

Opera 8 to Include Speech Commands

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Opera Software Thursday released the beta version of its next browser for the Windows platform. Opera is breaking ground once again with a range of new usability tools, including Fit-to-Window-Width, Fit-to-Paper-Width, improved RSS handling, Start Bar for easy access to main features and speech in- and output -- all presented in a simplified user interface. Still keeping some secrets up their sleeve, Opera has yet to reveal the name of their newest browser version.

Opera started out as a research project in Norway's telecom company, Telenor, in 1994, and branched out into an independent development company named Opera Software ASA in 1995. Opera Software develops the Opera Web browser, a high-quality, multi-platform product for a wide range of platforms, operating systems and embedded Internet products.

"We were preparing for the 7.60 release, but as work progressed and we kept adding improvements and functionality, it became very evident that we now have a browser that is so powerful, secure, and easy to use that it exceeds the next logical version number and warrants a major release," says Jon S. von Tetzchner, CEO, Opera Software, and adds that all those who have licensed Opera 7 will, of course, receive free upgrades. "The new Opera version has dramatic improvements under the hood, in addition to some very helpful new features to welcome more and more users to take advantage of browsing the Internet in a fast, safe, and customizable way."

Opera has repeatedly introduced innovative browsing features to the

Web industry, setting de facto standards for a better Internet experience along the way. The new version comes with an easier install process and simplified UI to introduce users to Opera's rich features, and a Start Bar for easy access to the main features. A trash can remembers closed windows and blocked pop-ups, which, especially combined with Opera's Sessions feature, prevents you from ever losing your work again.

The RSS newsfeeds client has been given a more prominent place and increased usability, setting it apart as an advanced and easy-to-use RSS tool. A clickable RSS icon will appear in the address bar on sites that offer RSS feeds so you don't have to look around for the link. You can also add the newsfeeds to Opera's e-mail client where you can store, sort, search, and find information with a click of the mouse.

The new version of Opera also features voice technology. Opera is the first browser to prepare for a future of Web sites offering interactive, voice-enabled shopping and booking systems. You can also browse the Web using spoken commands, such as "Opera next link", "Opera back", or "Opera speak". The latter command will make Opera read Web page content and e-mail messages to you aloud, adding usability as either a screen reader or advanced dictionary. Fit-to-Window-Width will adapt Web page content to fit the width of your window, which means you can have multiple windows open with no horizontal scrolling. In combination with Opera's Zoom feature, you can dramatically magnify Web pages and still view them without having to scroll sideways -- a compelling accessibility tool for visually impaired users. This technology may also be applied to printing Web pages with Fit-to-Page-Width.

"A browser is much more than what meets the eye, and to maximize speed, security, and page handling, Opera's Core and supporting code has undergone dramatic improvements based on the strict efficiency requirements brought in from the mobile phone market where Opera is a leading player," says Christen Krogh, Vice President Engineering, Opera

Software. "In addition, the new Opera browser comes with an update check function to ensure that you will always have the latest version for maximum protection and performance."

Opera is tightly coded to optimize speed and security while browsing the Web. With integrated search, tabbed browsing with saved sessions, built-in e-mail and more, Opera is still under 4 MB to save system resources. The compact build also works to keep you protected from viruses and spyware, which, in combination with Opera's transfers panel and advanced security settings, make Opera the safer browser on the market.

Availability

The beta version of Opera's newest browser is available as a free download from <http://www.opera.com>. The final version of the browser is scheduled for release with its full name in early 2005. Users who have licensed versions of Opera 7 will receive free upgrades to the new version.

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