



Maxthon: A New Browser With Potential

Product News



DAVID WINOGRAD



12:50 PM, Jul. 30th ET, 2012

TMO TALK (56)



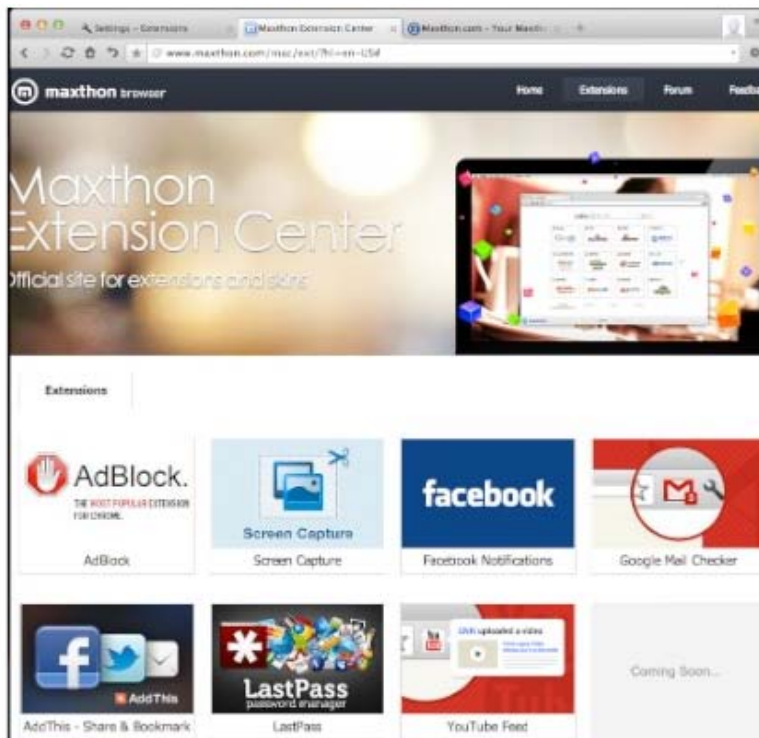
The Maxthon Browser for the Mac is being released today in beta form. It's far from perfect, but it has loads of potential and it can wind up being something very big in the Mac market. Let's look at what there is now and what it might take for this to be a powerhouse browser given time and honest critical feedback from the Mac cognoscenti. This is the first entry just such a discussion.



The Maxthon Browser for the Mac

Maxthon for the Mac has just been released. It's a beta version (and requires OS X 10.6 or later) so it only has a fraction of the feature set that the finished product will sport, but at this point it has at least one trick that Safari cannot do and it's definitely worth a look. The people from Maxthon, who I talked to extensively, tell me that they intend to update about once every two weeks with more features until it reaches parity with the Windows version which has been out for some time and has garnered a big following.

A good deal of its thunder was subsumed by the release of Safari 6 which brought global URL and search and into the same box. Maxthon has had this for some time. Maxthon has its roots firmly based in the open-source bits of Google's Chrome and extension for Chrome are what comes up when you access Maxthon extensions.



Maxthon Extensions

I suppose that there's nothing wrong with that, but the devil is in the details. Some extensions such as AdBlock are already in Safari 6, as well as sharing to [Facebook](#), Twitter and Email. One called screen capture is system wide on the Mac, but I tried to load it anyway just to see what would happen, and this scary box popped up:



