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Round 3:

Explorer vs. Navigator

By Rich Schwerin

Boom! Pow! The heavyweights square off.

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There hasn't been a battle like this for years. It may look like Microsoft and Netscape are just fighting over browsers, but the winner decides how we'll use our computers now and into the future. That's good news no matter which company's browser you prefer. The heated competition means the next beta arrives with even more features before you finish installing the last version. In its latest incarnation, Internet Explorer 3.0 rivals Navigator for features and adds unique touches of its own.

Meanwhile, Navigator 3.0 is richer than ever and still boasts dominant market share. Which browser is better for you? That depends on how you use the Web. Our Internet and usability experts inspected both browsers in several key areas--e-mail, finding information, bookmarking your favorite Web sites, downloading files, and customization--to help you decide which one better suits your browsing style.

Usability Report Card

Dead Heat

PENGAD-Bayonne, N.J. GOVERNMENT EXHIBIT 1266

Browsers do a lot more than change Web channels. Microsoft Internet Explorer 3.0 and Netscape Navigator 3.0 include dozens of Internet tools and, for the most part, are evenly matched. In evaluating late betas of these browsers, we concentrated on the five core tasks. While both browsers passed in all areas, each had certain strengths. Navigator narrowly edged out Explorer in three of them--e-mail, finding information, and downloading files--while Explorer won by a hair in bookmarking and customization. However, when the scores were tallied Navigator and Explorer tied for first, with a few caveats. For one, Navigator costs $49 and Explorer is free. On the other hand, Navigator supports a wider range of open technologies and comes in many different cross-platform flavors.

E-Mail

Winner: Netscape Navigator 3.0

Digital Postcards: Both Explorer and Navigator have powerful e-mail clients, though Navigator's setup uses a bit too much technical jargon compared with Explorer's easy-to-follow wizard. However, attaching files and sorting messages (by date, subject, and so on) while reading mail are a breeze with Navigator.

Finding Information

Winner: Netscape Navigator 3.0

Needle in a Haystack: Navigator offers several choices for entering Web addresses, and unlike Explorer it features a handy Open Location option, which you can quickly activate with the Ctrl-L command. Both browsers include toolbar-based Search buttons that link to most major search engines.

Bookmarking

Winner: Microsoft Internet Explorer 3.0

Saving Your Place: Keeping track of the Web's good stuff is easier than ever. Navigator's Bookmark feature is much improved from previous versions. It can even automatically check for changes in bookmarked sites. But Explorer's Favorites feature wins by letting you create folders and manage URLs on the fly.

Downloading Files

Winner: Netscape Navigator 3.0

Online Loot: Navigator's file-download feature is fast and convenient, with a single dialog box asking where you want the file stored. Downloading with Explorer annoyed testers because it waits until after you've completed the download to ask where to store the file and what to name it.

Customization

Winner: Microsoft Internet Explorer 3.0

Have It Your Way: Browsers should work the way you do. Changing the default home page is a snap with both browsers. But Explorer simplifies finding and modifying cache settings to suit your style. And the tabbed Options box makes it easier to set and save the browser's other settings in one fell swoop.

Not Just **Browsing**

No matter how we sliced the results of our rigorous usability testing, we were forced to declare a draw. For different reasons, both Microsoft Internet Explorer 3.0 and Netscape Navigator 3.0 are perfect choices.

For now, Navigator still enjoys an overwhelming mind-share lead over upstart Explorer, due mostly to marketing momentum and recent technology leadership. But things are changing: Explorer 3.0 now nearly matches Navigator's arsenal of features and it adds a few extras of its own. For example, Microsoft's ActiveX component technologypromises to provide a new way to deliver animation, 3-D virtual reality, video, and other multimedia content to the Web.

