

Changes Blur the Scenery Along the Digital Divide

By Jim Hedger, StepForth News Editor, [StepForth Placement Inc.](#)

The line it is drawn the curse it is cast
The slow one now will later be fast
As the present now will later be past
The order is rapidly fadin'.
And the first one now will later be last
For the times they are a-changin'.
(Bob Dylan, 1963)

A period of unprecedented change is upon us. From the micro-world of our personal finance and local economy to the macro-world of international development, the way things get done today is fundamentally different from the way things got accomplished even five years ago.

Online marketing and the methods used by marketers are changing. Search marketing has expanded from the humble but mysterious artful science days to be a more professional, precise and predictable service. With so much change on the horizon, it is often a good idea to scope the scenery to see how it is being affected. As we will all soon read about, the global economic shift is no longer eminent, it is in full swing and it is affecting the lives of everyone on Earth, even those not directly involved with the Internet.

Often faster than a phone call and far more practical than a fax machine, the Internet has provided anyone with a digital signal access to the global [agora](#), no matter where they are in the world.

As the Internet has grown, it radically altered a Eurocentric world order that predated the twentieth century. It is wild and remains almost entirely unregulated. It has become the basis of a grassroots global economy and naturally there is [international debate](#) over who exactly should control the Internet.

Regardless of who controls the conventions that make it operate, its evolution is virtually dependent on what tools and processes users choose to adopt. Compared to previous eras, the introduction of new tools and processes is relatively easy. This is especially true when you happen to be the most dominant player in the game.

This has been a tremendous week for Google. Monday's introduction of [Google Analytics](#) will have a massive impact on its rivals at Yahoo and MSN and likely caused the [scaling back](#) of the paid-advertising unit Ask established in August. It will also impact established Analytics firms such as WebTrends and ClickTracks, (a package we continue to use and recommend to clients). To make a long and developing story short, Google Analytics is a website / business management tool that provides a wide variety of statistics and information about how visitors use a website. It also provides webmasters displaying [AdWords](#) advertising through [AdSense](#) extra support with the aim of making more money by helping advertisers and ad-distributors convert site visitors into billable click-throughs.

Today's beta release of Google Base is the next shoe to drop on a market reeling from recent changes. Google Base has been called the Index of all indices, a reference to the concept that Google is preparing

to merge and present information from any variety of sources. According to Google, it is simply another way to get information into the Google search database, especially useful for submitters who don't maintain their own websites. In practical terms, Google Base appears to be a way to submit a list of virtually anything from free information to expensive items. In short, Google Base seems designed to cover all bases.

The introduction of Google Analytics and Google Base add a new dimension to Google as the leading global information provider. They also do one other, somewhat unexpected thing. Combined with other features and tools Google uses to narrow or funnel information searches such as Local search, geo-mapping, and comparison-shopping (Froogle), Google is decidedly staking its turf atop this next wave of search facilitated global-commerce.

Search Marketers, like the industry we work in need to evolve along the leading edge and as of this week, Google is it. The next few months should be very busy ones for search marketing firms as they rush to market services based on Google Analytics and Google Base. Current clients of search marketing firms should seriously consider contacting their SEM vendor to arrange time for inclusion of service or product offering at Google Base. They should also think about having their search marketing firm install the Google Analytics script and monitor information to fine-tune marketing campaigns.

Google's innovative good fortune doesn't put rivals Yahoo, MSN and ASK out of the picture as each remains an important component in search marketing and any one of them could introduce a superior product.

Yahoo itself has an amazing product in the [Yahoo Publisher Network](#), which is said to be ready for general release early in 2006. YPN is made for content-publishers and is meant to be a vehicle for Yahoo Search Marketing ads, Yahoo's alternative to AdWords. Yahoo's strategy appears to be centered on the provision of top quality content for YPN members, along with a number of search / information retrieval features such as tagging and stored-search preferences.

What YPN is trying to do is allow its members to create their own content spaces, in short, giving them many of the components necessary to become credible new-media creators and distribution outlets. Yahoo is betting on the commercial side of entertainment and the grassroots nature of the Internet as a means of providing it.

Ultimately, what Google and Yahoo are both doing, is creating information spaces and making it easier for webmasters or search marketers to guide visitors through. That's where the global economy comes into play.

Yesterday I seriously considered the concept of rental property in Turkey. A reader sent in a question about a technique used on his CMS driven website. I answered his question as best I could but also told him I was stunned by the craft that went into the representations of the rental units. There were 3-d floor plans, excellent exterior images and a well-detailed outline of life in Turkey. It had some of the best but simple elements I've ever seen on a real estate related site.

The Internet has opened a vast world of commerce that was previously unavailable in remote regions of the world. Knowledge workers, website designers and search marketers can be located anywhere in the world, as long as they have a means of drawing a pay-cheque. Most of this new commerce happens at a grassroots level but in competition, the grassroots can be surprisingly professional. With the offerings

Google made available this week, and the stuff we know to be coming down the pipe from Yahoo in the near future, it is hard to image how the search engine marketing sector will look this time next year.

The Internet has been the primary driver of both corporate and grassroots visions of the emerging global economic and social order. While it has not achieved a level playing field by any reasonable standard of measurement, the Internet, at least thus far, represents the greatest equalizer for growing economies, developing societies, underemployed individuals and small businesses everywhere.

The Internet has become the global networking tool its early proponents were hoping for, a flexible and expandable space where the users themselves actively promote its evolution. That evolution is accelerating.

Everything about the web is accelerating, leaving commentators and observers breathless as they (we) try to figure out exactly what streams, channels, ideas or emerging philosophies to focus on. The only constants seem to be our natural desire to improve our technologies and Moore's Law basic concept that information processing can double in speed every two years. Brilliance begets brilliance and invention invites innovation. Hold on to your seats John and Jane Doe, the times they are a-changin'.