

# Review Live Local and Interview

## 'Providing Live Connections to People, Information and

This article provides an overview of Live Local as well as some of the author's experiences with the application. Interviews with Tom Bailey, the Director of Marketing for Live Local, and Ashley Johnson of Waggener Edstrom Worldwide, the Windows Live Local PR team for Microsoft, are also included. Bailey was able to answer several questions directed specifically at current and future plans for MS Live Local in the European community.

### Microsoft's description of Live Local:

Windows Live Local uses location as the way in which people interact with the Internet so that they can more easily find, discover and plan activities relevant to that location. It takes information consumers want (weather, traffic, hotels, restaurants, entertainment, photos) and brings it together in ways that enable people to answer the question "What's it like there?"

By Greg Baca

### Menu Commands

Moving from left to right across the menu there is: 'Welcome', 'Scratch Pad', 'Locate Me', 'Permalink', 'Add Pushpin', 'Directions', 'Settings', 'Community', 'Help' and 'About'. The 'Welcome' screen is displayed to the left of the main map area. It displays news and information about MS Live Local. The 'Scratch Pad' allows the user to store a search result, or he can click a spot on the map, and save that spot on the map to the 'Scratch Pad'. The 'Scratch Pad' remembers where you have been and makes returning a click away. It is also possible to mail and/or blog your 'Scratch Pad'. The 'Locate Me' link activates a Windows Live Local application (Location Finder) that attempts to determine your present location and launch a Windows Live Local map of that location. There are two techniques used by the 'Locate Me' feature:

1. If the user is on a computer with a Wi-Fi card, Wi-Fi signal strength from nearby wireless access points can be used to determine location. This is generally accurate to between 50

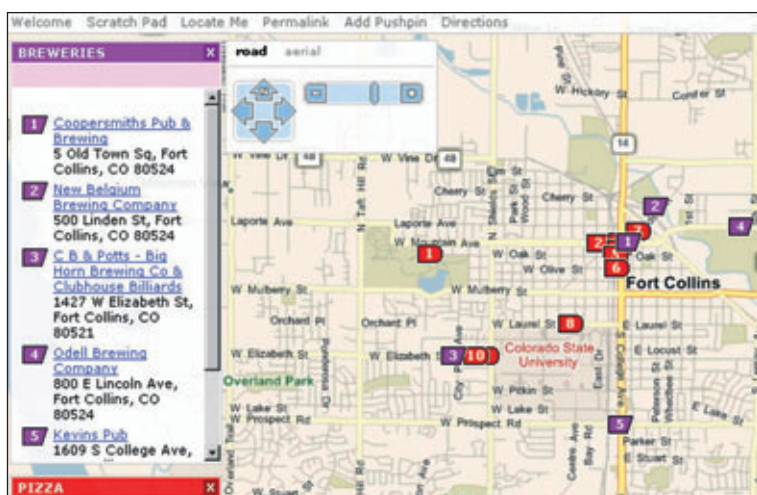


Figure 1.

### Overview

Live Local is completely web based - no plug-ins or downloads are necessary, see Figure 1. The application has all the typical features of a web based mapping service: search, routing, and more. In this overview the unique features will be described. The interface provides interaction through search, from a menu or context sensitive commands (right click), and offers keyboard shortcuts to assist with navigation of the map. The search features a "What" and a "Where" in area. In the "What" area the user may enter a specific topic such as museum, or cuisine. In the "Where" area an address can be entered. Or it is possible to search from the "What" and have the "Where" be set as "use the current map view". The application delivers on the "What" content as illustrated in a search of Brewpubs in the Fort Collins Colorado area map, see Figure 1.

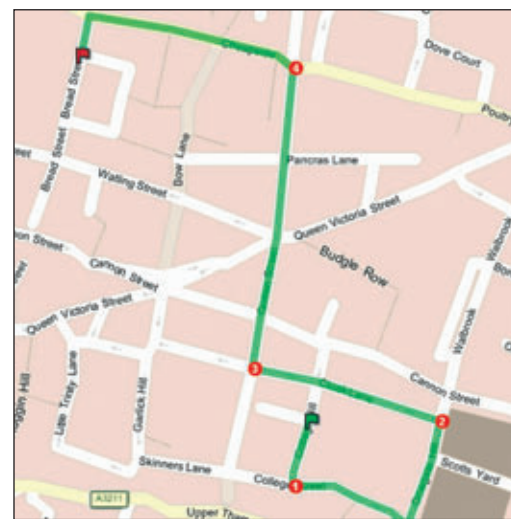


Figure 2.