Today's browsers have to handle more than just the Web, however. Both Explorer and Navigator contain entire suites of Internet tools, from e-mail handlers to teleconferencing utilities. Although Explorer's NetMeeting and Navigator's CoolTalk weren't ready in time for our testing, they will let you communicate, collaborate, and conference over a TCP/IP connection. Each product makes voice and data communication over the Net as simple as a phone call--a situation that could radically change the way you work and live. Navigator, like Explorer, also supports a wide range of cutting-edge online technologies including Java, VRML, and multimedia. And through hundreds of third-party plug-ins like Progressive Networks' RealAudio Player and Starfish Software's EarthTime, both browsers can be expanded to take advantage of an even wider range of technologies.

Despite their similarities, these browsers aren't interchangeable. If your primary interests lie in e-mail, finding information, and downloading files, Netscape Navigator gets the usability nod. And if you need browsers for platforms other than Windows 95 or NT (such as Macintosh, Windows 3.1, or Unix), Navigator is the only real choice. However, if you're looking for easier bookmark management or enjoy customizing and configuring your browser, choose Microsoft Internet Explorer. Explorer has come a long way in a short time, and it poses a serious challenge to Navigator's dominance. Better still, it's free vs. Navigator's $49 fee.

Decision Maker: Choose the Best **Web Browser** for Your Business

1. Choose the factor that's most important.	2. Choose the next most important factor.	3. What else is important?	4. For your needs, the best product is...
Usability	Technology	Bookmark Management	Microsoft Internet Explorer 3.0
		Plug-ins/Advanced Features	Netscape Navigator 3.0
	Price	Bookmark Management	Microsoft Internet Explorer 3.0
		Plug-ins/Advanced Features	Netscape Navigator 3.0
Technology	Usability	Bookmark Management	Microsoft Internet Explorer 3.0
		Plug-ins/Advanced Features	Netscape Navigator 3.0
	Price	Bookmark Management	Microsoft Internet Explorer 3.0
		Plug-ins/Advanced Features	Netscape Navigator 3.0
Price	Usability	Bookmark Management	Microsoft Internet Explorer 3.0
		Plug-ins/Advanced Features	Microsoft Internet Explorer 3.0
	Technology	Bookmark Management	Microsoft Internet Explorer 3.0
		Plug-ins/Advanced Features	Microsoft Internet Explorer 3.0

The Ultimate Web Browser

Web technology leaps ahead every day, so how can your browser keep up? Netscape found a way with plug-ins--small applications that add amazing features to a browser. Snap the proper plug-in onto Navigator and those plain-Jane text and graphics suddenly become online spreadsheets, live audio, and even real-time video. Microsoft Internet Explorer users, take heart: While Internet Explorer 2.0 supports few plug-ins, the final version of Internet Explorer 3.0 (scheduled to ship by the end-of August) promises to work with all Navigator add-ons.

