

**Subject:** SCMP - Outfoxed by Mozilla's new cute cub browser**From:** abrahim@uchicago.edu**Date:** Tue, 14 Sep 2004 22:00:24 +0800 (CST)**To:** abrahim@uchicago.edu**X-Account-Key:** account1**X-UIDL:** R\*!"!Hk]"!Ma!!Q>a"!**X-Mozilla-Status:** 0001**X-Mozilla-Status2:** 00000000**Return-Path:** <abrahim@uchicago.edu>**Received:** from mx01.uchicago.edu (mx01.uchicago.edu [128.135.12.174]) by plaisance.uchicago.edu (8.12.10/8.12.9) with ESMTTP id i8EDw7qO000542 for <abrahim@plaisance.uchicago.edu>; Tue, 14 Sep 2004 08:58:07 -0500 (CDT)**Received:** (from daemon@localhost) by mx01.uchicago.edu (8.12.10/8.12.9) id i8EDw7tn021899 for abrahim@midway.uchicago.edu; Tue, 14 Sep 2004 08:58:07 -0500 (CDT)**Received:** from sendmail.scmp.com ([202.153.123.206]) by mx01.uchicago.edu (8.12.10/8.12.9) with ESMTTP id i8EDw2ok021761 for <abrahim@uchicago.edu>; Tue, 14 Sep 2004 08:58:03 -0500 (CDT)**Received:** from uxipsprd01 (uxipsprd01 [202.153.123.206]) by sendmail.scmp.com (8.8.8+Sun/8.8.8) with ESMTTP id WAA11639 for <abrahim@uchicago.edu>; Tue, 14 Sep 2004 22:00:24 +0800 (HKT)**X-PH:** V4.4 (uchicago), \$Revision: 1.62 \$@mx01**Message-ID:** <444764838.1095170424482.JavaMail.csuser@uxipsprd01>**MIME-Version:** 1.0**Content-Type:** text/html**Content-Transfer-Encoding:** 7bit**X-Mailer:** sendhtml**X-UIDL:** R\*!"!Hk]"!Ma!!Q>a"!

Tuesday, September 14, 2004

## Outfoxed by Mozilla's new cute cub browser

DAVID WILSON

Once a year, the boredom my bundled blue browser provokes in me peaks. So I dump it and hunt for something sexier, then regret the decision. The last version of Netscape that I tested seemed to centre on shopping rather than research. I have also learned that Opera may run like lightning, but it crashes like thunder.

Enter Firefox, Mozilla's "next generation" open-source (freely distributed) browser. Firefox is the nickname for China's red panda.

"It was such a cute animal that we couldn't resist calling the product Firefox. We even have stuffed animals available and they're quite popular," said Mozilla Foundation spokesman Bart Decrem. He omitted this fact: the browser was originally called Firebird, but had to be renamed because of a trademark dispute. Still, the connection between browser and bearcat is reassuring since firefoxes are gentle, secretive creatures.

The connection is apt, too, because the browser is supposedly highly resistant to phishing, or scams to steal bank account details over the internet.

"Firefox is the browser users can trust for their day-to-day activity, when shopping online, when banking online, and making transactions," Mr Decrem said. "We're building a browser that users can trust that is fundamentally more secure, is more reliable, and [has] no hidden privacy concerns."

Firefox blocks intrusions such as adware, spyware and pop-up windows. This capability helps make the browser Mozilla's fastest - it supposedly runs quicker than Internet Explorer. Better yet, Firefox offers the downtime-busting convenience of tabbed browsing. This is the ability to open links in the background so that they're ready for instant viewing.

Firefox was written in XUL (XML-based user interface language). Pronounced to rhyme with "cool", XUL makes it possible to extend the Firefox's capabilities through the use of skins and extensions. But how

popular is Mozilla's cute cub? Well, Firefox 0.9 has so far notched up 4.5 million downloads. Mozilla is targeting 10 million downloads in 90 days for the next version.

In a testimonial, one British disciple, Alasdair McEwan, said he turned to Firefox because the Net is awash with invasive garbage that impedes rapid browsing. Mr McEwan added that Firefox lets you choose what you look at and how - the user is not at the behest of "some sleazy commercial web designer" or the powerbrokers behind the browser with a market share of more than 90 per cent. "In particular," he said, "I like the error message which went along the lines of: 'Sorry we can't do that and we are not sure why' - polite, humorous and respectful of users. All in all, a very refreshing reminder that not everybody in the world is in it for themselves. Some people are trying to keep the internet truly open and free."

My first and so far only flirtation with this tool of liberty was less inspiring. After I installed version 0.9.3 on Mac OS X, I found that the Firefox icon kept bouncing up and down in the "dock" or toolbar. I could not quit Firefox. I could not force-quit and so tried firing up the program again with the result that a second bouncing Firefox icon appeared in the dock, soon to be joined by a third when I haplessly repeated the procedure.

I tried to reboot. But, accompanied by the Mac's Spinning Beachball of Death icon, an error message appeared saying that Firefox had cancelled the manoeuvre. I tried to shut down. Same again. My stomach yo-yoed. At last, unfathomably, Firefox relented and allowed me to switch my laptop off and on (imagine my gratitude).

To be fair, it could be that I flunked the installation. To save time, I left several programs running just as, on principle, I always skip reading licence agreements and click on "Accept".

Even so, in case I encounter further theatrics, I feel reluctant to install Firefox on my Windows computer. I feel a touch suspicious about *Maximum PC's* verdict that using the upstart amounts to "nothing short of a revelatory experience".

Nonetheless, Mr Decrem has declared that the future of Firefox is bright. It will avoid the fate of the jaded green browser that once ruled the desktop because money is out of the equation. "Mozilla is set up as a non-profit organisation, so we only answer to our mission and not the bottom line," he said.

*Confused by computer jargon? E-mail [technopedia@scmp.com](mailto:technopedia@scmp.com) with your questions*

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