WOWD, the real-time search engine

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WOWD logo.

(PhysOrg.com) -- The beta version of WOWD, the Internet's newest search engine, was launched last week at the 2009 Web 2.0 Summit in San Francisco. It aims to differentiate itself from other search engines such as Google and Yahoo by identifying the most popular sites in real-time and by becoming, in effect, the Skype for search.

WOWD (a deliberate word play on "crowd") works in a different way to the other search engines, and focuses on identifying new trends, news, and popular topics and pages on the Internet. Users download the WOWD browser application, and then every web page they visit is automatically nominated for inclusion on the search engine's results page. This is a little like Digg and similar sites in which people vote for their favorite pages, except that WOWD does the voting automatically.

Mark Drummond, CEO of Wowd Inc., told the summit attendees that people do not have time to look for what's hot on the Net, and need a fresh alternative to the reference-style search engines of the last decade, which he claims are not good discovery tools. WOWD aims to present

dynamically updated results as an alternative to sites such as [Google](#), whose results are slow to change. Drummond expects WOWD to attract users who are interested in what is popular, and who see search facilities as an additional feature.

The founder of WOWD, Boris Agapiev, said that WOWD transfers control from impersonal data centers to individuals. Unlike previous search engines, WOWD does not use web crawlers or other conventional page ranking mechanisms, but instead taps into a " distributed cloud architecture", in which users who have downloaded the software become, in effect, both the web crawler and [data storage](#) center to build up the search index. The more often users visit a page, the higher the page is ranked.

The WOWD home page has three tabs: Hot List, Search, and My Pages. The Hot List is available to everyone and results by Popularity. The list can also be ranked by Freshness, but this (like many other features) is only available once you have downloaded the free browser application. Results are constantly updated, allowing you to see at a glance which sites are being most often visited by people who have downloaded the application.

Downloading the free application releases features such as a recommendation [search engine](#) and the option of searching through the user's own search history. The software also enables WOWD to store of bits of the search index on the user's computer. Each piece of information is stored on several computers so it remains available even when the user's computer is shut down. The algorithm used in this peer-to-peer system is called "Kademlia", which is used in peer-to-peer file sharing systems.

Privacy is protected because the site does not index pages protected by encrypted protocols, and because users actually access and index web

pages they visit through another person's computer, which protects against the collection of cookies or password protected information.

According to Drummond, since the advent of real-time applications such as Twitter and Facebook people are more interested in real-time, fresh information than in the sometimes dated results of traditional search engines, and WOWD aims to satisfy this growing preference. WOWD also has economic advantages for the company: using each user as a data storage center means the system could be infinitely large, since there is no need for expensive infrastructure such as massive data storage centers, since the cloud of users essentially form the search engine. The users also share the cost of the utility charges, but at an additional cost of a few dollars a year, are unlikely to notice.

The WOWD browser application is available for the Mac, Windows, and Linux.

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