☆☆☆☆☆ *Excellent* ☆☆☆☆ *Good* ☆☆☆ *Acceptable* ☆☆ *Poor* ☆ *Unacceptable*

Product	Price (direct price)	Pros	Cons	Verdict

Duplexx Net Toob info@duplexx.com	Free two-week trial. $14.95 to register	Lets you view FLI, MPEG, AVI and other video formats on-line.	You must download the entire file before you can view it.	☆☆☆☆☆ Play every bit of video the Web has to offer.
Inso Quick View Plus (800) 333-1395	Free 30-day trial version; $49.00 to register	View and print virtually any document from within your browser.	Sometimes puts odd characters in word processing files.	☆☆☆☆☆ A terrific all-in-one file viewer.
Macromedia Shockwave (800) 945-9360	Free	View animation and hear sound on "shocked" sites.	"Shocked" sites can be large-and slow to download.	☆☆☆☆☆ The coolest multimedia Web Tool around.
Progressive Networks RealAudio (800) 230-5975	Free	Listen to live audio broadcasts, too; works as helper app with any browser.	Sounds like a cheap AM radio.	☆☆☆☆☆ Live audio finds its way to the Internet.
VDONet VDO Live (415) 846-7700	Free	Shows live video on the Web.	At 2-3 frames per second, VDO's video is jerky at best.	☆☆☆☆☆ VDO Live makes video a viable option on the Web.
Chaco VR Scout (408) 996-1115	Free 30-day trial	Tour 3D worlds with this high-tech VRML tool; works as helper app with any browser.	Crashes on occasion.	☆☆☆☆ If you haven't seen VRML in action, check it out with VR Scout
Globalink Web Translator (703) 273-5600	$49.95	Lets your browser translate French, German, Spanish, and Italian Web sites.	Provides humorous translations on occasion due to language idiosyncrasies.	☆☆☆☆ The best way to view foreign sites without learning a new language.
Iterated Systems Fractal Viewer (800) 437-2285	Free	Convert graphics files into highly compressed fractal images format.	All that compression can take a long time.	☆☆☆☆ The FIF format is more compact than JPEG.
LiveUpdate Crescendo	Free	Plays real-time MIDI music while you browse; works with Internet Explorer 2.0.	More like Diminuendo if you don't have a wavetable sound card	☆☆☆☆☆ There's nothing like a little musical accompaniment while you cruise.
mBED mbedlets listening@mbed.com	Free	Creates simple animations you can use as buttons.	Sites with mbedlets can take a long time to download.	☆☆☆☆ A slick way to add animated images to your site.
Microsoft PowerPoint Animation Player (800) 426-9400	Free	PowerPoint Presentations come to life in your browser; works with Internet Explorer 2.0.	You're limited to PowerPoint presentations.	☆☆☆☆ If you're a PowerPoint user, you should have this utility.

ISYS HindSight (303) 689-9998	Free limited version. $39.95 for full version.	Remembers every page you've visited in the last week or month.	If you do a lot of surfing, searching through all the recent pages still takes some work.	☆☆☆☆ Great for tracing your steps when you forget to bookmark a site.
SoftSource AutoCAD DRW/DXF (360) 676-0999	Free for non-commerical use. $50 for businesses	Displays AutoCAD drawings on line.	Businesses can't use the freebie with a clear conscience.	☆☆☆☆ Show off technical drawings across an intranet or the Web.
ASAP Web Show (800) 336-8360	Free 30-trial	Play back ASAP presentations on or off-line.	Microsoft Powerpoint is a better presentation graphics package.	☆☆☆☆ An inexpensive way to present your ideas to the world via the Web.
Starfish Software EarthTime (888) 782-7347	Free 30-day trial; $19.95 to register.	Gives you the current time in 375 different cities worldwide.	Installation can take more EarthTime than you might want.	☆☆☆☆ If you do business around the globe, you need EarthTime.
TumbleWeed Envoy 7 (415) 363-7022	Free	Envoy's graphically rich files are smaller and download faster than similar Adobe Acrobat files.	Acrobat has the market share and marketing muscle.	☆☆☆☆ It works great, but few sites support the format.
Visual Components Formula One/Net (800) 884-8665	Free viewer; $79 for creation tools	Turn your spreadsheet data into Web pages for others to view.	Only the viewer is free.	☆☆☆☆ A great spreadsheet tool for office intranets.
VoxWare ToolVox (609) 514-4100	Free	Plays back sound with better quality than RealAudio; Netscape has bought in to the company.	Designed to work best with speech, not music.	☆☆☆☆ You can't beat ToolVox for listening to recorded voices.
Adobe Acrobat Amber (415) 961-4400	Free	View graphically rich Adobe Acrobat files on-line; works as helper app with any browser.	Amber's big files make for long downloads.	☆☆☆ Show off your pages with the original fonts, graphics and layout.
Carberry Technology Figleaf Inline (508) 970-5358	Free limited version; $19.95 for full version.	View and zoom in on a variety of graphics file formats, including Windows metafiles.	Free version only views CGM, TIFF, and JPEG.	☆☆☆ A neat little graphics viewer that supports several rather rare file types.
Corel CMX Viewer (800) 836-3729	Free	View Corel vector graphic CMX files in your browser.	CMX files can be created only using CorelDraw.	☆☆☆ View files created with one of the most popular graphics programs on the market.

