

SURFPACK

Reviewer's Guide: Surfpack

Organize all your web-based content in one place on your desktop.

Why Surfpack?

Surfpack is a new type of program that integrates various traditional software categories – Internet portals, RSS aggregators, and bookmark managers – into an effective combination with the following competitive advantages:

- **Compared to online portals:** no registration required, and no corporation is seeing what you have added to your pages, pages load instantly even there's no Internet connection established, and no pop-ups or advertising.
- **Compared to RSS aggregators:** supports various feed formats and surfing tools, resides in your preferred browser, provides a more readable newspaper-like feeds style.
- **Compared to bookmark managers:** resides within the browser, features various modules like Quick Links (keeps the most favorite links on the page), Smart Favorites (an instant access to the most visited sites), and Check Later (keeps the link on the page until you click on it).

The image shows a screenshot of Microsoft Internet Explorer displaying the Surfpack interface. The browser title bar reads "Tatyana's Startpage" and "Microsoft Internet Explorer". The address bar shows "http://localhost:8171/". The Surfpack interface includes a navigation bar with "Tatyana's Startpage", "Entertainment", "Home", and "Business". The main content area features a weather widget for "Grenchen Switzerland" showing "27 C" and "Watch current conditions". A "Quick Links 1" section lists "TV Program", "Fake or Foto?", "TV Program 2", and "Save Web Pages". A "Check Later" section lists "Launching a Software Application" and "Google". A "Read newsfeeds in newspaper-like style" callout points to a news feed section. A "Search with favorite search engines" callout points to a search bar. A "Read friend's LiveJournal,..." callout points to a LiveJournal link. A "...daily horoscopes, and more fresh news" callout points to a "Horoscope" section for "Aries" dated "Saturday 28 May 2005". A "Restore URLs broken by email client" callout points to a "www.livejournal.com/..." link. A "Keep most favorite links on hand" callout points to the "Quick Links" section. A "Resides within your browser" callout points to the browser's address bar.

