

## YOU'VE COME A LONG WAY, BROWSER



**W**HAT are upgraded regularly, are on almost every surfer's desktop, and are the topic of the Web's biggest battle? Browsers, of course. Netscape's Navigator (now called Communicator) and Microsoft's Internet Explorer have changed a lot over the past few years, so if you're still cruising (or should we say chugging?) around the Net with one of the earlier versions, it's time to download the newest editions.

As of this writing, Microsoft's Internet Explorer 4.0 and Netscape's Communicator 4.0 are available in beta. Netscape claims to have 45 million users worldwide. And as of June 4, 1997, statistics from *iWorld's* BrowserWatch page, <http://browserwatch.internet.com/stats/stats.html>, showed that about 60 percent of the browsers visiting the page were Navigator and about 33 percent were

Microsoft's Internet Explorer. For now, both products are similar enough so that you can use either one almost interchangeably.

With each iteration, though, these browsers become more complex. The latest offerings have added features, better user interface, and more power. It's worthwhile for you to test both browsers to see which one you like best.

Personally, I have earlier versions of both products installed on my computer, and I switch back and forth depending on my needs. You can download beta versions of each browser from <http://www.download.com>, <http://www.netscape.com>, or <http://www.microsoft.com>.

### Desktop or browser? You decide

You'll notice that the latest browsers weren't designed just for surfing the Web. There is a growing trend to unite browsers and desktop applications, which is described in a report,

### PRIVACY, PLEASE

If you think voicemail and email are intrusive, get a load of a new technology used by employees at Executone Information Systems in Milford, Connecticut.

For three years, they have been clipping so-called smart badges to their clothes every morning. The badges send infrared signals to receivers in offices and hallways. They report an employee's whereabouts to a computer linked to the company's phone system. For

example, call Jane Doe in HR and her message system will tell you that she's in a meeting or has gone to lunch. Though this tracking technology sounds promising for some cases, such as homebound patients or elderly people, is it really necessary to follow an employee's every move?

And just one more thing: How does that system explain an employee's trip to more delicate locales, such as a restroom?

Be sure to visit  
ASTD's Web  
page at  
<http://www.astd.org>

"The Internet Desktop," from Cambridge, Massachusetts-based Forrester Research, <http://www.forrester.com>. It says that by the end of 1999, 52 million full Internet desktops will replace traditional browsers.

To make that leap, the newest releases from Netscape and Microsoft have embedded intelligence, integrated communications, and rich multi-

### CYBERJARGON

Want to sound in-the-know? Then borrow a few of these hip phrases from the pages of *Wired*.

► **Collapsible corporations.** Companies that reside in electronic networks rather than buildings, giving them greater flexibility to change their size and configuration as market conditions dictate.

► **Leaky reply.** A message sent to an unintended recipient by a sender using the Reply-to-All option in an email program. Leaky replies may contain information about the recipient that he or she was not supposed to receive.

► **Prairie dogging.** When someone yells or drops something loudly in an office, prompting everyone's head to pop up over their cubicle walls to see what's going on.

► **Spamouflage.** Bulk email messages delivered from generic email addresses, with innocuous subject headers in order to confound filtering programs and spam-hating readers.

media. There is also a shift from icons to channels for navigation, says the report. Instead of clicking on an icon, Internet users select a channel when they want to toggle between Internet-based experiences.

Analysts at Forrester predict that it will take three releases of Internet Explorer and Communicator to reach "the peak functionality of the Internet desktop."

There are some noteworthy changes in Netscape Communicator 4.0, including new standards for open email, groupware, and browsing software. The software program has eight integrated components: Navigator, Messenger, Collabra, Composer, Netcaster, Conference, Calendar (Professional Edition only), and IBM Host On-Demand (Professional Edition only).

The Navigator portion of the software has new icons, a customizable button bar, and revised menu items. There are also two new useful features: AutoComplete (also available with Microsoft Explorer) and Smart Resume. The first helps you find mistyped or incorrect URLs by adding prefixes and suffixes to Internet addresses and correcting syntax errors. Smart Resume lets you restart crashed FTP downloads. So, if you're nearly finished downloading a file and the host server crashes, you may still be able to get the complete file if the host server supports resumption.