I'd Turn Back if I Were You

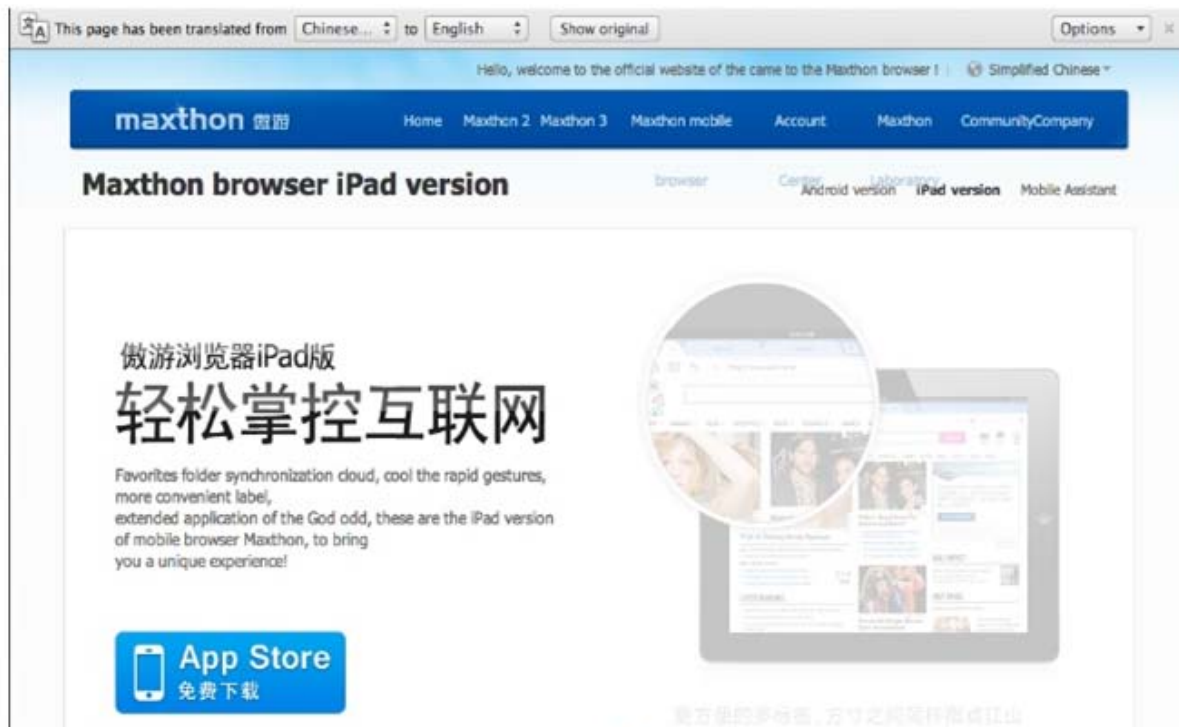
Google, whether right or wrong, has taken a beating over privacy issues, and this box seems to be saying that anything on [your computer](#) is up for grabs. I checked with one of my contacts at Maxthon to see if I misread it and was told no. My reading of it was exactly right. Now I don't know about you, but I don't want to give Google free reign over my computer, especially for a feature that you don't need.

One nicety that Safari 6 doesn't have, is that when you come to a page in a foreign language you'll get a very helpful box asking if you would like a translation.



Do You Want to Translate?

This seems to be an advantage, but I may have tossed it a curve-ball since I asked for something very hard. Translating Mandarin to English is no simple task, but I wanted to see if the Maxthon was up to it.

