

NCSA

Watch Out!

Netscape

Is

Here...

Somehow I had always thought that I was being too demanding. I started on the Web using MacWeb and it crashed, then it crashed, then, well, let me see, oh yes, it crashed again. I even started plowing through some books and got a version of Enhanced NCSA Mosaic from The Mosaic Handbook for the Macintosh (by Dale Dougherty & Richard Koman, O'Reilly & Associates, Inc., 1994) and that worked well, but kind of slow. Once I mastered Enhanced Mosaic I moved on to the latest Alpha version of NCSA's Mosaic - it worked even better, but still slow. Wow, I thought, the Web sure is great. . . and greatly slow, too!

Then a reader recommended Netscape, a new freeware Web viewer from Netscape Communications Corporation. The reader said it was fast and that he thought I might be impressed. So I downloaded it and gave it a shot. After trying Netscape, I had only one thing to say: Mosaic looks even better, now that it's in my trash can.

Netscape showed me that I wasn't being picky, Mosaic really is slow. Netscape leaves Mosaic in the dust. It has just about every feature Mosaic does, works more smoothly and two to three times faster. Netscape even

as some features that Mosaic lacks - like a Stop button which stops any data transfer on a dime, 100% of the time, first click (no more futzing with trying to get command-period to work). Netscape brings back the hotlist on a pull down menu (much more convenient than a bringing up a separate screen for your hotlist). Netscape also has online help and tutoring, just like Mosaic, guided by a fellow named Mozilla, the green cross between Barney and Godzilla you see above.

In testing Netscape I found zero problems. My ONLY complaint (and a very small one at that) is about the online help. Online help is a good idea because it allows the company to provide a continually updated user help - it is, however, useless if your problem is getting online. Programs which make use of online help should, IMHO, contain a basic user guide with the application to cover for this contingency. This problem, though, is not specific to Netscape, Mosaic's help works the same way, and Netscape works smoothly enough that I do not think anyone will have much trouble getting it started.

All in all, I cannot emphasize this enough - THROW OUT MOSAIC, DOWNLOAD NETSCAPE. The time you will save by web-surfing with Netscape is precious for those of us who have daily time limits on our SLIP/PPP accounts. You will literally be able to do four hours worth of Web-surfing in two or three hours. This application attacks what is currently the single biggest problem with the WWW, it's speed (or should I say lack of). Using Netscape, however, brings Web viewing close to the speed of a slow CD-ROM. In the end, I was fairly impressed. Netscape is a significant improvement in the available Web viewers. If the speed picks up just a little more, I might even consider throwing out all my TCP/IP software and relying completely on the WWW for my Net interface.

Please Note:

Netscape, like Mosaic, requires a SLIP or PPP connection to the Internet.

- a. anderson