

Firefox: 12 Extensions for Libraries

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Firefox is an open source Web browser created by the Mozilla Foundation. Currently, Firefox is used by roughly 16-18% of everyone accessing the Web.¹ Microsoft's Internet Explorer still dominates the market with an 80% share. So, why use Firefox? Since it is open source, anyone with the time, know-how, and desire can create add-ons to enhance its features. Currently, there are over 5,000 add-ons available for Mozilla's various browsers, of which Firefox is the most popular. Many of these add-ons can be very useful in the day-to-day operations of a library. This column presents twelve add-ons that can be used in various areas of the library.

I do need to make a disclaimer: this article features functions available in Firefox 2.0.0.14. By the time it is published Firefox 3.0 will be available, which may enhance some of these add-ons.

Reference Tools

Dictionaries

More than 60 language "spell checker" dictionaries are available for download. These can be found at <https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/browse/type:3>

DictionarySearch

The DictionarySearch extension allows you to highlight a word in your browser and search for it in *The Free Dictionary* <http://www.tfd.com>. You only need to highlight a word, right click and select "Search Dictionary for <your word>," and it will return the definition.



"Right-click" menu after add-ons are installed

For more information see: <http://dictionarysearch.mozdev.org/>

BioBar

BioBar is a useful tool for science topics. Users may browse and retrieve data from genomic, proteomic, functional, literature, taxonomic, structural, plant and animal-specific databases.² Once installed, a new toolbar will display in your browser. From here you can do a variety of biology-related searches. BioBar can also be used to search PubMed, SciRUS Google Scholar, and HubMed simultaneously by highlighting a word, right clicking, and selecting the BioBar menu option.

For more information see: <http://biobar.mozdev.org/>



BioBar Toolbar

Free Translate

Free Translate is a quick reference tool for English, French, Spanish, Italian, Dutch, Swedish, Norwegian, Polish, German, and Danish translations. Like many Web-based translators, however, it can be a bit quirky with modified forms of words like plural nouns. Once installed, Free Translate is easy to use. Simply highlight the word in question, right click and select "Free Translate," the language you are translating from, and the language you wish to translate to.

For more information see: <http://freenet.myseminar.ru/>

BibleServer.com Toolbar

The BibleServer toolbar sends a search to BibleServer, which provides thirty translations of the Old and New Testaments in more than twenty languages. Like BioBar, BibleServer creates a toolbar in the browser where you can enter your search. BibleServer allows you to compare scriptures across its various translations.

For more information see: <http://www.bibleserver.com>



BibleServer.com Toolbar

Acquisitions

BlueOrganizer

"BlueOrganizer understands the content of Web pages and offers a smart-browsing experience: when looking at an address, find it on Google maps instantly; when reading a book review, save it to your Amazon Wish List with a single click...and much more."³ You can also set it to search WorldCat and a host of monograph retailers. BlueOrganizer requires you to register before you can access the add-on. A new menu option will appear in your Firefox main toolbar. From here you can access the various options available. I use it for collection development. It is a great tool for creating lists of books I want to order from Amazon.com, without having to go back and forth between Amazon.com and whatever page I may be on. Also, it allows me to do searches in WorldCat from Amazon.com so I can see if we already have the item.

For more information see: <http://www.adaptiveblue.com/>

Cataloging

Dublin Core Viewer

The Dublin Core Viewer is pretty self-explanatory. It will display the metadata embedded in the page if it is using Dublin Core. Unfortunately, only a few sites use Dublin Core, so this tool is of limited use. When Dublin Core is found in the page, the Dublin Core Viewer icon in the bottom right of your browser will glow orange.

For more information see:

 <https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/528>

Systems

WebDeveloper 1.1.6

WebDeveloper is my favorite Firefox add-on. WebDeveloper allows you to manipulate the way the browser processes the page. You can display style elements, form data, table layouts, image attributes, and much more without looking at the code. It also allows you to edit the page in the browser without downloading it. Of course these changes are only for the session and will not affect the actual page. This is a useful add-on for any Web developer and is easily accessible from the toolbar.