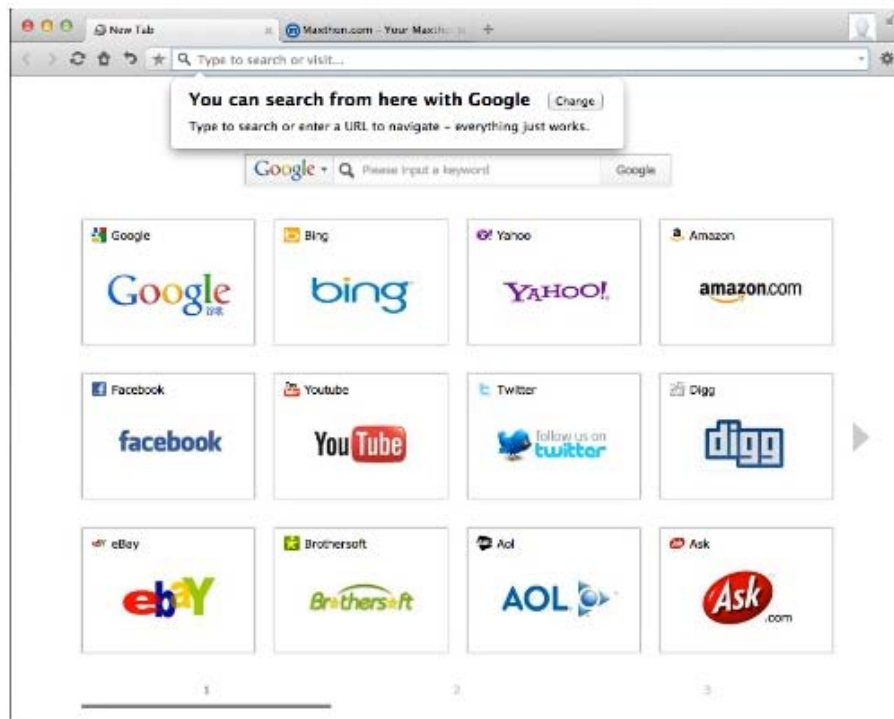


Apparently Not

Read the translation above and if you can make more than the slightest sense out of it, you're either better than me, or you have a working knowledge of Mandarin. I was told that it's using the Google engine and that was confirmed when I ran it through the Google translation page from Safari. It was worth a try though.

The big selling point not invalidated by Safari 6 is that Maxthon syncs bookmarks (which they call favorites, but we'll get to that) between the Mac, Windows and iPad version of the browser. That's a pretty neat trick. The first thing you need to do is get a passport from the site which requires your email and a password. You put that in any version of Maxthon you're using. I tried it on the Mac, Windows running System 7 under Parallels, and the iPad Version. It did work, but getting it to work took a lot of support from Maxthon since there is no Help File included in the beta released today.

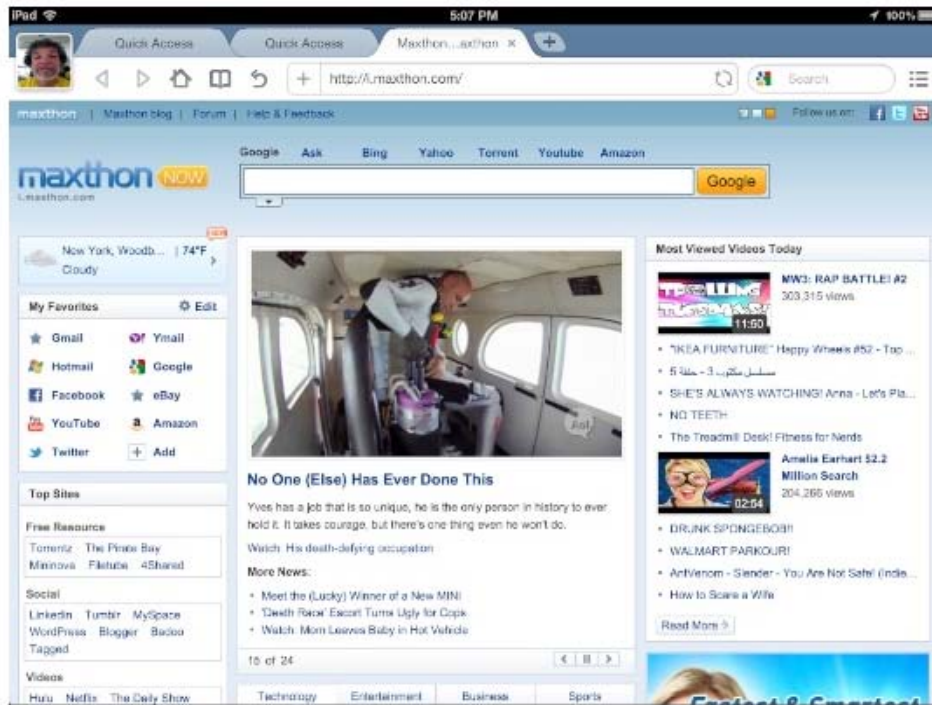
The easiest way was between Windows and Mac. I created a bookmark on my Mac, refreshed the PC version and it was there. But it still wasn't perfect. When I grabbed the bookmark/favorite, it was the *New York Times* and displayed them *NY Times* favicon. On the PC, the favicon was that of a blank page with the right hand corner folded. Re-running Maxthon on the Mac took away the NY Times favicon and replaced it with something plain. It was also exceedingly hard to find out where the synced bookmark/favorite was kept. To Maxthon, bookmarks and favorites mean the same thing. Regardless of what it's called I needed guidance on finding it.



