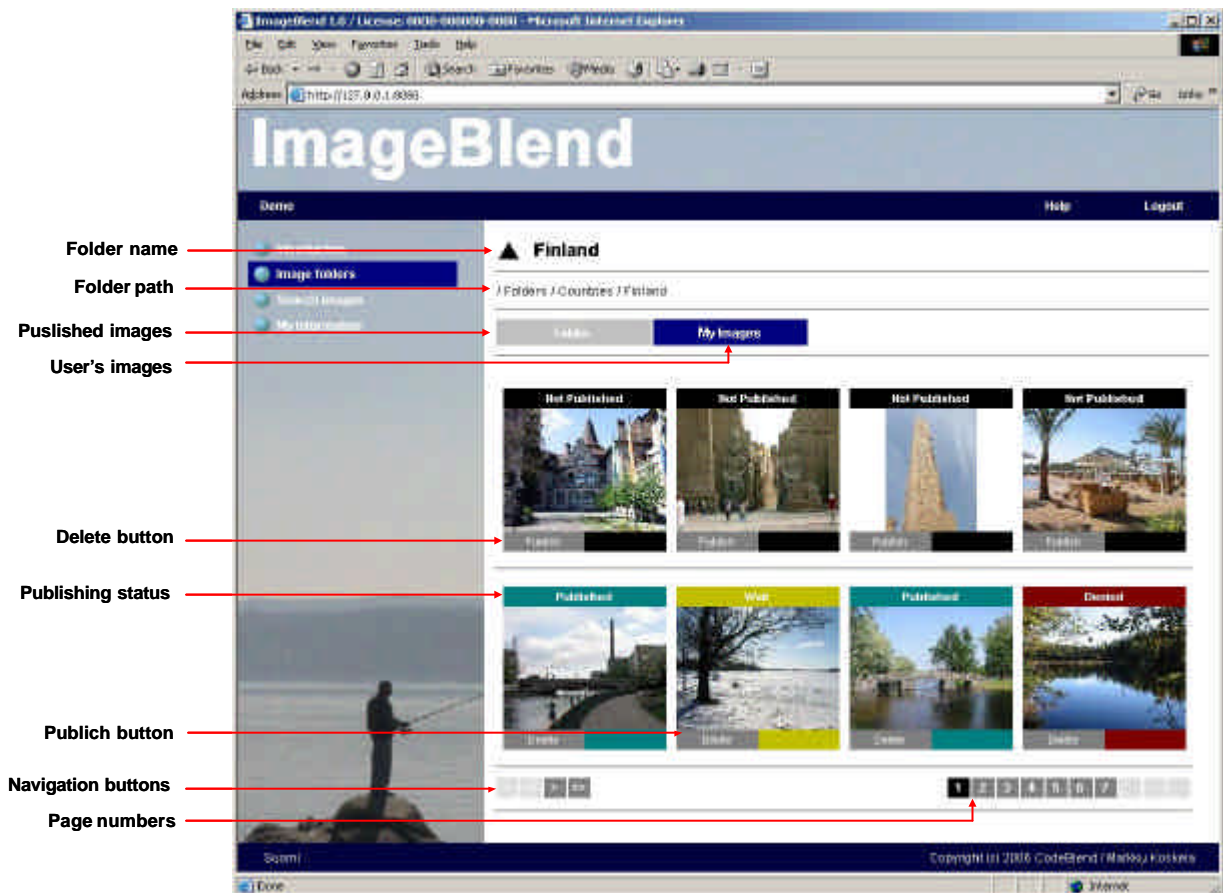
You can update the image information and define its keywords on the page shown below. You should get into this page every time when you upload a new image or click a preview of the image in the view shown in the previous page. Notice that you have to press the **Update** button in order to store changes into the database.



Notice that also this page contains "**Browse**" and "**Upload**" buttons. In the other words, you can upload images also in this page – you do not need to go back to the previous page in order to do that.

4.3 Image publishing

As was mentioned earlier the image publishing is a process in which uploaded images are published in image folders. After that other users can see the published images in the image folders. When a user has rights to publish images, the image folders look a little bit different than was shown earlier. In this case there are two tabs above the images as is shown in the figure below. By clicking the **"Folder"** tab you can see images that are published in this folder i.e. the images that everybody can see in the folder. When clicking **"My Images"** tab you can see all your own images. In addition, you can see the publishing status of your images in this folder.



The image status **"Not Published"** means that the image is not yet published and it is not waiting for publishing in this folder. You can try to publish the image by clicking the **"Publish"** button below the image. If your image publishing requires acceptance from the system administrator then its status changes to **"Wait"**. The system administrator will accept or deny the publishing later. This might take some time depending on how often the system administrator is checking new images.

