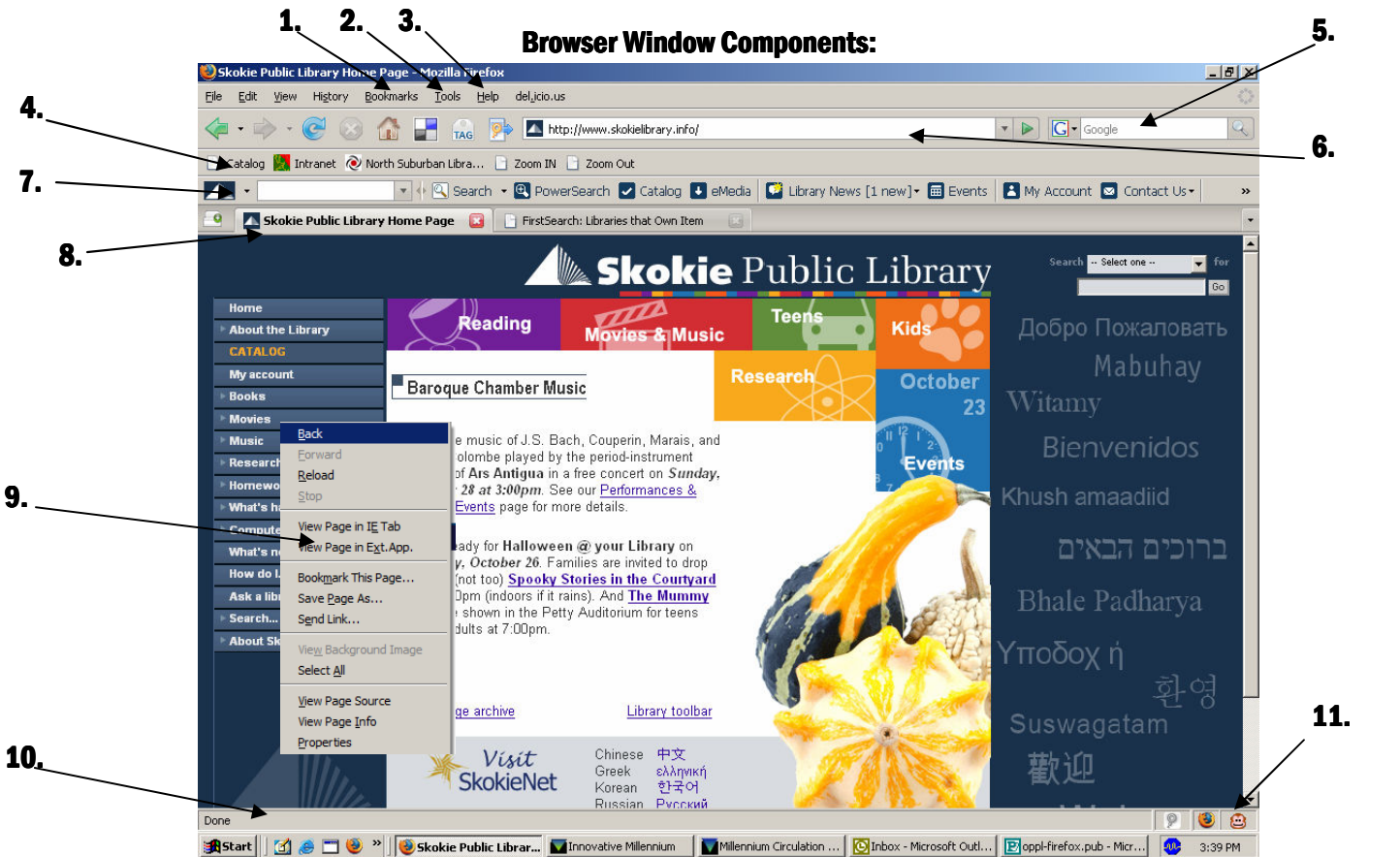




## Extreme Browser Makeover—Using Mozilla Firefox

Toby Greenwalt, Adult Services Librarian  
tgreenwalt@skokiellibrary.info

This handout is meant to provide a basic overview of the certain key features of Mozilla Firefox and Internet Explorer 7. While the image below is from Firefox, the features listed (aside from a few graphical tweaks) are the same.



