

Computer Corner

By Jim Jeup
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AOL's broadband service to end in Florida

DULLES, Va. – America Online is telling existing broadband subscribers in nine Southern states (Florida included) that they must find a new broadband carrier by Jan. 17. Those customers who do not switch to a new broadband carrier by that date will have their accounts revert to AOL's traditional dialup service. AOL has been emailing its customers in those nine states that they can switch to high-speed broadband service offered by BellSouth Corp. for a special promotional rate.

AOL is expected to phase out existing broadband customers in the rest of the country in a similar manner over the next year.

Google Desktop Search™

In October, 2004 Google launched the Beta for its newest search tool, Google Desktop Search (GDS), for public download/installation.

I make it a point not to discuss Beta testing software in public forums because "Beta" is **NOT** fully released software. It is software being "tested" for full release. Most Beta software is released for intermediate/expert computer users to test/report/fix issues before full release to the public. Why? Because most Beta software contains minor errors, which can create unexpected results on otherwise normal computers. Fixing unexpected results is work for experienced computer users who have expert knowledge about their computers and the way they work.

It is unknown to the public how many users have installed GDS. But, judging from the number of computers we see each week, the number is growing rapidly. Because the number of users is growing so fast I am going to break my rule concerning Beta software and discuss GDS now.

Google Desktop Search Basics

GDS seamlessly blends into Google's online search engine. When installed, you will see a new "Desktop" link on the Google home page and search results page. Selecting this link brings back results found on your own computer.

In particular, the tool indexes the full text of:

- Email within Outlook or Outlook Express (notes, contacts, journal and to do list items are not included, nor are emails in the Deleted Items folder)
- Microsoft Word, Excel & PowerPoint files
- AOL Instant Messenger chats
- Web pages viewed online in Internet Explorer or any HTML file saved to your computer
- Plain text files

The tool also indexes text within files, names of images in JPEG or GIF format, allowing basic image search capabilities.

Google Desktop Search Tool – Security Alert!

People who use public or workplace computers for email, instant messaging and Web searching have a new security risk to worry about: GDS indexes a computer's contents (without offering to password protect contents) for quickly locating data, which allows others to see private information that you may not want them to see.

Example: Others can see sensitive information in emails previously exchanged even after deleting them. That could mean revealed passwords, conversations with doctors, or viewed Web pages detailing online purchases.

Affected Computers - Any computer with public access

- Libraries
- Internet Cafes
- Computer Labs
- Networked Computers
- Computers on the Internet

Google Desktop Search Spy

With information so easily available, it's easy to say that there will be spyware in the near future, which will take advantage of the Google Desktop Search Tool.

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