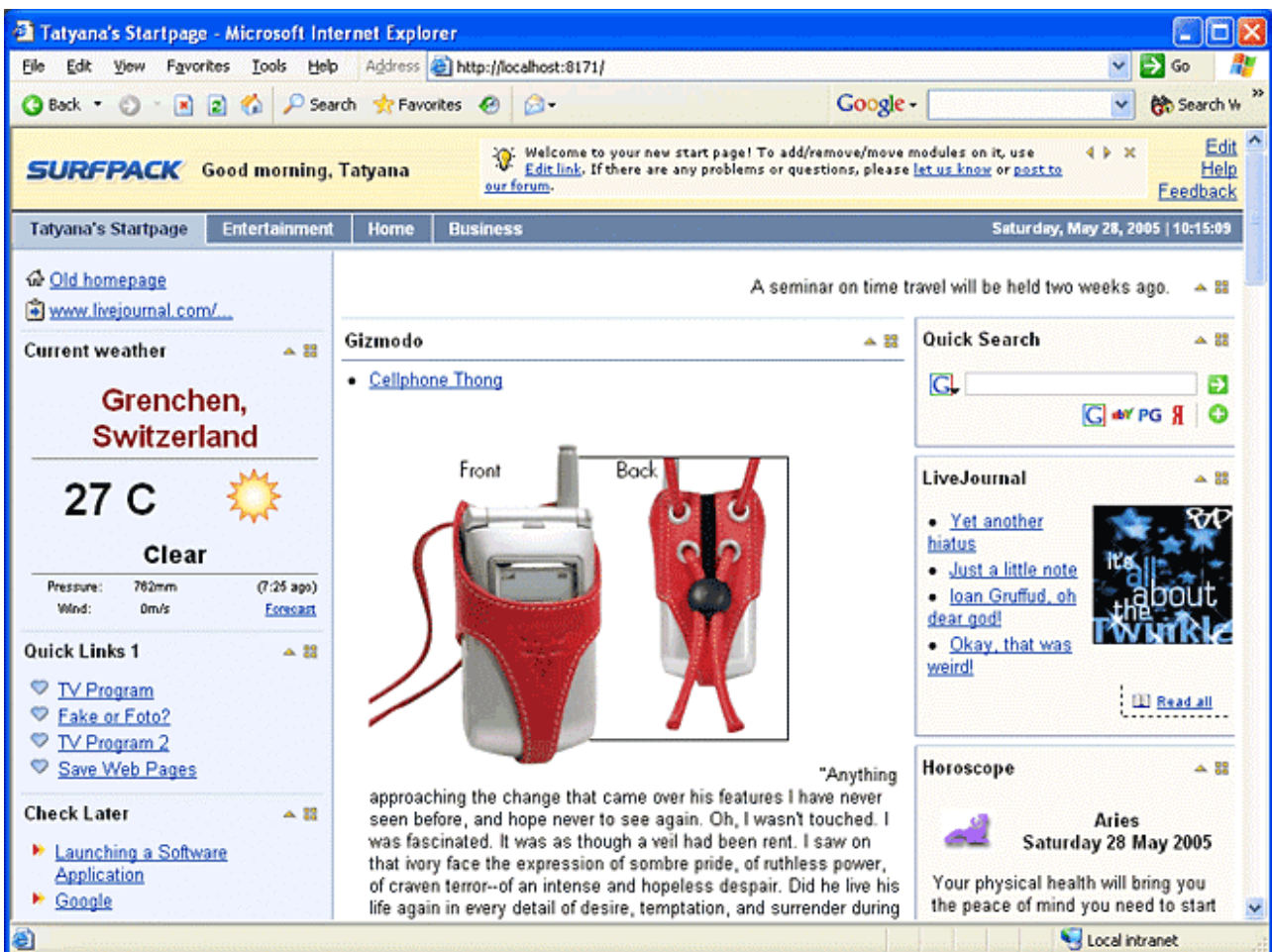
Getting Started

After installation, Surfpack's Welcome Wizard guides the user through the initial customization that allows you to set user's name, additional topics, skin and current weather location and add Surfpack to Quick Launch. (Screenshots of the wizard are available on <http://www.surfpack.com/press/>)



Overall Look

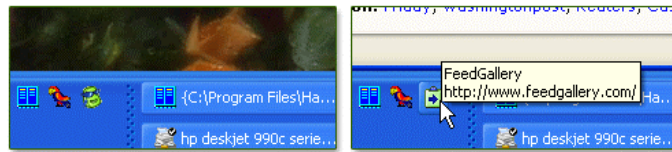
This is Surfpack's page opened in the browser.



The **tray icon** provides fast access to Surfpack's pages and options.




The **Quick Launch icon** is integrated with the Clipboard module. If the text in the clipboard contains a URL, clicking on the icon opens this URL. If the URL is broken by the email client, Clipboard module restores it.

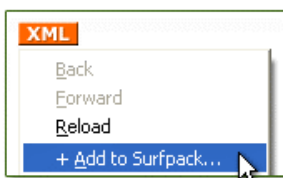


Web Modules

The following modules are included with the program:

- **RSS Reader**
A newspaper-style reader for the two most popular feed formats, RSS and Atom. All known RSS versions are supported.
- **Bookmark modules**
One-click access to your favorite websites, include Quick Links, Smart Favorites, Typed Links, and Check Later modules.
- **Search interfaces**
Fast access to favorite search engines and online dictionaries – more than 120 engines included.
- **Current weather conditions**
Temperature, wind, pressure and sky conditions based on local airport reports.
- **Broken URL restoring**
Have you ever tried to cut and paste long URLs into your email program, only to find that they have pasted incorrectly? The Clipboard URL module will fix this for you.
- **Startpage Guard**
If, by chance, your startpage is modified by spyware or Trojan software, this will restore your own startpage.
- **ICQ Online**
Watch online status of your ICQ contacts.
- **Custom Modules**
Add any given HTML or JavaScript code to the page.
- **Personal Daily Horoscope**
- **Quotes of the moment**
- **Pictures of the day, cartoons, webcams, etc.**