The image status **"Published"** means that the current image is published in this folder. You can cancel the publishing of the image by clicking the **"Delete"** button below the current image.

The image status **"Wait"** means that you are trying to publish the current image and it is now waiting the publishing acceptance from the system administrator. You can cancel the publishing trial of the image by clicking the **"Delete"** button below the current image.

The image status **"Denied"** means that the system administrator has denied the publishing of the current image in this folder. You should click the **"Delete"** button in order to remove the publishing trial and to remember that you should not try to publish the same image in this folder again.

5 Image acceptance

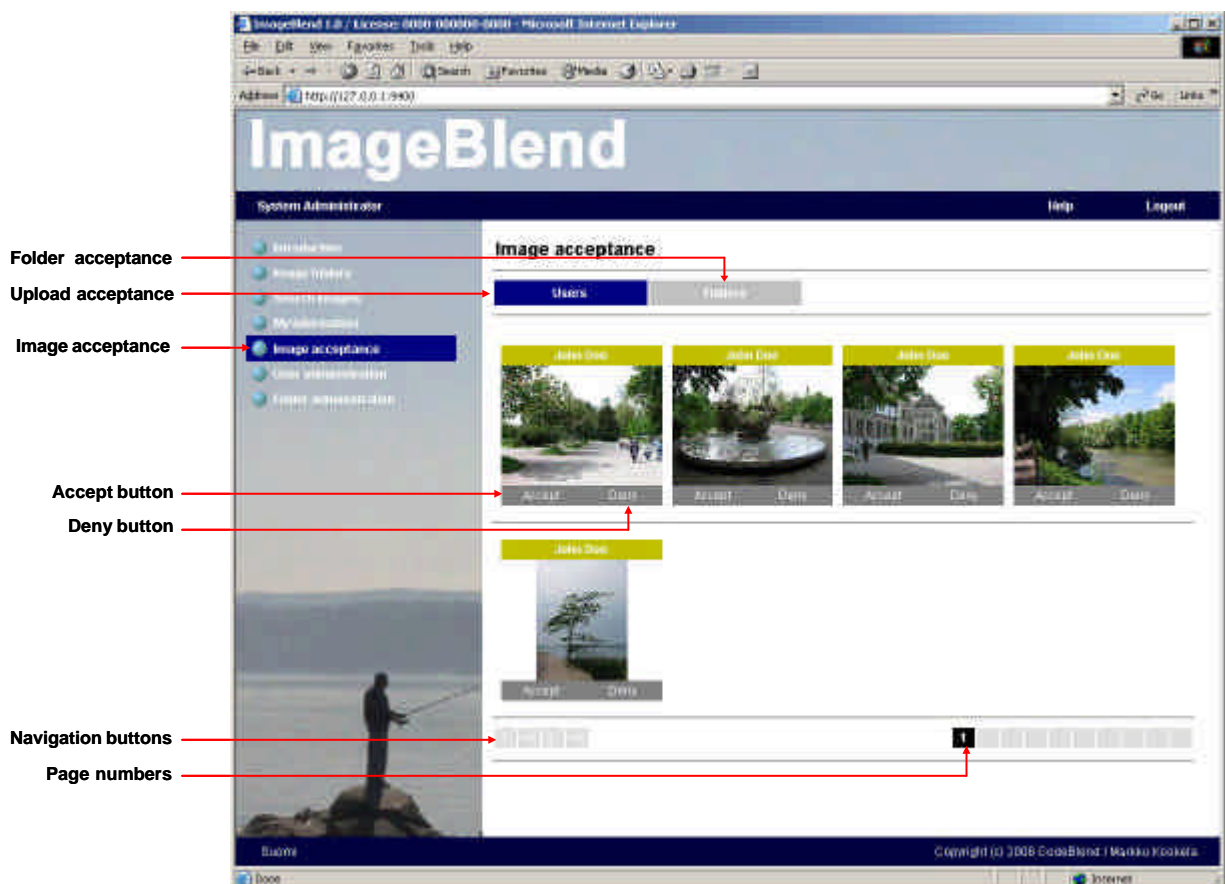
5.1 Introduction

The system administrator is responsible for accepting uploaded images and image publishing in different folders. In the other words, images acceptance is done in two levels.

- 1) When images are uploaded into the system the system administrator has to accept them before they become visible to other users. In spite of that images are not published in any image folder they can be visible to other users. That's because users can find images also by using keywords – this does not require that images are published in image folders.
- 2) When users try to publish their images in different folders the system administrator has to accept this. This is a way to make sure that images are published in correct folders. Otherwise some users might try to publish their images in all possible folders.