Farallon Computing Look@Me (510) 814-5000	Free	Connect to another Look@Me user and watch what's happening on the other PC's screen.	Can be difficult to set up and configure.	☆☆☆ Collaborate with your coworkers over the Internet.
Heads Off Play3D mark@headsoff.com	Free	Attach actions to 2D and 3D animations.	More limited than full-scale VRML.	☆☆☆ Add some animation to your Web pages.
ichat (888) 242-8669	Free	Connect to an ichat server, then send real-time messages to other chatters.	Few sites are set up as servers at this point.	☆☆☆ Have some fun chatting with other Web wanderers.
Inso Word Viewer (800) 333-1395	Free	View Microsoft Word files, even if you don't have Word installed.	Displays an occasional incorrect character.	☆☆☆ If your office has an intranet and uses Word, you need this utility.
InSoft Cool Talk (408) 986-9246	$49.95. $69.95 for two-pack	Allows full-duplex audio conferencing over the Internet.	Sound gets choppy if more than one person talks at a time.	☆☆☆ Turn your browser into a teleconferencing tool.
Netscape Live3D (415) 937-3777	Free	Take a ride through 3D "virtual worlds" created with VRML.	Not many useful sites use 3D yet.	☆☆☆ Netscape's own approach to the world of VRML.
OneWave OpenScape (617) 923-6500	Free	Access OLE custom controls and OLE objects from within the browser.	Requires knowledge of Visual Basic to create pages.	☆☆☆ The power of OLE comes to your Web browser.
PenOp (212) 244-3667	Free demo. $699 to purchase	Attaches legal signatures to HTML documents.	It's not cheap.	☆☆☆ Send legally binding documents over the Web.
Totally Hip Software Sizzler (604) 685-6525	Free	Adds small, easy to download animation to Web pages.	Not as "sizzling" as Shockwave.	☆☆☆ Online multimedia for people who don't have a lot of time.

Build the Ultimate Web Browser

Get the best the Web has to offer! PC Computing's Netties awards recognize the top products, sites, and technologies on the Net.

Internet Explorer	Netscape Navigator
OK, so there isn't much out there for Internet Explorer 2.0. Internet Explorer 3.0's plug-in and ActiveX control support (below) will change the situation. With the plug-in support, almost all Navigator plug-ins will work under Internet Explorer. But ActiveX controls will add even more features. Video, audio, animation, interactivity: You name it and ActiveX will do it. Many companies, including Adobe and Macromedia, are working on ActiveX versions of their Navigator plug-ins. Best of all, ActiveX controls can automatically download and install themselves in Internet Explorer 3.0.	• **Duplexx Net Toob:** Net Toob handles all types of digital video--AVI, FLI, MPEG, QuickTime, and more--without a hitch. • **Inso Quick View Plus:** View more than 200 file types, from word processing documents to spreadsheets to graphics files. • **Macromedia Shockwave:** "Shocked" pages can take a while to download, but Shockwave's sound and animation add excitement to the Web. • **Progressive Networks RealAudio:** The sound's a little tinny, but you'll still like listening to a live broadcast on your PC. • **VDONet VDO Live:** VDO Live's real-time video points enticingly toward the Web's future.