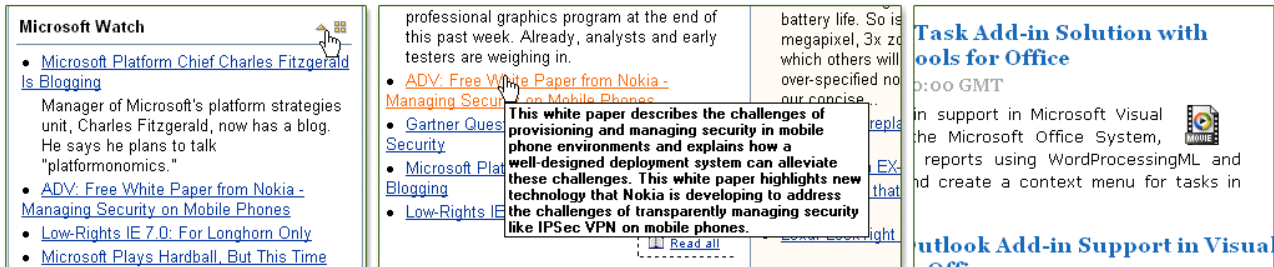
 About 2000+ RSS news channels are included with the standard Surfpack installation, and more can be downloaded from online feeds gallery www.feedgallery.com. Users of Surfpack can add any channel from www.feedgallery.com with one click.



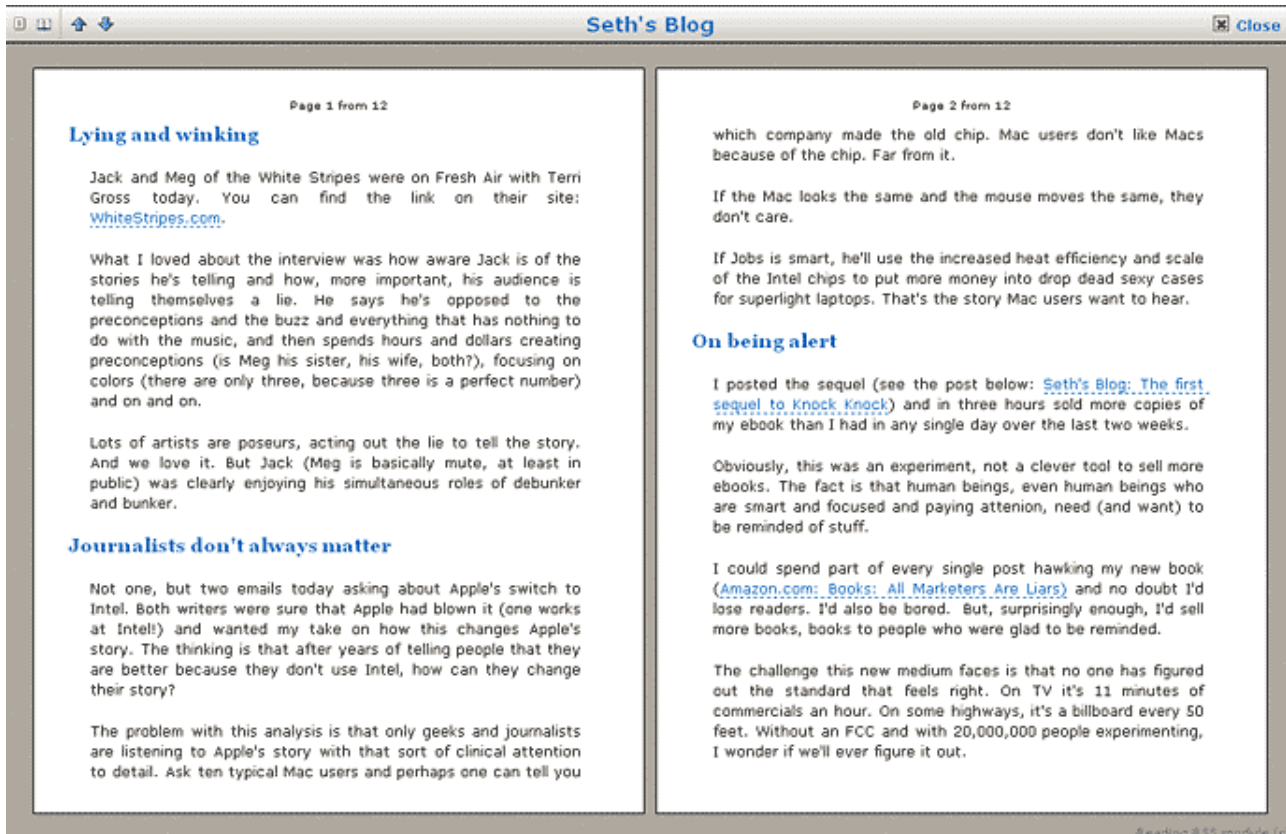
Use the **Add to Surfpack...** item in the context menu of Internet Explorer and Firefox to add any URL to Quick Links, Check Later modules, and to add RSS/Atom newsfeeds to the page.

