



Internet television — Dawn of the desk potato

“Desk Potatoes?” Alright, so you’ve surfed the net, you’ve canoed the net, but you feel you still don’t have enough information bombarding your synapses? Well folks, the ordinary couch potato, thanks to the Internet, can now evolve (devolve?) into the “desk potato” (when this phrase becomes ubiquitous, remember that it was coined in the *Ontario Technologist*).

Internet Television

I recently read an article in the *Ottawa Citizen* newspaper, on a new Canadian company called iCraveTV, which broadcasts TV stations like CTV, CITY-TV, TVO, etc. over the Internet.

iCraveTV bills itself as “the world’s first 24-hours-a-day, live streaming of complete over-the-air television broadcasts on the Internet. Now, when a tele-

vision set isn’t handy, you can watch your favorite television programs right on your computer monitor. You can watch telecasts while e-mailing friends or surfing the Web. iCraveTV’s stations are those freely available to Toronto, Canada.” You can check this company out at <http://www.iCraveTV.com>. Broadcasters themselves aren’t supporting iCraveTV and have launched a lawsuit against the company.

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cast, a combination of live TV and Web pages.**

has a fast Internet connection. You will need at least a 56k-modem connection, however, ADSL or cable modems are recommended.

Your selection

In addition to iCraveTV, other organizations such as CNN, ABC, and Discovery Channel broadcast custom programs over the Internet. These are not complete live television broadcasts, but rather custom designed clips for the Internet — still good stuff. There is a directory that comes with the Real Player application that includes radio stations, music video channels etc.

Alternatives to Internet television

If you really want to watch TV on your PC while surfing the Internet but aren’t satisfied with the current streaming quality, another option is a television receiver board for your

PC. This option gives you great quality pictures, but requires that you purchase a card for your PC and have a cable or antenna connection. This expansion board enables your computer monitor to do double-duty as a television screen. The board contains a TV tuner to select channels and circuitry to convert from the TV video standard (NTSC) to your computer’s video standard (normally VGA or SVGA). Most television boards support windowed TVs as well as full-screen viewing. With a TV window you can place a mini television in the corner of your screen while you use the computer for other tasks. Today’s television boards produce TV images comparable to normal televisions. Many home computers now come with a television board

pre-installed.

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cast, a combination of live TV and Web pages. For more info on Inter-
cast you can read an article at: <http://boardwatch.internet.com/mag/96/oct/bwm7.html>

My take

Okay, so I’ve tried these services — the question is, am I going to throw out my TV? Not just yet. I love the fact that I can listen and (sort of) watch the news while I surf, however, my connection speed (56k) is just not fast enough to do justice to full streaming video. And if you read my article last January on high speed access services, you will recall that ADSL and cable modems are not available in most rural areas yet (where I live). I’m holding out for a good satellite link.

All in all, I think Internet TV is a great new use of the Internet. I’m extremely excited about getting a multi mega bit connection in the future. Yes, cable companies, that is a cry for help.

Farewell

This will be my last regular column in the *Ontario Technologist* for a while, as I will be busy pursuing a Masters of Science degree in Project Management for the next three years. I’ve enjoyed sharing some of my interests with our readership. Thanks to all the readers who have written to me over the last few years. It’s been a blast, folks — stay tuned! 

Getting started

To get started using iCraveTV, ensure that your PC is capable of handling multimedia content, has a copy of RealPlayer (either RealPlayer G2 or the RealPlayer Plus plug-in (<http://www.real.com/player/index.html>) and

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