**Setting Up a Web Test System**

Several browsers do support JavaScript. Recent statistics (these statistics keep changing and should be verified on the web : http://marketshare.hitslink.com) shows that Internet Explorer and Firefox account for closer to 95% of the browser market share. With Safari following slightly (3%). Netscape browser held about 1% and Opera about 0.5 %, which was about the same as all the other browsers (including Konqueror) had together.

The best strategy for testing a website is dependant on what the audience of the website is. If you really have a high portion of MAC users then you do have to do extensive testing with the Safari browser, since this browser comes by default with recent versions of MAC OS X.

Internet Explorer continues to dominate the market irrespective of website you are using. Even on more open-source-centric websites. Hence you need Internet Explorer and a Windows system is required for testing or at least a Virtual PC or a VMware with a Windows virtual machine.

All Mozilla browsers share the same codebase (with minimal differences though) for rendering and also for JavaScript, thus it does not matter which platform you are using. Thus you can use Firefox on the same Window machine that Internet Explorer has been installed.

Opera runs under Windows as well as Linux and MAC. So the Windows partition can get another browser.

Two other browsers that need mentioning are Safari and Konqueror. Both browsers share the same codebase, more or less. Safari uses the KHTML engine which is at the heart of the Konqueror rendering.

In organising a good test system, two options come in mind:

* Set up a Linux box or a Linux Virtual machine with KDE and Konqueror
* Set up a MAC system. You can purchase an Intel MAC with BootCamp to dual-boot Windows and OS X.

Note, the larger the website gets, the more important it is to support as many target systems as possible. Regarding Internet Explorer, version 5.x is almost extinct and versions 4 and earlier are long gone. Thus testing in IE6 and above is acceptable in most cases. It is desirable to test in different versions of IE, but this usually requires one windows system per each IE installation. Though of late a parallel solution has been found.

Finally, test your website and applications built within the site with JavaScript first enabled and then disabled. Core functionality should be maintained when JavaScript is disabled (**you may have to provide alternate solution for core functionality without JavaScript**), and the rendering of your pages should degrade gracefully.

Alexander Adu-Sarkodie

MSc Telematics. MSc Engineering.. Teach. Cert. Dip. Russ. Lang.

*MBCsS MIfL AMIAgrEng*