Read RSS Feeds in Newspaper-like Style

Unlike most of desktop RSS aggregators which follow Outlook style, Surfpack displays RSS feeds in a newspaper-like format. News headlines are grouped on one page for quick review. You can choose to display news headlines only, or full texts of the first 1-3 entries, for example. A short description is displayed in the cursor hint when the cursor hovers over the entry headline. If the newsfeed contains media enclosures, such as video or downloads, the corresponding icon links to the URL of the enclosure.



To read a channel, you can either click on the headline to open the post on the author's website or click **Read All** and to use Surfpack's two-column reader with font and layout settings optimized for reading from screen.



The same two-columns reading layout is used on www.feedgallery.com to display news feeds. Click to see live examples:

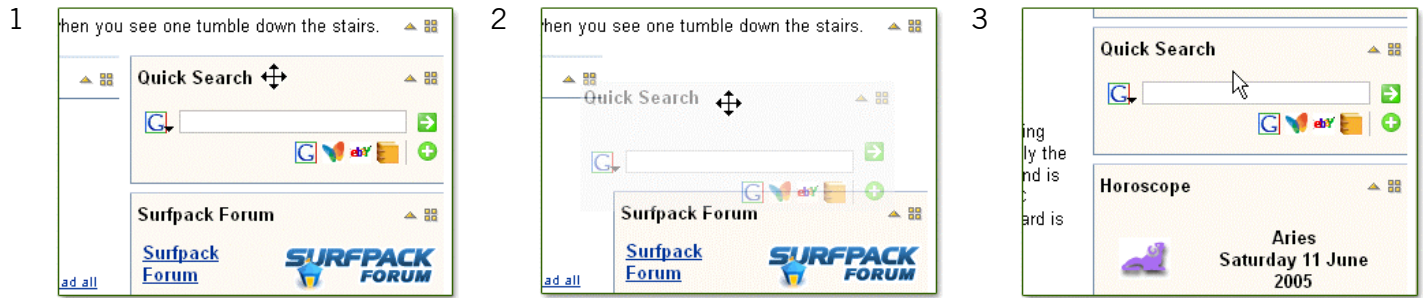
Boing Boing: <http://www.feedgallery.com/channel/rss/news1019.htm>

The Register: <http://www.feedgallery.com/channel/rss/news45.htm>

Google Watch: <http://www.feedgallery.com/channel/rss/news8815.htm>

Edit Modules on the Page

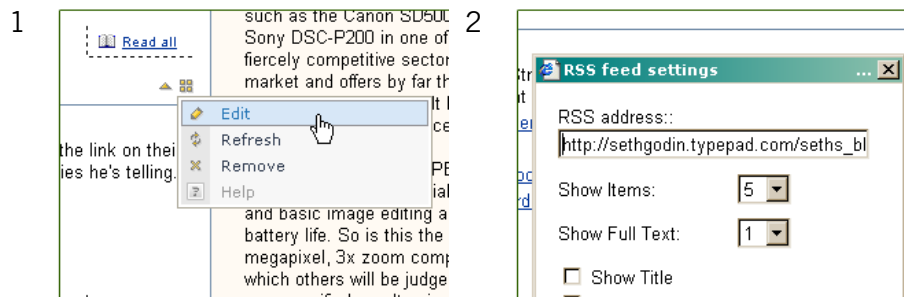
You can move modules around the page using drag-n-drop.