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## Passions They Care About'

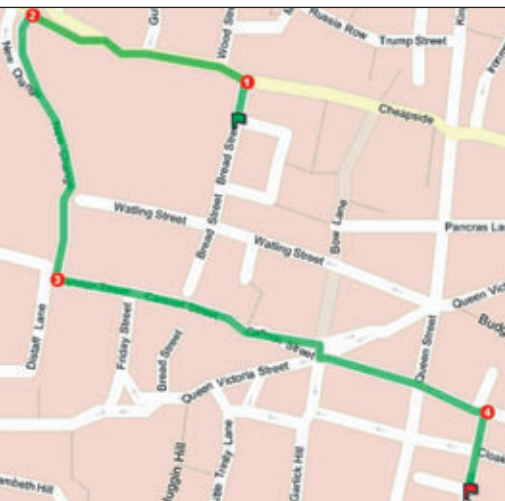


Figure 3.

and 200 feet;

2. If the computer does not have a Wi-Fi card, the Internet protocol (IP) address of the computer is used to determine an approximate location of the user. (IP-based location is generally accurate to the city or county level. In either case, if a location can be determined, the map is updated to reflect this location and a Pushpin is drawn on the map centered on the consumer's location.

### Rest of the Menu

A 'Permalink' is a permanent URL which encapsulates the current state of the Virtual Earth browser window, including the map view, the map style, zoom level, open searches, and Scratch Pad contents. Creating a

'Permalink' is a way to save and share your Windows Live Local experience with others; Pushpins are a way to add a custom Pushpin to a map much like one might have done in the past with a pin on a paper map. The pushpin allows you to name it and also add 200 characters of text in a note describing the Pushpin. The Pushpin can also be e-mailed to someone else;

'Directions' provide turn by turn directions with route highlights and maneuvers integrated into the map whether in road or aerial view with printing and email options available. To and from directions can be created by clicking anywhere on the map, or by traditional methods such as search results and entering an address. More on directions later in this article.

'Settings' provide a way to set a limited set of behaviors as to what is saved on exit, map navigation, and searching options; The 'Community' Link provides interaction with others in the community through:

- A hyperlink to blogs and threaded discussions boards about Virtual Earth;
- The ability to vote on simple Virtual Earth polls;
- Provide free text feedback regarding Virtual Earth.

'Help' provides a rich content of help for the Live Local tool. 'About' offers background into the technologies applied in Live Local, and credits all the data and technology providers.

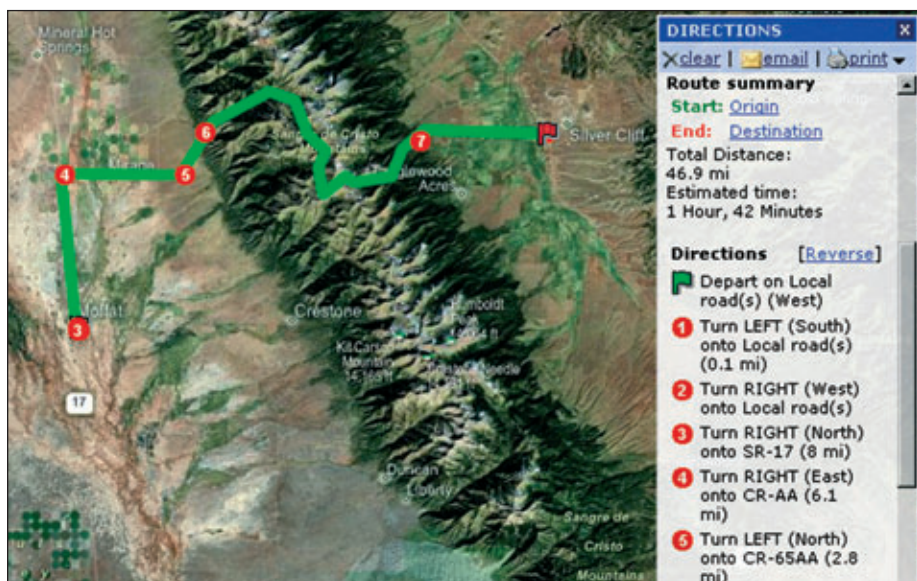


Figure 4.

