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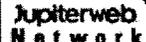
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Yahoo!, Ask Jeeves Bow Local Search Tools

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By [Pamela Parker](#) | [Zachary Rodgers](#) | August 3, 2004

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Two major search providers have rolled out new local search offerings. Yahoo! bowed a beta test of its local search platform, and Ask Jeeves debuted a partnership with Citysearch to provide local content on its results pages. The news follows closely on the heels [Google's own local offering](#), introduced in March and also in beta testing.

Yahoo!'s new local search product, available at [local.yahoo.com](#), combines Yahoo!'s own search technology with Yellow Pages, maps, third party and user-generated content. It features 14 million businesses found in Yahoo's Yellow Pages directory along with narrowing tools that let users refine searches according to such modifiers as distance, rating and category. The offering also lets searchers rate and review businesses, as well as personalize their experience by saving recent locations they've searched on.

"A great search experience is about more than just offering users relevant and comprehensive

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Web search results. It's also about creating an experience where we can quickly and easily provide users the answers they are seeking, whether it's the best Italian restaurant in their neighborhood or the nearest museums while traveling," said Jeff Weiner, SVP of search and marketplace for Yahoo!

So far, Overture listings -- some of them targeted through the company's Local Match program -- are the only ads that appear on the Local search results pages. These paid listings appear both above and below the organic results. But Yahoo! Local general manager Paul Levine hinted a partnership that leveraged the company's relationship with Yellow Pages providers could be in the works.

"In Yahoo! Yellow Pages we have productive relationships with Bell South and SBC. They have thousands of feet on the street and we have found them to be a really effective partner in reaching out to the local merchants," said Levine. Levine wouldn't say whether a partnership would be handled through Overture or whether it would be a separate program altogether. "It's too soon to tell," he said.

"Our goal is comprehensiveness. We are aggregating multiple databases and merging them into one single system," Levine said. "It's not perfect now but it will be getting more perfect over time. Comprehensiveness is critical. We are confident that we already have the most comprehensive database and we're going to work forward from here."

Yahoo! currently isn't promoting the new beta local offering throughout its network. "Over time we think we will execute on more contextual and intent-driven implementations," said Levine, such as linking to Local when a user of Yahoo! Search seemed to have a local intention.

Simultaneously, Ask Jeeves has reached an agreement to license local content and business data from Citysearch to power results on its search portal. The licensed content, which provides Ask Jeeves with a more robust local search offering, should be implemented on Ask.com in September.

The deal will help power "Smart Search" local search results on all Ask Jeeves content. It was accompanied by the announcement that Ask Jeeves has also rolled out maps and driving directions similar to those offered by Mapquest and Yahoo! Ask Jeeves developed these services using licensed data from a third party.

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These data offerings will complement existing local search offerings such as weather, movies and "white pages people search." According to Jim Lanzone, Ask Jeeves' senior VP of search properties, it's hard to overestimate the significance of local searching on Ask.com and its sister properties.

"Local search is a major category for Ask Jeeves," he said. "About 10 percent of our searches are explicitly local. In the past year we've been sequentially addressing that need with weather, people search, local white pages and movie times. By utilizing Citysearch's content-rich structured data, combined with our own proprietary technologies, we will make a significant step toward creating the smartest and most robust local search experience online."

The agreement will not directly affect Ask Jeeves' ad operations, most of which come through its longstanding partnership with Google. Ask Jeeves recently renewed its sponsored listings partnership with the search giant, which means keyword bidding and management on AskJeeves will be tracked and served through AdWords.

"Just by virtue of our relationship with Google, we benefit from their improvements with AdWords in the local space," said Lanzone. "They've done a lot of work in geotargeting, and we are recipients of that. Really it's incumbent on us to improve the site experience for users."

For Citysearch, the relationship creates a distribution channel on one of the most rapidly growing Web properties. Through recent acquisitions, Ask Jeeves has become the sixth most-trafficked Web site on the Web. For its part, Citysearch features approximately two million editorial and user reviews and ratings of local businesses.

The market for local search services is believed to be enormous. Kelsey Group has estimated local searches account for above 25 percent of commercial searches performed by online buyers.

Google and Yahoo! have both already rolled out local targeting for paid search ads. The products, which allow advertisers to target their listings according to geographic radius, are aimed at capturing part of the \$2.5 billion the Kelsey Group predicts local paid search will generate in domestically by 2008.

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