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## **Local Search Growth Awakens the Amazon**

**By Jim Hedger, StepForth News Editor, [StepForth Placement Inc.](#)**

The concept of local Internet advertising is rapidly gaining acceptance with users and advertisers with a predicted 46% increase in ad-spending in 2005 according to a study conducted by [Borrell Associates](#) in 210 U.S. media markets.

The Borrell study includes advertising in online newspapers but notes that local-search spending accounted for nearly 8.4% of the market. 2004 was the first year Borrell included search in its local online ad-spending studies.

Local search ad spending is projected to grow a whopping 70% in the Washington DC area in 2005, much of it focused on the highly competitive real estate market in the counties surrounding DC. Other American cities with high local search growth projections include; Salisbury MD – 62.3%, Bend OR – 51.7%, and Missoula MT – 47.9%. The sector is growing so quickly cities such as San Francisco and Miami are considered slow-growth areas with projected spending increases in the 22% – 26% range.

Local search is becoming a hot section of the search sector for a number of reasons. Nearly 75% of US homes now have Internet access with over 50% of them using high-speed connections. Add the portability of hand-held computers, cell-phones and whatever I-Pod evolves into and it is easy to understand why local-search is being accepted and used as an online version of the traditional print Yellow Pages.

Consumers are starting to exercise their ability to research local-shopping excursions, find the best prices and plot the best travel routes using mapping tools provided alongside search results. Ten years ago the publishers of the traditional print Yellow Pages directories knew this would happen. They spent the last decade desperately trying to find substantial value-added features they could offer a formerly captive market.

It took a full ten years for three major factors to form the 'perfect-norm' for local-search to thrive in. The first was the US broadband barrier that was breached in 2004. The second was the awakening of interest in search by the business world over the past two years. The last is the continued increases in processing power, bandwidth and Internet enabled appliances and home entertainment. The waves created by this confluence of factors are beginning to crest and the search sector and traditional print publishers are partnering up to stake out the best surf. Google and Yahoo have already claimed their sections of the beach. The latest entry to the local search market is Amazon's A9.com Yellow Pages.

A9 appeared on the search scene about nine months ago with a huge promotional push that generated a great deal of attention but won few long-term users. Drawing organic results from Google's database, the search engine filters results through Alexa's popularity ranker and its own database of registered users' preferences. To the right, a series of images drawn from Google-Images appear alongside corresponding search results. By design, A9 is still a work in progress as rankings are dependent on unique user preferences.

A second A9 marketing push appears to be underway with yesterday's introduction of A9's Local search feature, A9 Yellow Pages. Amazon's vision of local-search has one feature that blows the doors off the competition's products. In order to produce their version of local search, A9 placed cameras on a number of Amazon owned SUVs and basically took images of every commercial doorway in Atlanta, Boston, Dallas, Chicago, Manhattan, Denver, LA, Seattle, Portland and the Bay Area. They are hiring new staff, and plan to expand this list to every commercial doorway in America.



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According to CEO Udi Manber A9's goal is to show local search users "...images of the businesses in the Yellow Pages." They actually go one step further by displaying images of every doorway on the same block as the business the searcher is looking for. This is the [test search](#) offered by A9.Com

Like Google-Local, A9.com is working with a database of Yellow Pages listings; practically every business that has a telephone should be included.