For more information see:

<http://chrispederick.com/work/web-developer/>

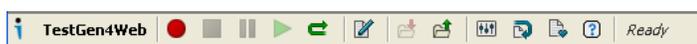


Instruction/Distance Education

TestGen4Web

This add-on allows you to “record” your browsing history. Though the creator claims it works like a VCR for your Web browser, it really just records the actions you performed on a page. Unlike many software packages, such as Camtasia, which actually records your every move, TestGen4Web records your actions. You won't see your cursor move across the screen and text will not slowly appear in a field. Instead, you will see snapshots of each step. Text fields will suddenly have words in them, links will suddenly turn into visited links, and a new page will appear. This could still be a useful add-on if you need to record and store your online searches. Also, the files are very small, unlike movies created by commercial software packages. The toolbar embeds itself at the bottom of the browser.

For more information see: <http://developer.spikesource.com/wiki/index.php/Projects:TestGen4Web>



TestGen4Web Toolbar embedded in the browser footer

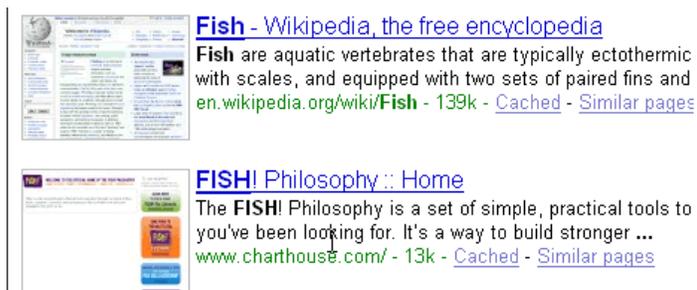
General Tools

Following are a few of my favorite add-ons that are useful in the library and at home.

Google Preview

Google Preview simply adds a preview thumbnail image next to each Google search result. It helps weed out garbage results and has saved me an untold number of clicks. One word of warning--it doesn't filter content, so there is always that chance of getting more than you bargained for.

For more information see: <http://ackroyd.de/googlepreview/>



Google Previewer

PDF Download 1.0.1.2

Don't you hate it when you click on a link and surprise it's a PDF that causes your PC to grind to a halt? PDF Download will always give you the option to download, open, or cancel the download. Also, it allows you to view a PDF as HTML.

For more information see: <http://www.pdfdownload.org/>

QuickNote

QuickNote allows you to highlight any part of a Web page and send it to a QuickNote file stored in your browser. It also attaches the source URL for each note you create. It can then be copied to Notepad, Word, or any equivalent word processing software.

For more information see: <http://quicknote.mozdev.org/>

Viamatic foXpose

If you're like me, you're constantly opening a number of tabs at a time, then forgetting which tab is which. This add-on will be your best friend. Viamatic foXpose allows you to view all of your tabs at once. If you have six tabs open, your browser window will divide into six equal parts, each with an image of what is in the tabs. Clicking on the image will bring you to the page. To activate Viamatic foXpose, simply click on the grey box it creates in the bottom left of your browser.

For more information see: <http://viamatic.com/firefox>

Installing Add-ons

Installing add-ons is simple once you have Firefox installed. Simply click on the “Tools” option in your browser, select “Add-ons” and then select “Get Extensions” on the bottom right side of the pop-up box. From here you can use the search function to find add-ons below, or you can browse them all. Once you have found the add-on, simply click the “Add to Firefox” button and install the program. Shut down Firefox and restart it and your add-ons are installed. You can also remove and disable add-ons from the add-ons manager in the toolbar.



Firefox Add-ons Manager

Hopefully, these add-ons will be useful. For all the Internet Explorer users out there wondering where their add-ons are, I'm sorry to say there aren't as many, about 500, and all the useful ones have a cost associated with them. You can find them at <http://www.windowmarketplace.com>

References

- 1 Market Share by Net Applications <http://marketshare.hitslink.com/report.aspx?qprid=0>
- 2 BioBar Mozdev.org <http://biobar.mozdev.org/>
- 3 Adaptive Blue <http://www.adaptiveblue.com/>