

## Review: BlackBerry App World simple, light on apps

April 15 2009, By RACHEL METZ , AP Technology Writer

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(AP) -- I'm typing this in between perusing Facebook, trying (and failing) to master a guitar-simulation game and listening to Internet radio on my smart phone.

And no, I'm not using an [iPhone](#). I'm using a BlackBerry Curve 8900 to try out the recently rolled out BlackBerry App World.

Lately, any smart phone maker worth its salt is operating or about to launch an application store that corrals all kinds of free and paid software you can download straight to your handset. Apple Inc. started the trend with July's release of its App Store for the iPhone and iPod Touch.

Google Inc. runs one for phones that support its Android operating system - currently just the T-Mobile G1, though more are expected - and [Nokia](#) Corp. runs several it plans to consolidate into one. Palm Inc. is developing the [Palm](#) App Catalog for its upcoming Pre handset, while Microsoft Corp. is making one for phones that use its Windows Mobile OS.

Not wanting to be left in the dust, BlackBerry maker Research In Motion Ltd. unveiled App World early this month, marking a major change from the past, when third-party programs were available for BlackBerrys but not in one convenient spot.

App World will undoubtedly appeal to RIM's growing legion of

consumer users, as well as business users with some free time.

But with only a fraction of the applications available through Apple's App Store and many fewer than Google's Android Market, App World has a lot of growing to do before it can become a serious contender in the booming smart phone application market. It doesn't help either that starting prices are three times those for Apple and Google programs.

First, the good: Available as a free download from RIM's site, the App World software has a simple design, is easy to navigate and works on all recent BlackBerrys.

It uses eBay Inc.'s online payments service, PayPal, so you can buy applications fairly quickly and seamlessly if you already have a free PayPal account.

App World doesn't look as slick as Apple's App Store, but it is definitely more visually appealing than Google's Android Market. It also includes some of the popular applications available on those platforms, like one for social network MySpace and song-identifying program Shazam.

You can browse through a number of "Featured Items," such as a \$12 mobile version of the popular video game "Guitar Hero World Tour," or the free travel simplification program WorldMate Live. As expected, you can also search for applications by title, or view them by category or popularity.

RIM says more than 1,000 applications are available on App World, with more added daily, but you will only see those that work on your device. Using the latest BlackBerry Curve from T-Mobile, I counted fewer than 700 applications.

That's better than the more than 500 applications that Apple had at

launch, and that far exceeds the dozens for Google. But Apple's store has since grown to house more than 25,000 and Google had more than 2,300 as of March.

While some popular applications are available, RIM needs to improve its selections before becoming a serious contender.

For example, given that many people still get a [BlackBerry](#) for work, I was surprised to see relatively few applications in personal finance and banking, mapping and the professional and business category.

I was miffed to see App World does not yet include applications for watching videos on YouTube or for just posting short messages on Twitter (there are third-party programs, including the free Snap2Twitter, that include Twitter capabilities among their many features, but none dedicated solely to posting the message bursts).

And I was put off by the prices of some applications, too. Many are free, but fees for others start at \$3 and rise from there. By contrast, prices start at 99 cents for both Apple and Google.

Fortunately, you can sometimes try before you buy. A ringtone application called "MP3 Ringtone Creator" cost \$5 but I downloaded a free trial version.

In some cases, programs that cost money through App World are available on Google's or Apple's application stores for less. This was the case for the \$12 "Guitar Hero" game, which you can also find on Android Market for \$5.

I decided to buy the game for the Curve, despite being skeptical of its worth. After several attempts to follow the guitar licks of Blondie and Lenny Kravitz, it was clear I wouldn't be mastering the game any time

soon, and I felt lame having spent \$12 on it. I didn't even bother trying to play it in drumming mode.

I was happy with some of the free applications I downloaded, including Snap2Twitter, Internet radio service Pandora and news browser Viigo.

It's clear that RIM is trying with App World, and its convenience and simplicity are appealing. But until some more tantalizing [applications](#) are added to the mix, I'll probably stick with downloading the freebies.

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