PERSONAL TECHNOLOGY

New `Metabrowsers' Allow You to Create A Quilt of Web Pages
By Walter S. Mossberg

05/18/2000
The Wall Street Journal
Page B1
(Copyright (c) 2000, Dow Jones & Company, Inc.)

FOR LOTS OF PEOPLE, the Web has ceased to be about idle browsing. Instead, they've settled on a routine collection of sites related to their work or interests, and try to check each one regularly, sometimes several times a day.

When you approach the Web that way, the standard browser experience becomes pretty tedious. So a number of companies are working on ways to let you see all or parts of multiple Web pages in one sort of super page that allows you to quickly scan them all.

Some very big outfits, notably Microsoft, are working on ways to change the basic architecture of standard Web pages so that browsers could combine them into these super pages. But without waiting for such big, systemic changes, some smaller companies have developed clever Web services that try to accomplish the same thing.

I've been testing four of these so-called "metabrowsing" services. Each is different, but I've found that, as in so much of life, the simplest approach is the best. Here's a rundown on some of the most promising entries.

MY FAVORITE of the early metabrowsers, and the simplest, is called Quickbrowse, a service founded by a free-lance journalist who was tired of looking up the same large group of separate sites daily for his work. It's available free of charge at www.quickbrowse.com. Here's how it works. You simply list a bunch of Web addresses for pages you check regularly, and Quickbrowse strings them together into one long, scrollable Web page. All of the content, including graphics, is preserved and all of the links work. When you click on a link, a separate window opens for the new page, so you can always return quickly to your Quickbrowse page.

Once you assemble a Quickbrowse page, you can save it at the site's home page so you can quickly retrieve it again without retyping all the addresses. You can create multiple pages. For instance, I created a technology-news page drawn from five sites, then a media-news page drawn from an entirely different set of sites. You can also bookmark the pages so you can get right to them from your browser without even visiting the main Quickbrowse page. The pages that make up your Quickbrowse page can be any page on the Web. Every time you call up the combined page, it gets updated.

The site is simple, almost crude. It has a number of preconfigured Quickbrowse pages you can use. But there are some drawbacks. You must manually type in the addresses of the component pages the first time you set up a Quickbrowse page. It would be better if you could automatically grab them while browsing. And the system doesn't work well with some sites that require registration, including The Wall Street Journal and the New York Times sites. The company says a new version, due in a month or so, will fix these problems.

NOT QUITE AS GOOD, but still useful, is OnePage at www.onepage.com. It lets you combine subsections, or parts of Web pages, into a patchwork page kind of like My Yahoo!, but drawn from disparate sources. You might have sports from ESPN, political news from the Washington Post, and entertainment news from Hollywood.com. The system for grabbing Web material is better than Quickbrowse's; you can choose just part of a page. But I found it slow, and it didn't work in a few instances.

A worse problem with OnePage is that it can be hard to arrange and read all those chunks of Web sites on the combined metapage. The layout controls are limited and I found the process time-consuming. The site's internal canned-page sections, selectable from a copious catalog, fit on the combined pages better.

Confidential – Outside Attorneys' Eyes Only DODOTS0026232
DoDots Exhibit 2026
Samsung v. DoDots - IPR2023-00701

Like Quickbrowse, OnePage lets you create multiple pages and save them for later retrieval. But OnePage pages can't be bookmarked in your browser independently. You must always fetch them from the OnePage site, which is really designed to be your browser's start page.

Octopus, at www.octopus.com, wasn't originally designed to include whole outside Web pages, just the canned content Octopus offers. However, Octopus has recently added the capability to include outside Web pages inside its metapages, and when the new feature worked, it displayed them better than OnePage did. But it didn't always work. I also found this site complicated. Certain kinds of content can only go on certain kinds of pages, and there are too many options and choices.

Finally, there's a service called **DoDots** , available at www. **dodots** .com. This company lets you download small, single-purpose programs called Dots, which you can keep on your desktop. For instance, one Dot lets you look up words at the Merriam-Webster Web site. Another lets you enter a search on Yahoo!. Another lets you get breaking news headlines from ZDNet. You can collect all your dots in a sort of dock called a "HomeDot."

The main weakness of **DoDots** is that you can only get the Dots from a limited number of sites the company has signed up as partners. Also, the Dots are designed to perform only narrow tasks, rather than display large amounts of Web content.

This is a positive trend, and the whole metabrowsing field will be growing and getting better. These four services are a good start.

For a special look at how to rig Microsoft Outlook and the rest of Office to resist viruses, check out my Mossberg's Mailbox column in today's Technology Journal pages.

(See related article: "Technology Journal -- Mossberg's Mailbox" -- WSJ May 18, 2000)

Copyright © 2000 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Confidential – Outside Attorneys' Eyes Only DODOTS0026233

DoDots Exhibit 2026
Samsung v. DoDots - IPR2023-00701