

•By Mike Wallinga <mikew@mymac.com>•

I WANT MY FREE INTERNET!!!

Over on the Wintel side of things, the word "free" is the current fad. The "free PC" movement is becoming increasingly popular—if a customer buys a cheap PC, he or she is eligible for a number of rebates, the sum of which equals the cost of the PC itself. Often, these rebates include a very large rebate from an Internet service provider, such as CompuServe or Prodigy, which you only receive if you agree to subscribe to their service for three years or so. There is a similar concept for Mac users, too—FreeMac.com, <<http://www.freemac.com>> offers a "free" iMac if you amass enough of the rebates and agree to their conditions. But there are still other "free" movements for Windows users that aren't available for Mac users, and I hope that the situation changes soon.

Juno, at <<http://www.juno.com>>, has offered free email for Windows users for a couple of years, but seemingly has never even considered a Mac-compatible version of their service. It's a straightforward experience; download the software, install it on your computer, and use the proprietary Juno client and phone numbers for your email. It's entirely free; you just have to tolerate ad banners on the email client and a tag line at the end of all email you send. In other words, Juno works very similar to the free email services on the World Wide Web, with the big difference that it's not on the web. And the bigger difference is that it's not on the Mac.

As much as I would like to see a Juno client available for the Mac, I've never complained too loudly about it. As a member of a minority group of the computer world, I've come to accept that there will be some things that third-parties won't produce for my platform. It's not nice, it's not ideal, and it's not always fair, but it's the truth. A recent announcement about another free service currently available only for Windows users prompted me to raise my voice a little, though.

AltaVista <<http://www.altavista.com>> recently announced free World Wide Web

access. Their proprietary software puts ad banners at the bottom of your Web browser, but gives you full, free access to the Internet. As of this writing, AltaVista had made a Windows version available, but was putting Mac and Linux users on hold.

I think that AltaVista has a very good idea; it's worked for email, it should work for WWW access, too. I also think that AltaVista (and Juno) is missing out on a big opportunity by not opening this offer up to Mac users. Thousands of iMac users have bought their new Apples specifically to get them on the Internet quickly and easily, and now there would be a possibility that they could do that for free! Think of it: you pay \$1,200 for an iMac and \$200 for a printer, and, with the iMac's bundled software, free email via Juno, and free Internet access via AltaVista, many people would never have to spend anything on their computer after their initial investment. Wow.

Not developing Mac versions of practical software with a wide appeal may have been a sound business decision when Juno first rolled out its email client, because Apple was teetering on the brink of extinction. But that is obviously not the case anymore, and there are countless numbers of people who are buying new iMacs and wanting to use the Internet. Why can't Juno and AltaVista see the opportunity that I see?

SOME NEW, GOOD MAC ANNOUNCEMENTS

It's nice to see that there are some new and exciting developments for Mac users, too. I'm looking forward to the grand opening of MacLaunch <<http://www.maclaunch.com>> , an Internet portal similar to [Snap.com](http://www.snap.com), [Go.com](http://www.go.com), Netscape's [NetCenter](http://www.netcenter.com), and others, but with a Mac-centric twist. It may turn out to be the site that actually sells me on portals (right now, I still start up my web browsers with a blank page).

Also, I have extremely high hopes for a new Mac print-based publication, called MacLiving. There was a preview issue #0 given out at Macworld in July, and the first issues should be available soon. I like the writing and style of MacLiving's website <<http://www.maclivingdaily.com>> and I hope that the print publication is just as excellent and successful.

That's it from me this month. Talk to you again next time!

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Websites mentioned:

<<http://www.freemac.com>>
<<http://www.juno.com>>
<<http://www.altavista.com>>
<<http://www.maclaunch.com>>
<<http://www.maclivingdaily.com>>

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