



# Monticello Explorer attracts users, praise

By all accounts, it's a hit.

Since being added to the Web site [monticello.org](http://monticello.org) in April, the multimedia feature Monticello Explorer has attracted a significant number of virtual visitors and garnered high praise in the media.

*“A truly remarkable informative multimedia surfing experience, which boasts attention to detail, intelligent content management and in-depth planning.”*

- FavoriteWebsiteAwards.com  
Site of the Day, June 9

Monticello Explorer offers an array of innovative ways to experience Thomas Jefferson's house and plantation, from 3-D models that allow Internet users to tour the house room by room to an interactive map that shows the buildings, roads, gardens, and fields of the mountaintop over the decades. Computer animations, panoramic views, still images, text, and video contribute to a distinctive online experience.

“A virtual site tour is never the same thing as being there, but the good people at the Thomas Jefferson Foundation have gone way out of their way to make the experience worthwhile, providing a trip through a 3-D model of Monticello and likely more access to Jefferson's famed plantation and home than you'd be privy to during a physical visit,” USA Today said May 12 in its weekly “Hot Sites” feature.

Through the end of September, 62,396 individual users had accessed Monticello Explorer and viewed 940,129 pages, an average of more than 15 pages per visitor.

Monticello Explorer is designed to appeal to a variety of users, from casual surfers to serious researchers, and to accommodate the different ways people like to experience the Web. For example, users may take one or both of the two

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# Monticello Explorer

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narrated video tours of the house, or roam on their own using the floor plans, models, and interactive map.

“Monticello Explorer not only lets you walk the halls and fields of the estate, it actually gives you more access to this World Heritage Site than you’d get during a personal visit,” Jim Regan wrote in the April 26 issue of *The Christian Science Monitor*. “Monticello Explorer offers what could easily be an overwhelming amount of information, but keeps things intelligible through navigation options that are as intuitive as walking through someone’s home. (Which, as it turns out, is exactly what you’ll be doing.)”

Monticello Explorer was developed by a team of Thomas Jefferson Foundation staff members, directed by Webmaster Chad Wollerton, and Second Story Interactive Studios of Portland, Ore. Many disciplines were employed in its creation. The 3-D models were built from laser scans done by Quantapoint, Inc., of Pittsburgh, which has also worked at historic sites such as Egypt’s Valley of the Kings. The animations were developed from drawings, primary documents, and still photos. The interactive map was created with information gathered by Monticello’s Department of Archaeology, and the video tour narrations were written and read by Monticello staff experts.

In addition to producing Monticello Explorer’s overall design, Second Story did the animation, programming, and 3-D modeling. Since its founding in 1994, Second Story has developed more than 80 award-winning interactive projects, with clients and partners



**Monticello Explorer’s page on the Dome Room (above) offers numerous features, including images of the room’s interior (below right), an exterior view of the dome showing the top of the glass oculus (below left), and Jefferson’s notes for the remodeling of Monticello (bottom left).**

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such as the Smithsonian Institution, Museum of Modern Art, National Geographic Society, DreamWorks, NASA, and PBS.

Monticello Explorer was made possible through the support of the John A. Griffin Foundation.

Monticello Explorer is accessible through Monticello's home page or by going to <http://explorer.monticello.org/index.html>. Because many of its elements are relatively sophisticated, Monticello Explorer requires a good Internet connection for optimum performance. Those with dial-up connections or older Web browsers are likely to experience access difficulties.

*“Tourism sites take note. This is how you build a website to showcase what you have to offer to the world.”*

- Eirecom  
Site of the Day, June 28

**COMMENTS? [newsletter@monticello.org](mailto:newsletter@monticello.org)**