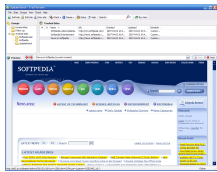


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Update Patrol

Patrol and Report

Get the latest news on the Internet

I was always amazed by how true is the saying: "Bad news travel fast". It has been demonstrated scientifically that the saying is true no matter the field of activity. Once it is out, bad news will travel light speed and will definitely reach competition's ears. But with the Internet at our disposal, good news' turn has come and with the proper tools, you can learn about it as fast as about the bad one. Update Patrol (the old Delta Spy redesigned) will make a compromise and bring you any news at the speed of a mouse click. Forget about RSS readers that only bring you news if the source website supports the technology. They are very good in retrieving the headlines, but run short of detecting any change in the website's page. Update Patrol on the other hand is designed to constantly monitor the websites you want and alert you when a change, no matter how small, takes effect. This way, you can always be up to date with the latest news, irrespective of their nature. The price is a mere \$49.95 considering the options made available. The ease of use is on every user's taste and the trial period is 30 days (the only limitation imposed by the publisher) - more than enough to properly test the application. The interface of the software allows even to the neophyte easy access to options and functions with the least effort. The explorer-like looks make it a familiar environment to handle. In the left hand of the screen, there are the groups storing your news sources. Groups can be as many in number as you want and the storage of the items is also limitless. In the right, there are displayed the tracked sites inside the groups. You can give them a name for a better view. This second window gives the necessary information for you to know what is the URL the information is retrieved from, the last check time and date, the last update performed and the scheduling table. Under Groups and Tracked Sites windows, there is the web browser. It is too much to say web browser as it fulfills only the basic functions of a browser, meaning navigation (that is if the link is not set to open in new page; in this case, the page will open in your default web browser). There is no support for tabbed browsing which is pretty detrimental to the application, but I have a hunch that this will be implemented in future releases. A very handy tool made available by the developer is Search. In case you are an update freak, this tool will prove its talents by helping you find a certain monitored website. I have seen cases when the need for monitoring modifications on websites reached hundreds of domains. So you can imagine the effort of taking a look at one of them in particular, if it weren't for a search function of some kind. Adding a site is easy and I'm sure that you have spotted the top left hand option in the application window with no effort. Or, you may have activated the context menu in the Tracked sites window and located the function. There are a number of tabs available whenever you want to track a new site and the user will have to configure the notifications, check scheduling (you can schedule each link to be checked at different time intervals or you can set Update Patrol to update them all at once), enter the login information for websites that require it (email accounts, forums, etc.) and configure the Javascript security. Matching tab is dedicated to advanced users and novices will not understand too much of it. It implies working with regular expressions for a better notification of the software. By means of these expressions (I never quite got them right, but Update Patrol provides a set of rules for using them that is pretty accessible). Thus, you can set up for what kind of changes to be alerted (some pages have counters or change the date, provide a weather forecast, etc.) and which ones to be ignored. The trouble with the regular expressions in Update Patrol is that they are the most important aspect as due to them, you can set the ignore elements and they are not translated into a more human form of use. Once you read the help file's Advanced Options on regular expression syntax at least two times, you will be

able to get a grip on some of the expressions you need. The downside of the regular expressions in Update Patrol is that they are not as reliable as they should. I tried a few ways of ignoring the timestamp on a website and yet be alerted when the version of a software is changed. It may be me, but I did it all according to the help file included and the desired result was not achieved. General Setup settings allow the user to set Update Patrol to start with Windows, change the notification sound (works with any WAV file) and test it, configure the general notifications for checking all the websites, make the network settings and blog layout. The software supports RSS 0.91, 0.92 and 2.0, Atom 0.3 and 1.0 as well as RDF formats. The XML files are checked for changes and then converted into HTML. The HTML layout can be changed by editing the CSS style sheet available. **The Good** Almost everything about the software is good. It silently monitors the web and tracks down any change in the pages you define. The alert time interval can be changed according to your updating needs. Easy to handle and to configure, Update Patrol proved to be stable and extremely handy. For a better distinction of the new elements available on the page, these are highlighted in yellow. The user has the possibility of adding websites in the Follow-up Groups folder. It functions as a sort of favorites or as prioritizing them. The web browser has some issues with the Back button. There were times when returning to the previous page could be done only from the context menu. **The Bad** Mentioning the highlighting color reminded me that there is no option to change the color. The regular expressions, despite the fact that they are hard to swallow, are not as accurate as I expected. Maybe a little more work in that area would bring the application on the right track. I am talking about complex syntax and coding. No matter how good the regular expressions work for you, Update Patrol is not able to track only the changes you want. Some websites automatically generate a quote a day without changing anything else in the page content. It would be nice to have some kind of control over this, too. **The Truth** Update Patrol is stable enough and proved to be a very handy tool when it came to tracking changes on any website on the Web. It promptly notifies you and highlights the changes that have taken effect since the last update. My only beef is with the regular expressions that are practically restricted to the use of advanced users. Despite the help file, beginners and even average users may have some trouble with them. Regarding the control over what changes Update Patrol should track, I think a solution would be applying a grid over the page and letting the user decide about the content in a certain part of the page to be ignored or not. But hey, this may not be the best of options. *Here are some snapshots of the application in action:*