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March 27th, 2008

Microsoft releases first public test build of Windows Search 4.0

Posted by Mary Jo Foley @ 4:33 pm

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Microsoft released on March 27 the first public test build of the technology it calls "Windows Search 4.0."

First things first: What is Windows Search 4.0? It's the search technology formerly code-named "Casino," which Microsoft — at one point — planned to deliver as a Windows Live Service. It is an extension, but not the successor, to the Windows Search that is built into Vista, as well as the "Windows Desktop Search" (WDS), which is part of Windows XP.

The Microsoft Download Center, where the public test builds of Windows Search 4.0 are available, explains it a bit more succinctly:

Windows Search 4.0 "lets you perform an instant search of your computer. WS4 helps you find and preview documents, e-mail messages, music files, photos, and other items on the computer. Please refer to the Knowledge base article KB940157 for a full description of the technology."

Here's more, from a company spokesperson:

"At one point Casino was an internal code name for Windows Search. Windows Search 4.0 will address many of the issues Casino was originally slated to address, but it is distinctly different in that WS4.0 is a continuation of WDS3.01 and an update to Windows search functionality, while Casino was a research project. The purpose of Casino was to explore the area of federation, whereas the goal of the WS4.0 release is improved quality, better performance and reliability, as well as removal of deployment blockers."

When it ultimately is released — a date which Microsoft isn't providing — Windows Search 4.0 will be supported on 32-bit and 64-bit versions of Vista SP1; 32-bit versions of Windows XP SP2 or later; all 64-bit versions of XP; Windows Server 2003 SP2; all 64-bit versions of Windows Server 2003; Windows Server 2008 and Windows Home Server.

It isn't clear whether Windows Search 4.0 (or 5.0 or whatever version) will be built into Windows 7. From the aforementioned spokesperson:

"While it is too early to talk about specific details of Windows 7 features, we will be sure to build future functionality so that it extends, not replaces, the features available for Windows Vista SP1."

So now that it's (sort of) clear what Windows Search 4.0 is, [here's what's new in the publicly downloadable build](#), according to Microsoft:

- Most of the bugs affecting Windows Vista users that were reported by private testers have been fixed
- Performance improvements have been made. Even in this "preview version," Windows Search 4.0 query times are 33 percent faster than search queries in Vista, according to the Softies.
- Improvements to Remote Index Discovery is now enabling PC-to-PC search to work on all supported versions of Windows
- Rollback Recovery has been added, allowing the search index to roll back to the last known good state; indexes are not rebuilt from scratch if errors occur

One more piece of information (to try to help explain how Windows Search 4 works, courtesy of our trusty Windows Client spokesfolks: "When it is installed on Windows Vista SP1, Windows Search 4.0 is an update to the Windows Vista SP1 search files, replacing them. On downlevel platforms, it is a downloadable feature, enriching the search experience and functionality. Windows Search 4.0 is an update for WDS 3.01 replacing it when it is installed on Windows XP or Windows Server 2003."

Is anyone out there — on any Windows platform — giving Windows Search 4.0 a whirl? What do you think of the technology?

Mary Jo has covered the tech industry for more than 20 years. Don't miss a single post. Subscribe via [Email](#) or [RSS](#). Got a tip? Send Mary Jo your rants, rumors, tips and tattles. For disclosure on Mary Jo's industry affiliations, [click here](#).

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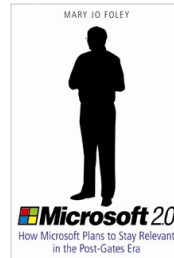
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