Yahoo shuts down Internet relic AltaVista

July 8 2013, by Barbara Ortutay

Once up on a time, there was a popular search engine called AltaVista. It lives no more.

On Monday, its owner Yahoo Inc. sent AltaVista.com to the Internet graveyard to rest alongside order-almost-anything venture Kozmo.com and the butler from Ask Jeeves.

Palo Alto, California-based AltaVista was introduced in 1995, three years before Google Inc. was founded. Eclipsed by Google in the early 2000s, AltaVista's star had already faded by the time Yahoo acquired it as part of its $1.7 billion purchase of Overture Services Inc. in July 2003. Overture had bought AltaVista earlier that year from Massachusetts-based CMGI Inc.

Yahoo announced AltaVista's fate on its Tumblr page late last month.

Search industry expert Danny Sullivan likened AltaVista to a bright child neglected by its parents.

"You were loved. You really were," Sullivan wrote in a blog post eulogizing the site. "People did not want to leave you. But despite adding new features, some of which Google copied, you couldn't keep up with the pace and innovation of that company, which decided against becoming a portal like your corporate masters ordered for you."

Indeed, AltaVista's decline began after it expanded to become more like Yahoo, offering a bevy of online services instead of sticking solely with search. By the time the site reversed course, it was too late. Its finances were sinking and Google was on the rise.

Yahoo's June 28 announcement of AltaVista's end is brief. It's buried as the eighth item on a list of other services the company is shutting down. Along with the mention of AltaVista's July 8 expiration date, the post says only: "Please visit Yahoo Search for all of your searching needs."

According to data from online research firm comScore, most people in the U.S. use Google for their search needs, followed by Microsoft's Bing. Yahoo is in third place.

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