Google to add maps of local findings to search results

April 8 2009, By Elise Ackerman

Google has confirmed that it is going to start adding a map of local findings to search results for things like "pizza," "burger" and "dentist," something that Google watchers have been buzzing about for months.

Google already does this if you specify your location, such as when you type "pizza San Jose." But it has been debating whether or not to tweak its algorithm to assume someone wants a map of nearby pizzerias if they just type "pizza."

Paul Levine, the former general manager for Yahoo's local search division, said in an online discussion last week that the practice has been around for years, and that the search engines will infer a user's location based on their IP address, which is the string of numbers that identifies your computer to your Internet service provider. IP addresses tend to correspond to geographic areas.

In the past, however, search engines have been concerned that some people would be uncomfortable that Google or Yahoo or Microsoft could figure out their location.

That concern appears to be fading as location-based services become more common.

"Google wouldn't be doing this unless it was confident that it was right about what people want," said Greg Sterling, of Sterling Market Intelligence.

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