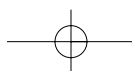


Foreword

The Internet has become central to our lives—it's how we communicate, find, and share information with colleagues, friends, and family. It has permeated the fabric of our lives to the point where its enticements can now be found on prominent display on television, print media, movies, and any other form of advertising you care to think of. The Internet has grown so rapidly and taken such a hold, not just because of its fundamental utility, but also because of the ease of which people are able to make use of it. In the 1980s, for the first time computer software evolved to a point where it was possible for ordinary people to transmit and receive information through networks. The early 1990s followed with the development of the World Wide Web and software designed to navigate it—web browsers. The rich nature of the web with its graphics, flexible presentation options, and open construction made it easy for people to connect, contribute, and benefit. Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, software vendors have focused on making connecting to the Internet as simple as possible. They have had a large degree of success. In 2002, the CIA's *The World Factbook* estimated 159 million Internet users in the United States alone.

With so many people using the Internet and the technology behind computers still being something of a mystery to most of us, in the past few years, Internet users came under attack. Computers began to slow down and crash. Data was lost or, even worse, stolen. The web experience began to degrade as more and more sites began showing popup windows with advertising. Junk



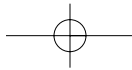
email was on the rise. It became harder and harder to get value out of the Internet when much of people's time was spent dealing with this new generation of digital annoyances. The situation was in part due to the open design of the underlying systems—Microsoft Internet Explorer and Outlook/Outlook Express were never intended to be exploited in such ways, in part due to tricks of social engineering and in part due to flaws in the Internet software most people used. Microsoft had won market dominance after several years of fiercely competitive battle with Netscape Communications Corporation and ended up distributing its software to every user of Microsoft Windows, in effect becoming the portal to the Internet for most people.

Microsoft designed Internet Explorer to be a developer's paradise, an extensive programming API that allowed for rich content and add-ons to be effortlessly deployed to thousands of users. With the flexibility came a price, however—it was not long before individuals sought to capitalize on users' lack of understanding to foist "spyware" software onto their machines: key loggers, data grabbers, popup ad generators, viruses, and other deviants. Microsoft Outlook suffered a similar set of problems whereby users could inadvertently run malicious programs attached to unsolicited email.

One of Netscape's last great acts was to open its client development process with the creation of mozilla.org in 1998—the source code of its web browser and email reader would be opened for all to read, understand, and contribute to. Two and a half years after the source release in November of 2000, Netscape released Netscape 6.0 based on the results of this effort to date. The product was exceptionally buggy, slow, and laden with misguided attempts to make a quick buck from browser users. It was a product marketing disaster, and much of the remaining user base abandoned Netscape for Internet Explorer. But the core was solid, and Netscape and the open source community continued to develop the browser over the following years, improving the performance, stability, and features. Security was always important to Netscape and its customers, so the software was designed with a more restrictive view of how content should be handled.

Eventually, a group of us who had worked for Netscape during the 6.0 development cycle and some others from the Mozilla community decided that the secret to better success in the marketplace was better presentation—more of a focus on relating to the user, more focus on simplicity of purpose, and then selling the resulting software on those strengths first to a technically adept set of early adopters and then to the world as a whole. It was this set of ideals that led to the formation of the Firefox browser project, initially known as Phoenix and Firebird and the Thunderbird Email project.

By staying true to these principles, the relentless pursuit of perfection in the details of user conversion, and optimizing common tasks such as searching for and managing information while staying true to some of the original design



philosophies of Mozilla and Netscape software, we have created a useful tool that is also remarkably successful at keeping much of today's Internet nastiness at bay.

That said, no software is perfect, and, as I have said, many exploits are cunning tricks of social engineering. What is really called for is an increased awareness from people as to what's going on when they browse the web. We've tried to make increased awareness easier in Firefox and Thunderbird, and we will continue to develop them to better alert you when we think you might be going down an undesirable path. But fundamentally, the more you know about the way your software and the Internet works, the safer you'll be from exploitation.

This book should give you a better understanding of what makes Firefox and Thunderbird tick, how to get the most out of them so that you get the most out of the Internet, and how to stay safe when you're online. I hope you enjoy your Internet experience with Mozilla software. Stay safe out there.

—Ben Goodger, Lead Engineer, Firefox Project