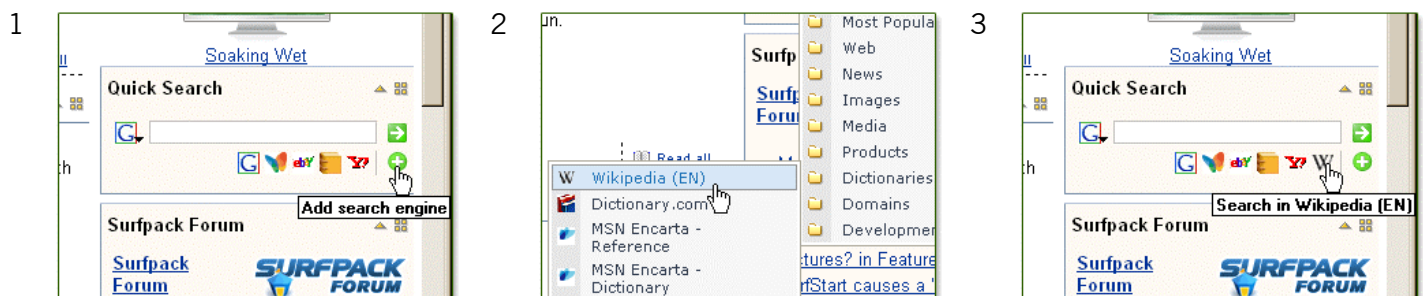
After reading the module, you can collapse it (a module expands when new content is available).



To edit, refresh, or remove a module, use module's menu. The **Edit** menu item opens module's settings form.

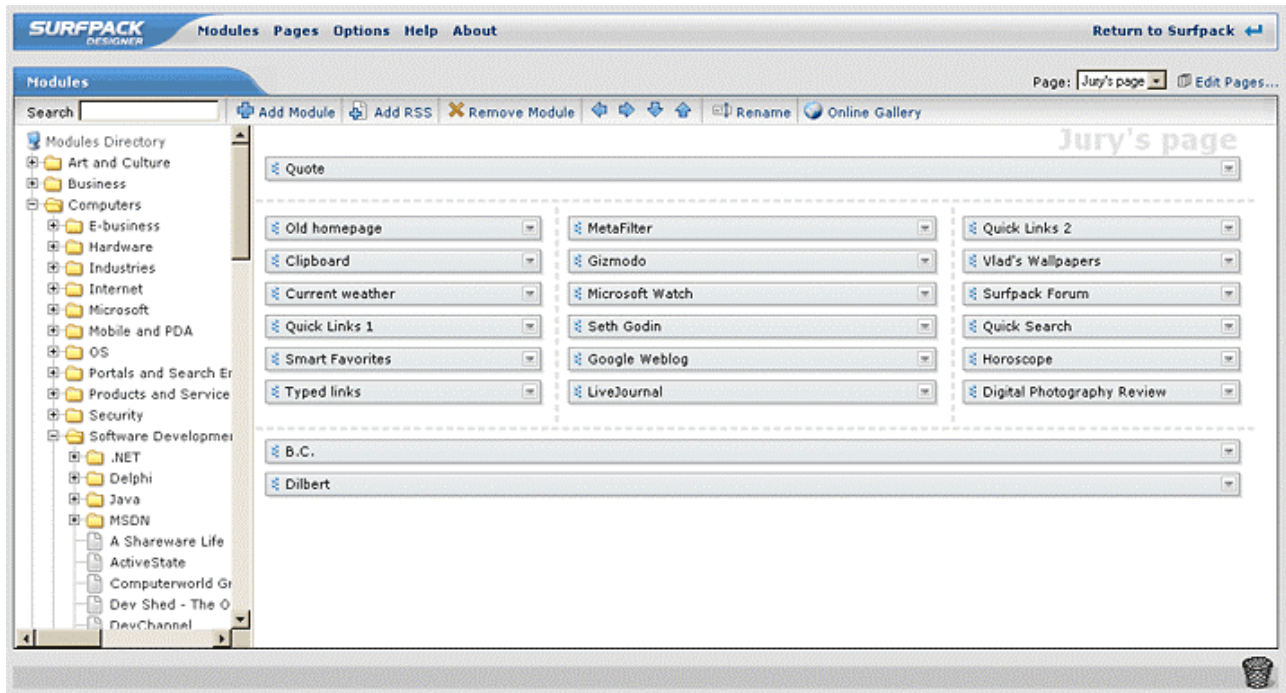


Some modules use inline pop-up menus instead of separate settings form.