A Nice Touch

Although the main screen, which can be set and is shown above acts as a newsfeed and portal, it's easy enough to get to this screen which will take casual users to a good number of places they probably want to end up. I'm not sure if this can be modified, but for novice computer users I can see its utility.

There is an iPad version and herein lies some problems due to the fact that I don't believe Maxthon did enough work into learning about the Mac market. The verbiage is in PC talk and confused the heck out of me. Graphics that mean one thing on a PC mean something else on a Mac, and this can be quite frustrating and baffling. Let me give you a few examples on the iPad version of Maxthon that was updated on July 12th.



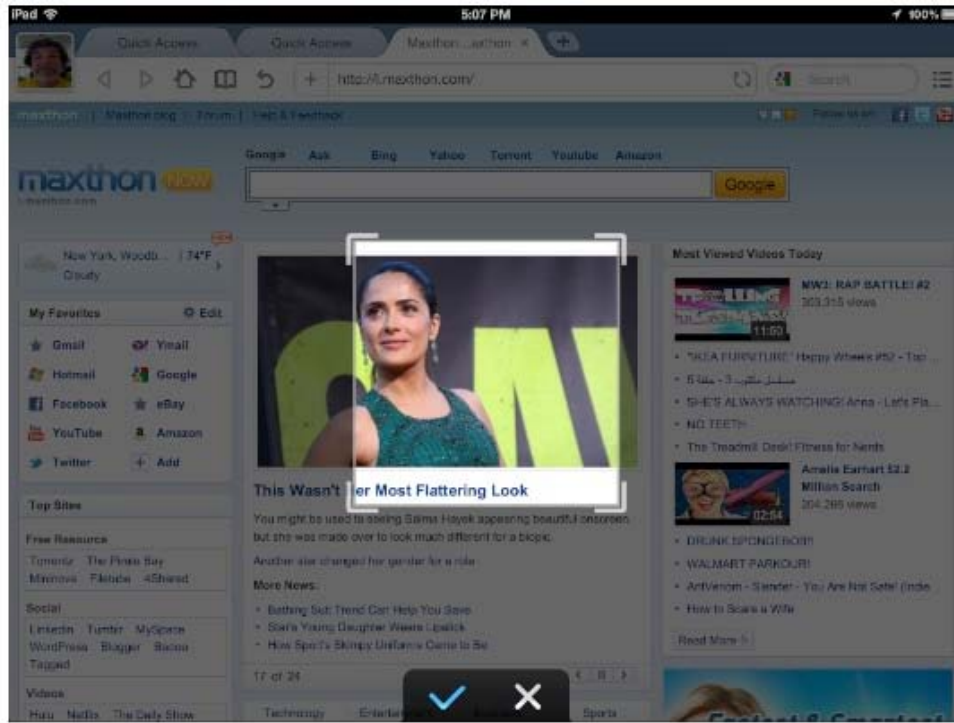
The iPad version of Maxthon

Let's take it from the top. On the top upper right what do you see? There are three bars with dots. To anyone that has upgraded to Mountain Lion that icon signifies the Notification Center. But here it is used to bring up a menu where you have some options.