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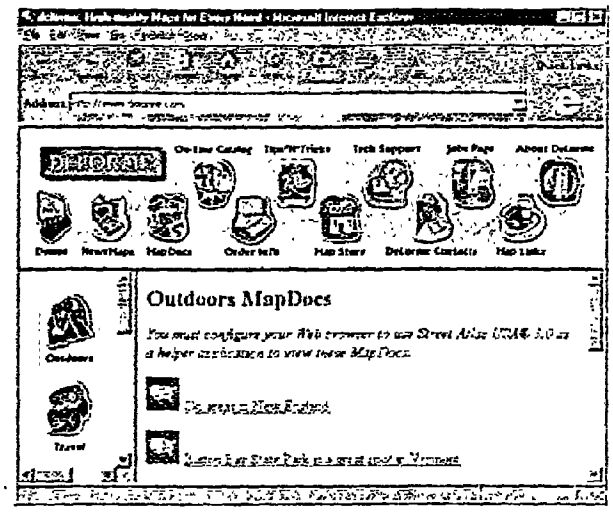
pcc_webmaster@zd.com

Microsoft Internet Explorer 3.0, Netscape Navigator 3.0

by Scot Finnie

The Browser Battle Rages On: Isn't competition great? With giants Netscape and Microsoft openly battling to build the best Web browser, the rest of us only stand to come out ahead. In the latest round of the contest, both companies have produced even better versions of the two most popular and most powerful browsers available: Netscape's Navigator 3.0 and Microsoft's Internet Explorer 3.0.

Internet Explorer 3.0



- New, intuitive interface
- Will display borderless frames
- Support for Netscape plug-ins
- Speedy performance

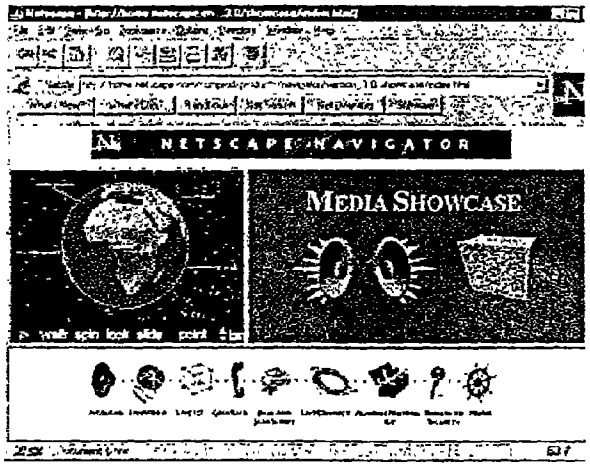
Free

VERDICT: ★★★★★

A worthy competitor to Netscape's Navigator -- and it's free.

Microsoft, (800) 426-9400

Netscape Navigator 3.0



- Built-in support for streaming audio and video, Java, and VRML, plus hooks for hundreds of free plug-ins.
- New CoolTalk utility includes a Net phone with data-sharing and text-chat features.

$49 est. street price

VERDICT: ★★★★★

The best browser keeps getting better.

Netscape Communications (415) 937-3777

On paper, the packages are much alike. Both include extensive support for many of the same new Internet technologies, controls, and plug-ins. Take a closer look, however, and you'll see many differences. Microsoft's efforts will present a serious challenge to Netscape in the future. For now; however, the top browser is still Netscape's -- barely.

Refined and Reliable Netscape had something to prove about reliability given the numerous peccadilloes of Navigator 2.x. But our early tests of a prerelease version of Navigator 3.0 make it clear that the company succeeded in hammering out the bugs.

Navigator 3.0 runs fast and true. Have you had trouble with Navigator's cache? Netscape's new LiveCache system makes better use of RAM to support CD-ROM content. It also progressively caches partially loaded content, making it easier for you to pick up where you left off.

Although Navigator 3.0 represents a major upgrade, it's really an enhancement of the already great version 2.0. The big news is its support for new Web file formats and technologies, plus one or two significant add-on modules. There's built-in support for streaming audio, streaming video (both AVI and

QuickTime), and 3-D VRML, plus security password certificates. We've tested them all, and they work as advertised. The VRML support is particularly impressive.

Cool Talkin' CoolTalk is probably the single most visible addition to Navigator 3.0. It's a separate Internet telephone program, similar to VocalTec's Internet Phone, that lets you converse with another person either point-to-point or via a Netscape host-server connection. In addition to two-way audio communication, CoolTalk provides competent software and data-sharing (whiteboarding) tools, as well as a text-chat feature.

