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**PERSONAL  
TECHNOLOGY**

By WALTER S. MOSSBERG



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## New Tool Cleans Up The Messy Business Of Web Research

*March 18, 2004; Page B1*

It's pretty easy to find things on the Web these days using Google or other search engines. But it's not so easy to capture, save and organize the information you find for later reference offline, especially if you're doing significant research.

Some people print out the relevant Web pages, but that can take a lot of paper and ink. Others cut and paste important passages into a word processor, a slow and clumsy method. Still others save the Web pages as files to their hard disk. But, depending on the method you use and how good your file system is, these saved pages can be hard to locate and open later.

Now, a new company based in Cambridge, Mass., Onfolio Inc., has come up with an inexpensive piece of software, also called Onfolio, which aims to solve this problem.

The software integrates seamlessly with the dominant Internet Explorer browser, and allows you to quickly store whole Web pages, pictures, snippets of text from the Web and other material, in a way that makes it a snap to find later.

Onfolio costs \$29.95, and can be downloaded at [www.onfolio.com](http://www.onfolio.com). It requires Windows XP or 2000, and Internet Explorer version 5.5 or later. A Professional Edition that allows you to publish customized reports from the material you capture is \$79.95. Before buying Onfolio, you can download a free trial version that has all the product's features but expires in 30 days.

I have been testing Onfolio, and I like it. Despite a few minor downsides, it does what it promises and can make a huge difference in the process of doing research on the Web. I especially like the user

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**ABOUT WALT MOSSBERG**

Walt Mossberg is the author and creator of the weekly Personal Technology column in The Wall Street Journal, which has appeared every Thursday since 1991. The goal of the column is "to take the consumer's side in the struggle to master the machine, to deliver a weekly dose of useful information in plain English, but in a way that never condescends to our readers just because they can't tell one chip from another."

Mr. Mossberg also writes the Mossberg Solution, which premiered April 9, 2002, and Mossberg's Mailbox. He is also a contributing editor of Smart Money, the Journal's monthly magazine, where he writes the Mossberg Report column. On television, Mr. Mossberg appears frequently as a technology commentator for the CNBC network.

Mr. Mossberg has been a reporter and editor at the Journal since 1970. He is based in the Journal's Washington, D.C., office, where he spent 18 years covering national and

interface, which is clear and clean, and gives users multiple ways to do many key tasks so they can fit the product to their own styles of working.

Onfolio takes the form of a special panel on the left side of the Internet Explorer browser, with three main sections. At the top of this panel is a toolbar with a few simple command icons. Below that is a section showing how your information has been organized into groupings called collections and subgroups called folders. Finally, the bulk of the panel is a list of the Web pages, images, text snippets and other material you have saved in whatever collection or subfolder is selected at the top.

Capturing information is simple. You just navigate to a Web page of interest and click on Onfolio's capture button, which appears both at the top of the Onfolio panel, and in the upper right of the browser's main window.

Onfolio then pops up a window asking whether you want to save the page as a link, which would require you to be online to see it in the future, or as a "local copy," which is a file to whatever hard disk you want that can be viewed offline. You can also choose a collection or folder in which to store the page, add your own comments about the page, name it whatever you want and even assign it a color-coded flag. You then click Save and the page appears as an entry in the Onfolio panel.

You can also capture pages by hitting the F9 key, or by right-clicking on the page you want.

If you want to save only an image from a page, you just right-click on it and select "Capture image to Onfolio." To save a passage of text, you highlight the passage you want and right-click to select "Capture snippet to Onfolio." Or, you can just drag text passages and images onto the Onfolio panel.

Onfolio also allows you to capture files and text passages from your hard disk, from programs like Microsoft Office, or from other Web browsers with which it doesn't integrate.

To do these things you use a module called the Desktop Bar, which closely resembles the Onfolio panel in Internet Explorer, but functions separately.

In my tests, I was able to assemble collections and folders that included a mix of Web links, locally stored Web pages, text snippets, images and non-Web files. I was amazed to be able to save perfectly formatted tables yanked from Web sites.

Once you have all this stuff, what can you do with it? Well, if you click on any saved item, it appears right in the browser. If you assemble a large amount of material, you can use Onfolio's built-in search function to rapidly find any term or phrase in any of the documents.

Or, you can export the material to files on your hard disk and e-mail it to others, right from within Onfolio, in a variety of formats. If you have the Pro edition, you can turn the material into personalized, formatted reports.

So, what are the downsides to Onfolio? In my tests, I couldn't capture some Web content that was in Macromedia Flash format, including on Onfolio's own Web site. Some of the reports Onfolio created were blocked by my security software when I tried to open them, though that could be fixed by adjusting the settings. And a feature in which Onfolio supposedly keeps track of Web searches simply never worked for me.

But these are minor woes. Onfolio works well and fills a real need. If you do a lot of Web research, it's worth the \$30.

international affairs before turning his attention to technology.

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