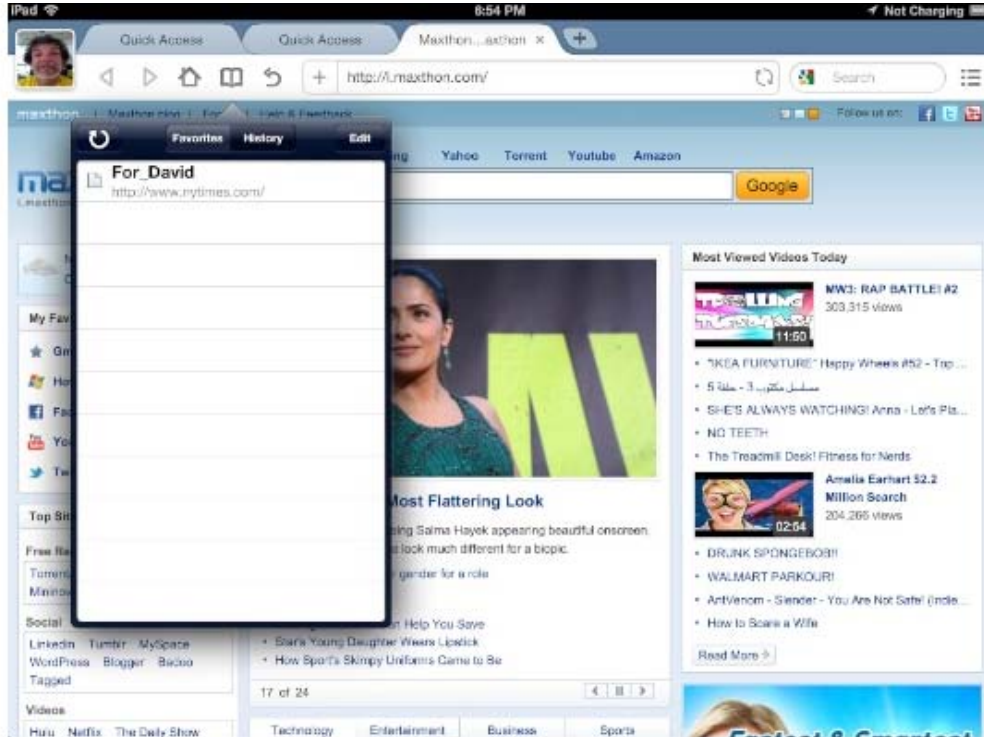
The Option Menu on the iPad

From here you can share to email, Twitter, etc., and sync tabs which I couldn't find on the computer versions. I'm not sure what Download does but Screenshot is interesting and does have a valid use. However, finding this menu wasn't easy for either me or my contact at Maxthon. We still couldn't find where the bookmarks/favorites were found.



Take Screenshots of regions of the iPad screen

I thought that this was very neat and I haven't come across this in any other iPad browser. Apple can [learn](#) a thing or two from this wonderfully useful option. I found it by accident and I was quite impressed. But where are the synced bookmarks? Finding them wasn't easy but that's only because I'm dense.



Under the Book Icon

It was under the book icon all the time, which I'm pretty sure is an Apple convention. Trust me to miss the one convention that they got right. Oh well...

Would I Use It?

I most certainly would. With a whole lot being borrowed from the open-source bits of Google development and the knowledge that Chrome is on its way out of the Mac market, this can wind up to be quite a useful browser. I wouldn't say that is today, but in my very extensive discussions with reps from Maxthon, I believe that they are committed to doing what it takes to crack the Mac market and will update and update until Maxthon really cooks.

We are at the birth of a new browser and one that has the potential of being really, really good. Maxthon has the talent. What they don't have is a knowledge of things Mac, such as icons, verbiage, conventions, and what the average Mac user expects to see on a screen. What they do have is one out of every five emails telling them that they need a Mac version. They can learn what they have to. I just hope they don't have to go through the somewhat typical barrage of Mac folks sending emails relating to them a scatological version of the end product of the digestive system when it comes to a reaction to their browser. That's disheartening to everyone and please don't do it.

Their heart is in the right place, they want to make a browser that can end up to be magical. Maxthon has the talent to do it. And when was the last time you were present at the birth of anything that can grow up to be something really important?