## Interview with Ashley Johnson

### Please tell me about Live Local.

Windows Live Local was launched on Thursday, December 8, 2005. It is a free online local search and mapping service that combines maps, unique bird's eye imagery for many US cities, advanced driving directions, Yellow Pages and other local search tools, enabling people to learn, discover and explore a specific location. Windows Live Local is powered by Virtual Earth, delivering a core set of functionality that combines maps and directions, immersive Bird's Eye and aerial imagery and local search. Our product roadmap includes a community approach where people can create their own location-specific view and share it with others.

### Why the name change from Virtual Earth?

This name change was part of the broader Windows Live strategy change launched on November 1, 2005. The vision for Windows Live is that it will help people have richer lives by providing live connections to people, information and passions they care about. Windows Live Local helps to deliver on this by combining immersive aerial imagery, customizable map annotations, innovative driving directions and the ability to share local search results with others. Windows Live Local falls under the Information Services tech pillar of Windows Live. The other pillars are Communication Services, Safety and Protection, as well as Storage and Roaming.

### How is Live Local different from Terra Server?

Today the aerial imagery in the Virtual Earth platform comes from Microsoft's TerraServer project (terraServer.microsoft.com). TerraServer has been digitizing publicly available aerial images taken by U.S. Geological Survey's National Aerial Photography Program (NAPP) for use on the Web. The frequency in which these images are updated varies.

### What applications or web services do you see as the major competition?

Windows Live Local is part of a broader strategy to deliver such rich and innovative experiences to our users whether that is two or two million people together across PCs, devices and the web. We are confident

in knowing that if we do a good job of executing our Live initiative across all of non-US markets, then our competitive position will take care of itself. We don't intend to react to our competition; we are going to respond to our customers access to state-of-the-art' needs. That's what will define our competitive position.

### I see from the website information that ORBIMAGE is a contributor - will there be full coverage of the earth available at the resolution of IKONOS imagery?

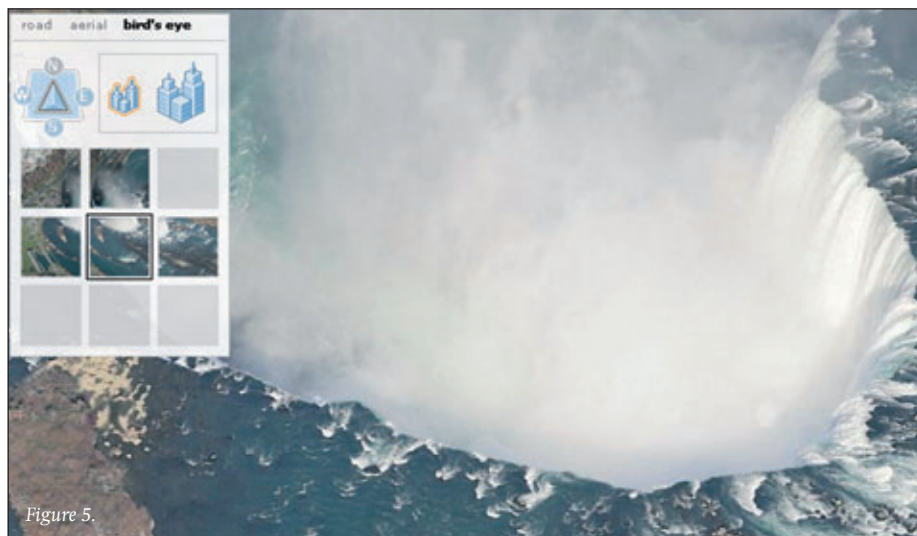
Microsoft and ORBIMAGE have entered into a five year exclusive deal in which Microsoft will be the sole online distributor of world wide satellite imagery from ORBIMAGE. The partnership between Microsoft and ORBIMAGE will enable Microsoft's mapping and location assets to offer rich satellite imagery to both consumer and business customers outside of the United States and will accelerate our ability to offer this imagery in non-US markets. Moreover, ORBIMAGE plans to launch a new satellite within the next 18-24 months which will give Microsoft and its customer's access to state-of-the-art satellite imagery.

