# KICKING the TIRES

by Frank Petrie, MaMUGs, Technology Specialist

Product: OmniWeb v4.5
Company: The OmniGroup <www.omnigroup.com>
Requirements: Mac OS 10.2.x or later
Retail Price: (US) $29.95
Test Rig: iBook G4/933/640 MB RAM, Cable Modem
Review Date: 03 December 2003

First, there was the Napoleanic Wars. Then World Wars I and II. And finally, the Cola Wars.

Now, we have the Browser Wars, although the participants are dwindling in number. Internet Exploder [Ed. - Are you absolutely sure that this is the correct spelling?] has pulled out of the battle. Opera never got more than two feet out of the trench and iCab went AWOL. That leaves Mozilla's Firebird, Safari and OmniWeb.

Today, we will see how OmniWeb has weathered the conflict.

## The Good

"Drag this file into your Applications folder."

OmniWeb was the first state of the art browser for OS X. It lacked some desired functions, but kept improving with each subsequent release. With the release of v4.5, OW has become more integrated with OS X and uses the WebCore and JavaScriptCore frameworks from Apple. As a result, rendered pages look excellent.

The layout adheres to all of Apple's guidelines. You can customize the Menu Bar and such. Setting up the prefs and importing bookmarks is a breeze, as well.

## The Bad

No tabs, just folders. I'm spoiled; I have no excuse.

## The Ugly

Speed wise, it is behind both Safari and Camino. Some pages load quickly, some you have times when you can go outside and give your Chevy two coats of wax. Then there are those that never finish loading. Very frustrating and very time consuming, to say the least. Which experience you will have when you click on a bookmark is a crapshoot at best. (In fact, I wrote half of this article waiting for the BBC World News page to load.)

OW crashed more than any other app that I have ever used in X. Then again, the previous versions demonstrated the exact same behavior. Apparently OW doesn't like the Real Player plug-in. It will run for about twenty seconds and then crash. However, it appears to have no problem with the QuickTime plug-in.

## The Close

OmniWeb was my browser of choice for many years. Then came Safari. And now Mozilla has replaced its engine to bring it up to speed. As these two browsers are free and rarely crash, they have a leg up on OmniWeb. I personally use Safari as Apple built it to integrate it into its OS. But I have used Firebird successfully, too.

I like the attention that The Omni Group pays to its users and I would have liked to have been pleasantly surprised by this latest version, but alas, they're not in the iCab category but not in the Safari category neither. So, while I can safely say that OW has come a very long way, it is still playing catch-up with the competition.

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