1. **Bookmarks:** Under this tab, you can bookmark your favorite pages, and sort them into relevant groupings. You can also import links that you've compiled and exported from other browsers.
2. **Tools:** Monitors your browser customizations, enables you to clear out private data, and configures other browser settings.
3. **Help:** Use this tab to check the version of your browser. Firefox also has a useful section covering the transition from past versions of Internet Explorer.
4. **Bookmarks Toolbar:** Add your most frequently visited pages to this toolbar for 1-click access at any time.
5. **Search Bar:** Instead of visiting [www.google.com](http://www.google.com), you can now search directly from this window. Use the pull-down menu to change your search options, and click "Manage Search Engines" to add more of your favorites. (See the next page for more info.)
6. **Address Bar/Security Indicator:** When visiting a secure site, be sure to look for the "lock" icon on the right side of the address bar.
7. **Library Toolbar:** Download this extension from [tools.skokiellibrary.info](http://tools.skokiellibrary.info), and get 1-click access to the catalog and other features of the Library website.
8. **Tabs:** One of the key features of this new breed of browsers, tabs enable you to have multiple web pages open in one browser window. You can sort these open pages by dragging the tabs, or close individual tabs by clicking on its corresponding "X."
9. **Right-Click Menu:** Like many other applications, right-clicking on a page activates a context-sensitive menu. In Firefox, this can allow you to cut-and-paste images or text, open new pages, add a page to your bookmarks folder, or activate certain browser extensions.
10. **Status Bar:** Indicates if a page has loaded properly, or if a certain web feature is not working properly.
11. **Extension Status (Firefox only):** Certain extensions (such as Meebo or IE Tab) can be turned on and off. These icons in the bottom left corner of the browser indicate their status.

## Use Extensions to make Firefox even better!



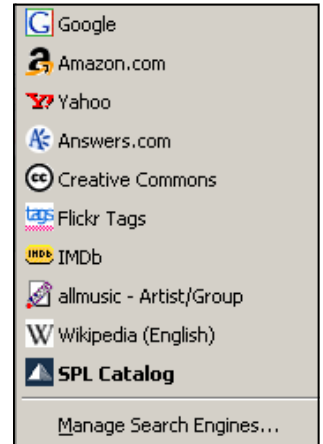
Extensions (also known as Add-ons) enable you to customize Firefox in order to make the browsing experience easier, more efficient, and more fun. Hundreds of extensions are available, but I have found these to be particularly useful in library activities.

### Search Extensions

The search bar is already a standard feature on most modern Internet browsers. Many of them even allow you to pick and choose from a variety of search engines. Firefox takes things a step further by allowing you to create your own search tools. We have created a Skokie Public Library extension, which you can download at [www.richardkong.net/tools](http://www.richardkong.net/tools).

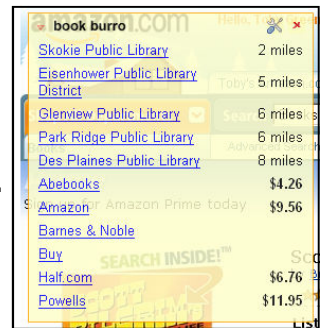
### Context Search (<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/240>)

One way to make the search bar even more useful is to employ an add-on such as Context Search. Context Search allows you to highlight a piece of text within a webpage and search for that term by right-clicking on it. You can choose any of the search engines in your main search bar. This saves you from typing in search terms, making web searches much faster.



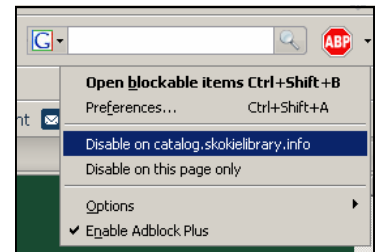
### Book Burro (<http://www.bookburro.org>)

Book Burro is a hardy little beast that checks on the availability and price of books as you browse commercial sites like Amazon.com. The extension can also search from a pre-made list of library catalogs, or use WorldCat to search libraries near a ZIP code of your choosing. Book Burro also works with the Syndetics module, to enable cross-checks from the catalog. A word of warning: This ZIP code feature has an odd quirk to it, where it seems to have a "blind spot" directly over the entered ZIP. Entering 60077, for example, shows everything around Skokie, but not Skokie. We can hope that they're working on this bug, but in the meantime, use a nearby ZIP like 60712 to call up the Skokie Library's holdings.