As for updates in IE 4.0, one of the most useful is Smart Favorites. This beefed-up bookmark program helps users keep track of changing content

## COOL REFERENCE SITES

► WWWebster Dictionary, <http://www.m-w.com/netdict.htm>. Type a word in this site's search engine, and you'll get its meaning, pronunciation, function, origin, and synonyms.

► Foreign Languages for Travelers, <http://www.travlang.com/languages/>. Need to learn some language basics in a hurry? This site can help. First, you select from such

languages as French, Spanish, Japanese, and Hindi. Then, you can choose basic words, shopping phrases, numbers, and more. The site includes audio files so that you can hear how words are pronounced.

► Learn2.com, <http://www.learn2.com>. Touted as the "ability utility," this advice bonanza offers guidance on topics ranging from how to write a speech to how to make paper airplanes.

► All-In-One Cool Sites Page, <http://www.http://www.all-internet.com/cool-site.html>. Here's a meta list of "best of" sites. Netscape's "What's Cool" page and "Weberawler 100" are two of the links found here.



on their favorite sites. It monitors Websites in the background to see whether anything has changed. If something has changed, a red gleam appears over the icon next to the site name in the Favorites menu. IE also keeps a thumb-

## WEB TRENDS

Website growth in total pages will nearly double in 1997 and triple in 1998, says "Content Management Crisis," a report from Forrester Research, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

"An increase is happening at all company levels. Additional departments within an organization are bringing their own supplementary material and ideas to the table. As a result, sites are getting bigger and more complex," says Mark E. Hardie, author and senior analyst with Forrester's Interactive Technology Strategies group.

"The implementation of sophisticated multimedia enhancements, Web content archives, and e-commerce capabilities also propels the growth rate of Website content," he adds. The report concludes that companies are also generating more dynamic content. By the end of 1998, 54 percent of the 50 respondents will be generating dynamic content.

For more information about the report, contact Diana Reeves at Forrester Research, 617.497.7090.

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## NEW PUSH FROM POINTCAST

In June, PointCast released a major upgrade of its popular software, the PointCast Network. This version includes better performance, a new user interface, and a few new features.

The company's final beta version of PointCast Network 2.0 for Windows 95 and Windows NT can be downloaded for free from the company's Website, <http://www.pointcast.com>.

The most significant changes in the product are performance improvements that will minimize the loads on corporate networks and are likely to make the software more widely used, both at home and at work. Although Version 2.0 is a 32-bit application, it runs faster than its 16-bit predecessor. At the same time, the software requires less bandwidth to deliver content and can run in the background, consuming fewer machine resources. In addition, the newest version of PointCast lets users update content one channel at a time rather than all channels at once.

PointCast Network 2.0 is the first product that will let just about any



Webpage provider push its pages over the Internet into what the company calls its "Connections" channel. Using the Channel Definition Format, a file format that Microsoft is trying to turn into a standard, Webpage designers can customize their pages and make them read-

able over PointCast. PointCast also unveiled a tool, called PointCast Studio, that makes it easy for Webpage providers to create CDF files. PointCast said that about 3,000 Websites are contemplating making their content available through the Connections channel.

The company's new software also comes with improvements in user interface, most notably a detachable ticker that can deliver headlines or stock quotes and that runs independently from the application. The ticker supports links that let users see a full story by clicking on a headline.

PointCast Network 2.0 will be integrated within Microsoft's Active Desktop, the software giant's own push technology, when it is shipped with Internet Explorer later this year.

(Source: *Wired News*)

nail image of each page in the Favorites section so it's easier to find sites.

Both software programs now have standards-based Internet mail. That enables the seamless and secure exchange of email across most messaging systems. In other words, it helps eliminate many of the unreadable email attachments and garbled messages that have plagued proprietary email systems. In addition, both browsers embrace HTML as a standard for email. That means that if someone sends you an email with a URL, you can click on the email link and your browser will jump to the correlating Webpage.

Finally, both software programs offer dynamic Webpage creation capability, offline reading, push features, voice chat, and file transfer capabilities. Offline reading, for example, lets users download specific Websites to their hard drives at selected intervals. That way, a user can surf while traveling or whenever it's not convenient to be connected to the Web.

For a more in-depth look at each browser and a side-by-side comparison, go to Browsers.com, <http://www.browsers.com>.

*@Work* is a monthly column devoted to the use of the Internet. Email your online experiences and suggestions to [atwork@astd.org](mailto:atwork@astd.org).