5.2 Acceptance page

The image acceptance is usually done in the **"Image acceptance"** page, which is shown below. The current page contains two tabs: the **"Users"** tab and the **"Folders"** tab. When clicking the **"Users"** tab you can see uploaded images that are waiting for the acceptance. When clicking the **"Folders"** tab you can see images that are waiting for the publishing acceptance for image folders.

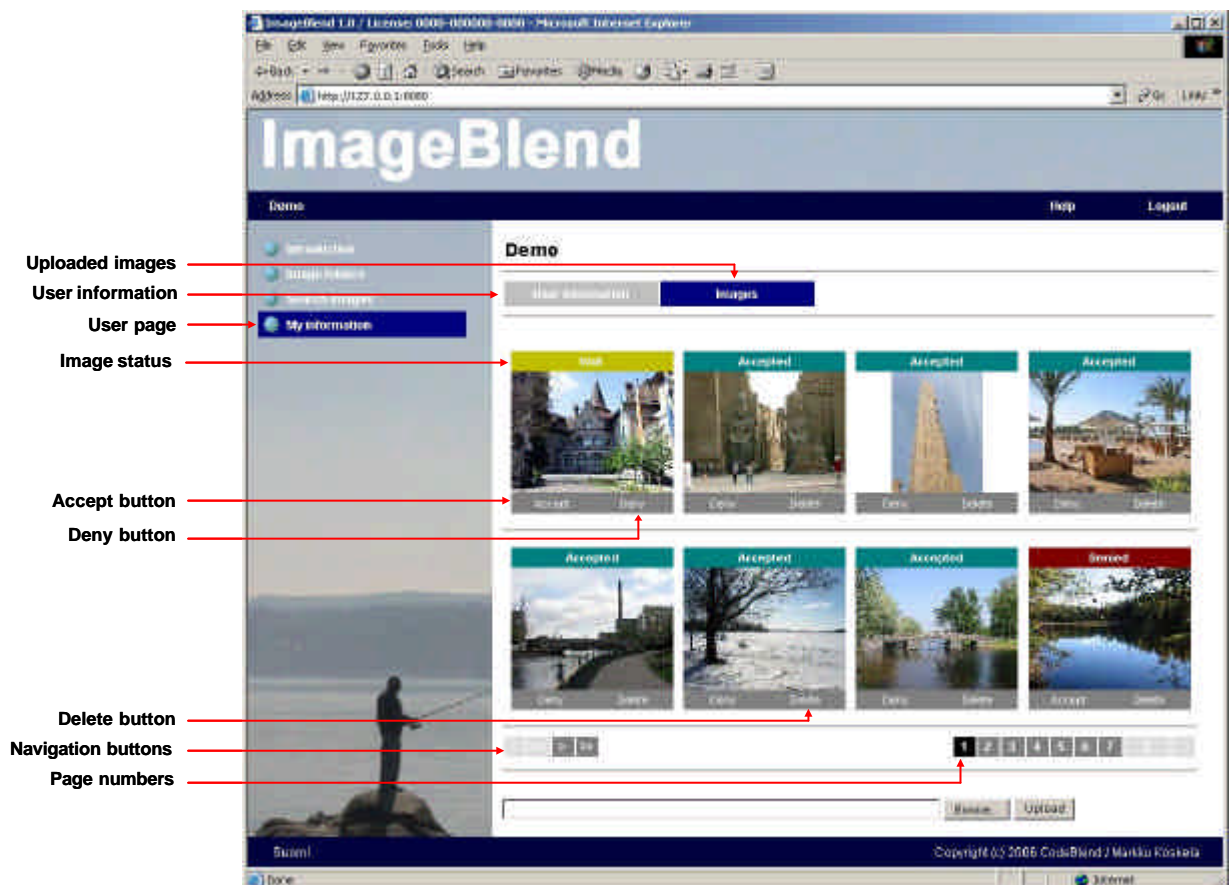


The both acceptance views (Users, Folders) look almost identical. The only difference is that in the **"Folders"** view the name of the image owner (above the images) is replaced by the name of the image folder where the images is tried to be published. In the both cases the system administrator uses the **"Accept"** buttons to accept photos and the **"Deny"** buttons to deny photos. When the system administrator clicks one of these buttons the image disappears from the page, which means that it does not wait acceptance anymore. If the system administrator accidentally clicked a wrong button he/she can later fix the problem.