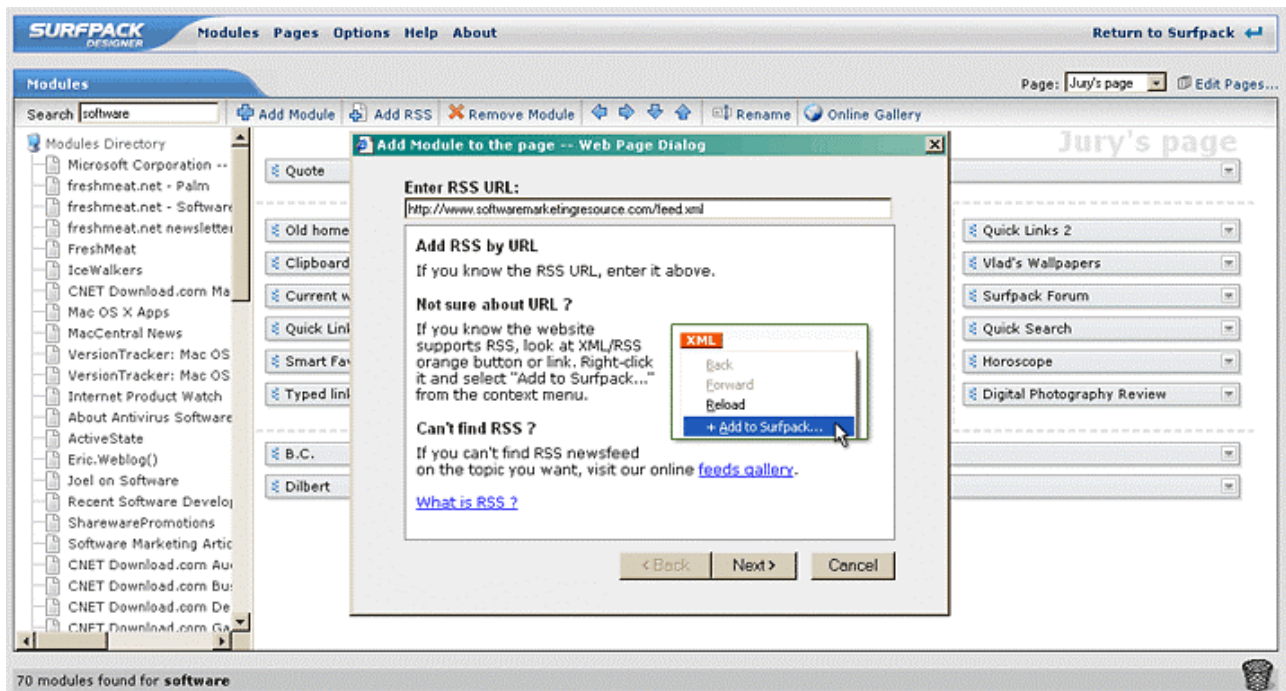


Select Content Modules

To select newsfeeds from the Surfpack directory, add new modules, add/edit pages and change settings, use the Surfpack Designer Page:

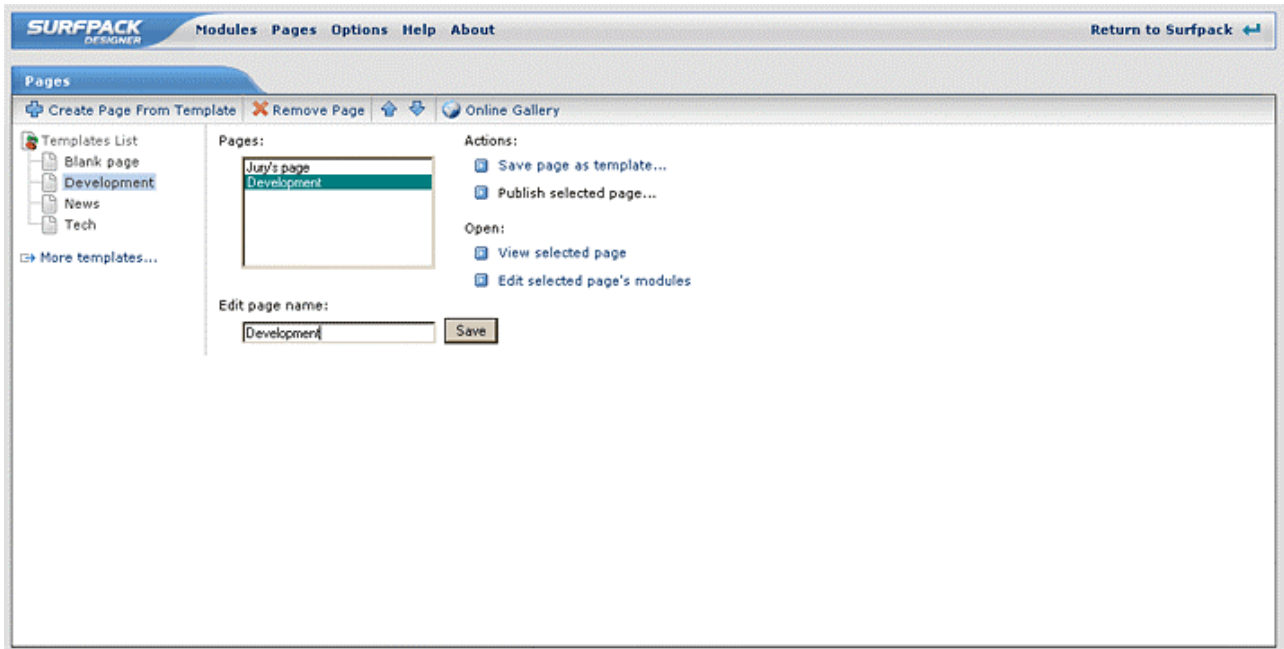


If the newsfeed is not presented in the directory, use **Add RSS** button or look for it in the www.feedgallery.com online directory.