### AdBlock Plus (<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/1865>)

Installing AdBlock Plus helps to stop a large percentage of the pop-ups and extra advertising that shows up on many websites. Blocking them will make for a less cluttered browsing experience, and cause many pages to load more quickly. Sometimes AdBlock will get a bit overzealous in its efforts to keep your browser pop-up free. A few notable examples of this include the Library Intranet and the Syndetics catalog module. You can "whitelist" these items by clicking on the ABP stop sign in the top corner of your browser. Select "Disable on <name of website> here," and that site will be unblocked. The stop sign will turn green to indicate that AdBlock Plus is off.



### Del.icio.us (<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/3615>)

Now that you've finished Thing 6, you should be an expert in Del.icio.us, right? This extension enables you to add to your social bookmarking account right from your browser. Any time you wish to bookmark a page, simply click the Tag button, add your annotations, and click Save. You can click the del.icio.us checkerboard icon to visit your collection of bookmarks.



Looking for more extensions? Of course you are. Check the next page.

## What? More extensions?

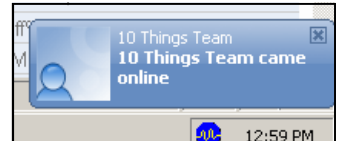
### IETab (<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/1419>)

While my love for Firefox knows no bounds, it does have a few limitations. Every once in a while, certain pages won't render properly in Firefox, or simply won't open at all. (This is particularly true for a sites that employ ActiveX controls.) Installing IETab allows you to switch to Internet Explorer without exiting Firefox. If you run into a troublesome page, simply click on the Firefox logo in the bottom corner of the browser (see image at right, and you'll switch rendering engines. (This is also helpful if you're a web designer, as it enables you to check browser compatibility with one click.)



### Meebo (<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/5700>)

Do you Instant Message? Would you like to use multiple IM clients in one place? After downloading the Meebo extension, you can manage your IM usernames and receive notifications of new messages directly in your browser. Using the extension also gives you a better warning of when new messages come in, illustrated by the image at right. A window will briefly pop up in the bottom of your screen, and the Meebo indicator (see above picture, left of the Firefox icon) will tell you how many messages you have pending.



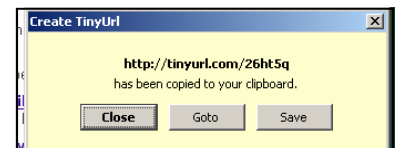
### Tab Mix Plus (<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/1122>)

If you've gotten the hang of tabbed browsing, Tab Mix Plus will added extra features to your tabs. This changes the status as follows (see image, from top to bottom). You can *Protect* a tab (prevent it from closing), *Lock* the tab (prevent it from navigating to another web-site) or *Freeze* the tab (both protect and lock it). You can activate these options by right-clicking on the tab itself. You can also use Tab Mix Plus to bring up lists of tabs that you've closed, in case you accidentally closed a page in the course of clicking through tabs.



### TinyURL Creator (<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/126>)

Web addresses have a tendency to get rather unwieldy, making it hard to pass links along to those who need them. TinyUrl.com has long been a tool for many web users, due to its ability to shrink URLs down to a more manageable size. By adding the extension, you don't have to copy the address and head over to TinyURL. Simply right-click on the page, select "Create TinyURL for this page," and the add-on will do the rest. It will even copy the new tiny URL to the clipboard for you!



This is by no means a comprehensive list of extensions. Different extensions work for different people, so don't be afraid to search for extensions on your own. You can visit the main page by clicking on "Tools" in your Firefox toolbar, selecting "Add-ons," and clicking the "Get More Extensions" link. If you don't like a particular extension, you can always uninstall it by visiting that Add-ons menu.

### Suggested Reading

- Hipson, Peter D. Firefox and Thunderbird: Beyond Browsing and Email. Indianapolis: Que, 2006.
- McFarlane, Nigel. Firefox Hacks. Sebastopol, CA: O'Reilly Media, 2005.
- <https://addons.mozilla.org/> (browse add-ons and search plugins)
- [cdeweese.blogspot.com/2006/01/how-to-add-your-library-catalog-to.html](http://cdeweese.blogspot.com/2006/01/how-to-add-your-library-catalog-to.html) (how to make a search plugin)
- [http://www.libsuccess.org/index.php?title=Web\\_Browser\\_Extensions](http://www.libsuccess.org/index.php?title=Web_Browser_Extensions)
- [www.mozilla.com/en-US/support/](http://www.mozilla.com/en-US/support/) (FAQs and support for the browser)
- [www.richardkong.net/tools](http://www.richardkong.net/tools) (other SPL-related plugins for Firefox)