5.3 Upload acceptance

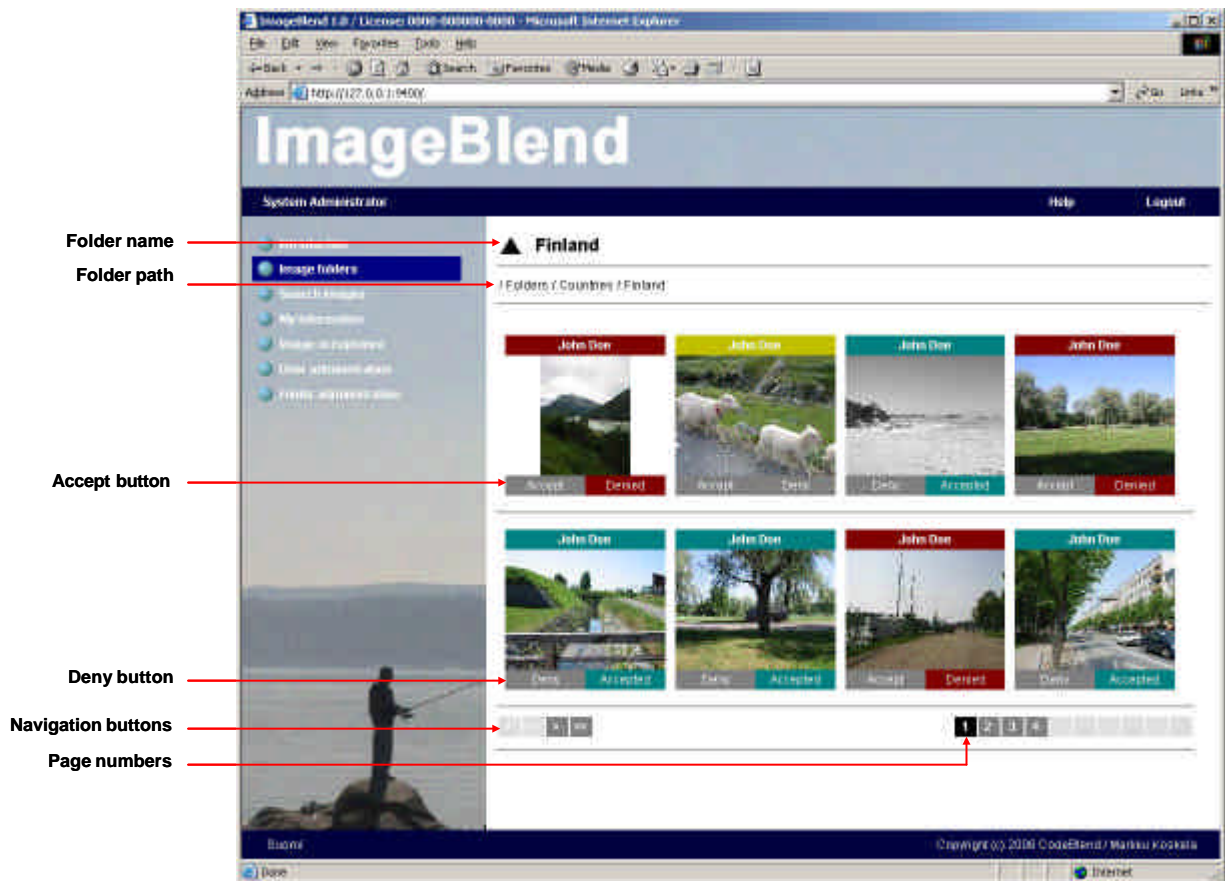
There is also another way to control uploaded images. The system administrator can login into the service by using any of the user accounts. This can be done through the “**User administration**” page. After that he/she can see the service as the current user sees it. This means in practice that the system administrator can for example cancel the image publishing trials by using the user’s own account.

In addition, the system administrator has some extra privileges when he/she is logged in as an ordinary user. For example, when the system administrator goes to the user’s **images** page as is shown below, he/she can see all images that the current user has uploaded. In addition, the system administrator can see some extra buttons that he/she can use in order to accept, deny or delete uploaded images. This means in practice that the system administrator can anytime deny already accepted images or accept images that were earlier denied.



5.4 Publishing acceptance

There is also another way to control image publishing in the image folders. The system administrator sees the image folders a little bit differently than other users. The system administrator sees in the image folders all images that are published, waiting for publishing or denied in the current folder. In addition the system administrator sees some extra buttons that he/she can use in order to accept or deny the image publishing in the current folder.



Usually the system administrator uses this view in order to change the visibility of the images in the current folder. For example, it might be that someone has published so excellent images in the current folder that it does not make any sense to keep some low-quality images in the same folder. In the other words, the system administrator can change the image publishing status anytime he/she wants.