

The New Google Toolbar for Firefox

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I'm heartened by Google's increasing support for Firefox. For a while now we've had the [Firefox Start page](#), which looks--suspiciously--really, really good next to Google's [Microsoft page](#), whose graphic looks extremely plain and is tied to microsoft only by the fact that the graphic is one of the default Windows desktops.

But now, Google has come out with the [Google Toolbar for Firefox](#). This is one of the first pieces of software designed specifically for Firefox by Google, and I'd like to think I had a little something to do with it, since a few months ago I emailed the Google team with a request for this very tool. The toolbar offers all the functions of the Internet Explorer (IE) version, including site search, word highlighting, image search and AutoLink, a service some regard very warily, since Microsoft was earlier decried for trying to include a similar service with versions of IE. Here's Google's pitch on AutoLink:

The online review of a great new restaurant has the place's address but no map. You could type the restaurant's street, city, and ZIP code into the search box, but why bother, when clicking the Toolbar's AutoLink button will automatically create a link to an online map (US addresses only)? AutoLink can also link package tracking numbers to delivery status, VIN numbers (US) to vehicle history, and publication ISBN numbers to Amazon.com listings.

The argument was that Microsoft could use this to funnel business toward only the businesses they listed and thereby funnel it away from others; and the same argument was made about Google, since 99% of Google's revenue comes from advertising and this could create the problem of improper alliances between Google and specific businesses. But I digress.

As for me, I will probably never use the Firefox Toolbar. The only reason I wanted to see one created was for the PageRank display that was formerly lacking in Firefox, but I found one at [Mozilla's Firefox Extensions page](#) a few months ago and use that instead: it's small and unintrusive. The Mozilla team's inclusion of a built-in Google search box in Firefox also makes the toolbar a little moot, unless you want to get more into what Google can do. I just use the site. But again, it's great to see Google nodding to Firefox: the line is being emboldened, on one side Microsoft with IE, MSN, the MSN Toolbar and [other spyware and pseudo-spyware applications](#), as [Jasen mentioned in a previous article](#); on the other [Google, Firefox](#) and the [Mozilla community](#), and savvy Internet users. But that's not news. It's been that way for a while; and I suppose it's clear where I stand.

The fact that Google developed a Firefox toolbar shows that Firefox has gained a significant and important market share; and Google didn't stop there. One of my new favorite toys--even though I don't own a cellphone--is Google's Send to Phone extension for Firefox. I don't believe there's an IE equivalent for this tool, which allows you to send text messages to your friend's cellphone with a browser. You type their number and choose their carrier, and the extension sends your text. Nifty, no? [Other Firefox-specific extensions like Google Suggest](#) are paving the way for more.

If you do not currently use Firefox, we highly recommend downloading it and making it your default browser. It's not only safe, but fun to use, given all the great applications that are developed for it every day!

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<http://software.silicon.com/malware/0,3800003100,39150242,00.htm>

http://www.awsinternet.com/articles/2005/deep_down_microsoft_fears_linux.html

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