



MOST VISITED: The Top Sites menu in Safari 4 lets users view a layout of their most visited Web sites, which can be accessed with a click. COURTESY OF APPLE

One Web Browser to Replace Them All

Apple releases Safari 4, the world's fastest Web browser ever

By **JOSHUA PHILIPP**
Epoch Times Staff

With the release of Safari 4, Apple may have spelled the end of Firefox and Internet Explorer (IE). Not only is it fast, but it offers several features that are sure to set new standards.

According to Apple, Safari 4 is more than three times faster than both IE and Firefox when loading HTML Web pages. When loading JavaScript, it is eight times faster than IE, three times faster than Firefox, and 4.5 times faster than the previous version of Safari.

The quick load times are attributed, in part, to the new Nitro JavaScript engine found at the heart of this browser. It also supports HTML 5 and advanced CSS Effects, allowing for more fonts, graphics, and a significantly richer Web experience.

The software has just recently been made available for a free download for both Mac and Windows PCs. Just three days after it was released on June 8, Apple reported more than 11 million downloads of Safari 4—six million of which were from Windows users.

Safari's New Clothes

Aside from groundbreaking speeds, the new Safari incorporates new features that are sure to become user favorites.

When you first open Safari 4, you are greeted by a curious grid

of Web pages. This is the "Top Sites" page. It displays the front pages of your 12 most viewed Web sites.

A similar feature—soon to become part of your daily Web-browsing routine—is the new "Cover Flow" search page.

What really makes the search page different is its presentation. It displays a spread of the Web pages in the same way Mac Leopard lets users quickly view pictures. It can display your full search history, bookmarks, RSS Feeds, or other options which are found listed at the bottom of the page.

These functions enable users to view Web pages at a glance—greatly reducing tedious browsing.

Thankfully, these Mac-like features are also available in the Windows version of Safari 4.

Another thing PC users may notice missing is the toolbar normally found at the top of the page. Apple has placed these options in two small, tabbed menus at the far right of the address bar. The result is a cleaner looking page and larger workspace. If, however, there are Windows users who've grown accustomed to the old browser format, Safari 4 has an option to keep the classic look, while still enjoying a faster Web experience.

Of course, in addition to a sleeker format and increased browsing speed, Apple has also designed the Safari 4 to be a safe

browsing experience. Apple designed this browser with phishing and malware protection, and features what it calls Private Browsing. Safari doesn't save or cache any personal information you enter or pages you visit, so you can safely surf even on a public computer.

So what are the downsides of Safari 4? I haven't been able to find any. However, it did seem that the Top Sites menu was taking a bit too long to display the front pages of the Web sites. Yet they could still be opened quickly, whether or not the image loaded.

All in all, Safari 4 makes Web browsing a much more enjoyable experience. The extra features place a great deal of extra control at the user's fingertips, while the quick load times make browsing much easier and more enjoyable.

SCORECARD

Effectiveness: A+

Interface: A+

Usability: A+

Installation: A

Final Score: A

Rosetta Stone: a Hit for Mandarin Language Learning

By **JAN JEKIELEK**
Epoch Times Staff

Rosetta Stone language-learning software has long been established among the industry's stalwarts, publishing virtual lessons in 31 languages. Their system must work, if the company's impressive list of users, including the U.S. military and the State Department, is any indication. Rosetta Stone Inc. went public and opened its first retail store last April, which piqued our interest in the product.

Eager to begin my lesson, I found an online version of the software at www.rosetta-stone.com. As I recently joined the wave of North Americans who are starting to learn Mandarin, this was the obvious choice for testing. A six month online subscription was priced at \$200 USD, a hefty sum, but compared to live language lessons (and the three-level CD box set which weighs in at \$549), it seemed to be a bargain—if it works. Let's see how the software stacks up.

After a few clicks, a single flash-based window opens, governing the totality of your language-learning experience. The page has a clean design, with large, high-quality photos and associated text. A convenient button at the bottom instantly toggles between three text options: Traditional Chinese, pinyin Romanization, and both at once. A friendly voice speaks a phrase, text appears, and you're expected to click on the corresponding image. A large checkmark or 'x' tells you if you are right or wrong in your choice. This method forms the essence of the Rosetta Stone teaching strategy.

Some years ago my wife, who spent several years teaching English in a Japanese classroom, taught me an innovative language-teaching method. Avoiding the use of students' native language, a highly-animated facilitator would display familiar items, and mime out corresponding actions. Think of someone displaying a fork, saying the corre-

sponding Japanese word, then miming 'eating' enthusiastically, and then saying the second word in addition to the first. No English was used, but the meaning was obvious. Within the course of several hours, students would start picking up basic words and concepts, leading to a sense of success and elation that would leave the student eager to continue.

Rosetta Stone replicates this highly successful teaching method on your desktop, with an added



LESSON LEARNED: Rosetta Stone language-learning software uses a technique it calls "dynamic immersion" in which words and relationships among them are introduced through photo cue cards. COURTESY OF ROSETTA STONE

twist: It challenges the student using puzzles in which the identities of words are not just shown to you, but also determined via what Rosetta calls your 'intuition' (initially process of elimination, with other twists coming later on in the lessons). For those that enjoy logic puzzles, cross-words, or the like, Rosetta Stone will be a natural fit.