There are two significant advances in Navigator 3.0 that won't be readily apparent to most users, but they could improve the Internet experience. For example, Netscape reworked its Java and JavaScript support for greater reliability and wider compatibility. Even better, the company added an object-integration framework, called LiveConnect, that allows live objects such as Java applets, JavaScripts, and plug-ins to interact and synchronize with one another.

Navigator 3.0 also includes minor but welcome interface tweaks, such as completely reworked context menus in Bookmarks. There's also a nifty little icon next to the Location (URL) field that you can drag off to the desktop, a folder, or the Bookmarks window to create an instant URL shortcut icon of the current Web page. You can also (finally) customize the windowpane arrangements of the Mail and News programs.

Webmasters and Net surfers alike will appreciate improvements to Frame navigation, including support for the Back button within a frame. There are also new HTML tags like background colors for tables, and new attributes for embedding audio and video.

Serious Challenger Meanwhile, Microsoft's Internet Explorer (or MSIE, as it's known on the Net) is also extremely ambitious. Version 3.0 might just as well have been called version 4.0. That's no accident: Netscape has a significant lead in the browser world, with 75 percent market share, and Microsoft is the only company with any real chance of competing. To get ahead, Internet Explorer 3.0 has to match or beat Navigator 3.0 feature for feature, and in many ways it does.

Internet Explorer 3.0 looks dramatically different from previous versions. Microsoft paid close attention to the interface, giving it a drag-and-drop-configurable toolbar with buttons that light up as the pointer hovers over them. These enhancements add up to an extremely usable application -- and usability is where Microsoft's browser skips ahead of Navigator.

Top Performer Internet Explorer 3.0 brings a raft of features that improve performance, including better support for multiple connections and background downloads. In a simple side-by-side comparison of the prerelease versions of the two browsers, Internet Explorer 3.0 had a slight performance edge when opening uncached Web pages. Another surprising new touch is a pair of excellent bundled add-in programs: Internet News (a newsgroup reader) and Internet Mail (an e-mail utility). Both are first-rate apps that we prefer by a small margin to their Netscape counterparts.

Microsoft also added Navigator 2.0-compatible frames that support the use of the Back button within frame pages. New attributes deliver customizable frame borders, including invisible borders and floating frames, letting users improve their Web-page designs without facing performance penalties.

Early Look Many of the major features that Microsoft announced for Internet Explorer 3.0, such as support for Java and third-party plug-ins, weren't operational in the prerelease version we tested but will be included in the final release. Existing Navigator plug-ins will work with Internet Explorer 3.0, and Microsoft is working on a setup routine that will detect and automatically configure plug-ins already

installed on your PC. That's a trick Netscape should copy. Internet Explorer also includes an Internet phone that lets users share applications over the Net, and a shared whiteboard conferencing tool that supports multiple-point (more than two-person) conferencing. These two features could help Microsoft leapfrog Netscape.

Another big feature of Internet Explorer 3.0, ActiveX, was in the prerelease version -- but few pages on the Web have yet to take advantage of this technology. Built-in ActiveX controls let browsers view charts, timed events, automatic event-launchers, and 3-D animation. ActiveX components will work in concert with Java applications. In theory ActiveX is a boon, but we'll reserve final judgment until we've seen it fully applied.

Close Choice Until now Netscape's Navigator has dominated the browser market. With version 3.0 of Internet Explorer, however, Microsoft poses a serious threat to Netscape's lead. Microsoft may even beat Netscape at its own game: Internet Explorer 3.0 costs nothing, while Navigator, after years of being free, now costs $49 per copy. Ultimately, however, the battle of the browsers will be decided by content. If either LiveConnect or ActiveX builds serious support, people will want to use the browser that best supports the prevailing standard. But for now, the lead is still Netscape's.

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pcc_webmaster@zd.com