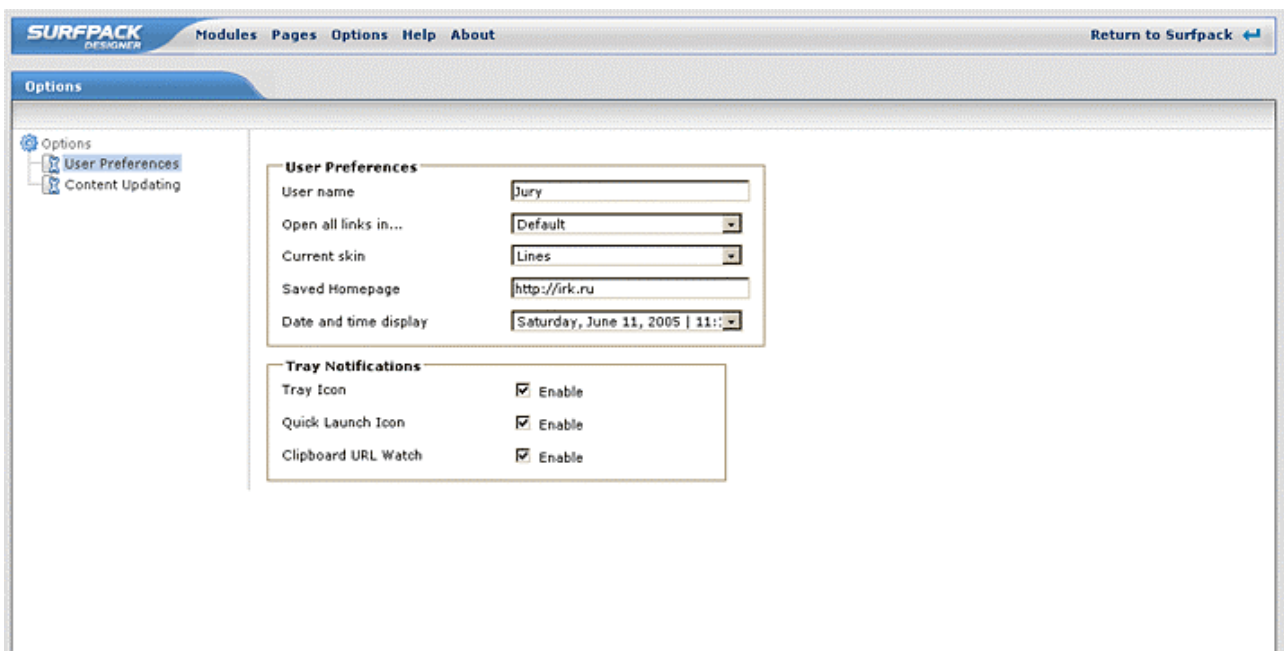
Create Custom Pages

To create Surfpack pages for any number of special topics, you can use predefined templates or a blank page. **Entertainment, Home, and Business** template pages with newsfeeds on corresponding themes are presented as examples. Any page created can be saved as a template and the next Surfpack version will allow you to share your template pages with friends by email or via a gallery on the Surfpack website.



Options

You can choose a name to display on the Surfpack's page ("Good morning, Army"), change current skin, choose to open all modules' links in the same or in a new window. When, for best results, you make Surfpack your startpage, it keeps a link to your previous homepage. If you un-install Surfpack, your previous homepage is restored. You can also choose date and time format for the clock on the page.



Make HTML Sing

The new API is HTML, and the new winners in the application development marketplace will be the people who can make HTML sing. – [Joel Spolsky](#).

A web browser is the best place to display web news, favorites, surfing tools, and other web content. At the same time, because of numerous HTML limitations, this task becomes a challenge for an interface developer. Surfpack overcomes these limitations by using advanced DHTML and JavaScript techniques known as AJAX (www.ajaxmatters.com) and providing drag-n-drop, pop-up menus, refresh without reload, instant forms submit, fast treeview implementations, and full support of all major browsers - Internet Explorer™, Firefox, and Opera.

Technically, Surfpack is a small localhost server that runs on the user's desktop. Having no interface of its own, it compiles an HTML page and displays it in your browser (like, for example Google Desktop). Surfpack provides an environment for content modules of all major types. Besides RSS and Atom feeds, it also reads XML, Javascript and HTML feeds, with custom plug-in options. As a desktop application, Surfpack supports any plug-ins made in HTML format. Plug-in specifications for developers are included in SDK (available on the website).

More Features to Come

In the near future, Surfpack will also offer the following modules and features:

- Financial modules
- Mailbox module
- TV program module
- To-do module
- Outlook tasks and calendar module
- eBay watch module
- Group several RSS channels in one filter
- Module for parsing any HTML page
- Weather.com current conditions and forecast
- Desktop alerts and notifications
- New scriptable modules and filters architecture
- Synchronization between different computers

...and much more.

Requirements

Windows – Surfpack's engine is a 32-bit Windows® application and runs under Windows® 95, Windows® 98, Windows® ME, Windows NT® 4.0, Windows® 2000, Windows® 2003 and Windows® XP.

Browser – Surfpack's DHTML interface works under Internet Explorer 5.0+, Mozilla Firefox 1.0+, Opera 7.5+. JavaScript should be enabled at least for Local Intranet zone.

Internet – HTML page generated by Surfpack is accessible in offline mode, while may display outdated content (stored locally). Internet connection is required to update web modules content.

Availability

Surfpack version 2.0 is available as a 30-days trial download. Softshape offers multiple-user discounts on licenses for Surfpack, starting at USD \$29.99 for a single-user license. The details are available at <http://www.surfpack.com/order.html>.

Surfpack version 1.0 is available as freeware. It has no designer and very limited editing options comparing with Surfpack 2.0. This Reviewer's Guide is based on the Surfpack version 2.0.128.

More information about Surfpack: <http://www.surfpack.com/>

Surfpack Press Package: <http://www.surfpack.com/press/>

Direct download URL: <http://www.surfpack.com/download/surfpack2.exe>

The latest version of this Reviewer's Guide is available on <http://www.surfpack.com/press/>. On this page, you'll also find all the screenshots in their original resolution.

Contact Information

Jury Gerasimov

Softshape

www.softshape.com

e-mail: jury@softshape.com

#

Free evaluation license is available for the reviewer on request.