Rosetta Stone calls its technique "dynamic immersion", and indeed, the experience is remarkably immersive. During the first hour of use, I found myself learning several basic words, simply by following along with the photo cue cards. Over the first several hours I found I had built a basic vocabulary—very impressive. Successfully learning several words and the relationships among them at the same time was very motivating. I

found myself keen to continue with the lessons until completion. While nothing can replace genuine interaction with a native speaker, Rosetta Stone software quickly teaches you to speak basic Mandarin—with retention several days later.

Now on the down side... one of the features touted by the Rosetta PR materials is the speech recognition component of the software. As part of the lesson progress, when you speak into the microphone, the program should be able to assess whether you are pronouncing the phrases you are learning correctly. This worked at a mediocre level at best using a built-in Macbook microphone. For those that might question my own ability to assess pronunciation, I'm generally known to be able to parrot sounds effectively, so here I will have to assume that it's the software that's failing. Fixing this element would perfect this learning method.

On the technical side, logging in was relatively painless, but I soon found that on a Macbook running

Leopard, I was missing a speech services plugin. Downloading took a bit of time, and installation took a few steps that could be confusing to a computer neophyte. During post-plugin installation, in its first run, the language-learning site locked up five-minutes into loading, using Firefox 3. Subsequent logins, however, loaded lessons quickly. Restarting the computer mid-session was not a problem; the software allowed me to restart or continue exactly where I left off. The software ran lightning-fast and seamlessly using Safari 4.

One a side note, in its ever-present images, Rosetta presents a balanced selection of people of various races, creeds, and nationalities, contributing to a genuinely international experience. Kudos for that! All and all, Rosetta Stone is an engaging, attractive and highly effective piece of software that definitely has me hooked. Expect a follow-up review a few months down the line. I expect to write part of it in Mandarin.

SCORECARD

Effectiveness: A+

Interface: A

Usability: A

Installation: B-

Speech recognition: C-

Lacking E-Mail Etiquette: The Downside of Technology

NEW YORK (Reuters)—A political coup in New York's statehouse can be traced back to an incident in which a top lawmaker so enraged a wealthy backer by peering at emails on his BlackBerry that his patron engineered his ouster.

One of the newer forms of poor office etiquette—paying more attention to a hand-held device than to a conversation or business meeting—happens so frequently that businesses are complaining it upsets workplaces, wastes time and costs money.

"It happens all the time, and it's definitely getting worse," said Jane Wesman, a public relations executive and author of "Dive Right In—The Sharks Won't Bite."

"It's become an addiction," she said. A third of more than 5,000 respondents said they often check their emails during meetings, according to a March poll by Yahoo! HotJobs, an online jobs board.

Such habits have their price, said Tom Musbach, senior managing editor of Yahoo! HotJobs. "Things like BlackBerries fragment our attention span, and that can lead to lost productivity and wasted dollars because people aren't focused on their work, absolutely," he said.

Reprimanded For Bad Manners

In other Yahoo! HotJobs research, nearly a fifth of respondents said they had been reprimanded for

showing bad manners with a wireless device. Yet even those who rail against such behavior admit to their own weakness.

"I catch myself driving in the car with my husband. He's talking to me and I'm downloading my emails," said Wesman. "You can't help yourself. There's this need to know what's going on."

But the constant pursuit of an email fix may be costly. Research shows such multi-tasking can take more time and result in more errors than does focusing on a single task at a time.

"We know that if you have a person attending to different things at the same time, they're not going to retain as much information as they would if they attended to that one thing," said Nathan Bowling, an expert in workplace psychology at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio.

"If you're attending to multiple things at the same time, you often times don't learn anything," he said.

Then there's the risk of making someone really mad.

In the New York state political coup, billionaire businessman Tom Golisano said he grew angry after meeting this spring with state Democratic majority leader Malcolm Smith, who paid more attention to his BlackBerry than to issues at hand.

"I thought that was very rude," Golisano told statehouse reporters.

Golisano is known for hefty campaign contributions and for funding his own unsuccessful bids for governor.

Irked by Smith's behavior, Golisano reportedly approached other legislators, who this week voted out the Democratic leadership and voted in the Republicans.

"One should not play with one's BlackBerry (or anything else) when billionaires who have helped elect you have traveled to your office to talk to you," Henry Stern, former head of New York City's parks department, wrote on a Yonkers Tribune blog.

Counterproductive Work Behavior

People who text message when they should be doing something else are engaging in what Bowling called counter-productive work behavior, which also includes harassment, showing up late or playing endlessly on the Internet.

"Technology allows us to do counter-productive things that we weren't able to do 10, 20 or even five years ago," he said.

Business etiquette coach Barbara Pachter said there is a "learning curve" to new technology such as BlackBerries.

"We're still at that point where we're being rude," she said, adding that people's behavior is likely to improve in the next year or two. "We're just not there yet."

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