### Are there plans to incorporate European cities for address matching?

We are continually updating Virtual Earth with new imagery provided by our partners. Ensuring our customers have the best possible information from this new service is critical to us. Not only are we regularly updating the existing aerial imagery, we are also adding new data such as bird's eye and global satellite imagery at 15 meters. We have announced agreements with Pictometry Intl Corp to do low-level 45 degree or bird's eye imagery and with ORBIMAGE and Harris to provide international aerial satellite photos from around the world taken at 15meter proximity. With Aerial Photo with Labels: refers to the imagery, we are planning to cover 80 percent of the US population within the next two years, with European data available later this calendar year. Live Local now includes imagery from the USGS, Harris, Pictometry (for Bird's Eye views), and others.

### Other Features

- Aerial Photo with labels: refers to the navigation feature that displays the aerial images with an overlay of road networks and points of interest that is correctly geo-referenced on the image;



- Auto-Refreshed Search Results: as the user moves around the map, the search results refresh dynamically to always give the user the most relevant information that pertains to the selected map view;
- Yellow Page directories: these directories have been incorporated into the Windows Live Local index so that users can query the information in rich, flexible ways;
- Multiple Searches: give users the ability to conduct multiple local searches and have all of the relevant information show up on the map alongside one another.

One of the features I liked best is the ability to click on a place on a map, right click and set that point as a start or an end point to a destination and get directions to that destination without the need to enter an address for either location. One can then reverse the directions from B to A as illustrated in figures 2 and 3 in an area in London. The reverse directions feature is quite handy when dealing with one-way streets; many one-way streets in the area depicted in Figures 2 and 3 looked like a difficult place for the application to choose a route.

### Literal

It is interesting how literal routing software can be; point A to point B along any road. I selected a route between Moffat and Silver Cliff Colorado, see Figure 4. I don't believe this route is passable by anything short of a high ground clearance vehicle, and then only in the summer. Note that the peaks listed in the map are all above 14,000 feet.

This figure illustrates the high quality of the images; even at this scale landforms are easily distinguishable. Did you notice the geometric circles in the southwest of the image? On first sight these appear to be some sort of problem with the image, but the circles are actually accurate renderings of crops irri-

gated with a center pivot irrigation system. Some other interesting things to point out with this image; look at the mileage and time for the route. The routing algorithms obviously account for speed by road type. Also notice all the acknowledgements in the south east corner of the map.

### Bird's Eye Views

Bird's Eye views are likely the most interesting and unique feature of the Live Local service. Bird's Eye allows us to change from road or

## Questions and answers from Tom Bailey

### Can you tell me what the Virtual Earth/Live Local relationship is?

The Virtual Earth brand is the platform upon which the consumer destination site is built. You will see in the Header of the Windows Live Local website "Powered by Virtual Earth". The reason that this is important is that we have a business to business focused service which we call the Virtual Earth Platform. This is a service we sell to many commercial and government entities that wish to integrate mapping and location based services into their Internet and intranet solution offerings. That's where the relationship is; all of the mapping and location services that drive the various experiences are built on the Virtual Earth Platform.

### What is the street source data used for routing within Live Local?

We use NAVTEQ as the underlying mapping data for about 75 percent of the maps. NAVTEQ creates the digital maps and map content that power navigation and location-based services solutions.

## What Geocoding Engine does Live Local use?

We have our own Geocoding service which we have built and refined over the years and we are also beginning to integrate best of breed geocoders alongside the home-grown geocoders. As we broaden out to new languages and new services beyond what we serve today - which is mostly North America and Western Europe. We are looking at other geocoders to augment other countries, such as Eastern Europe, Japan and China.

## What are the plans to add content for the European community?

The MapPoint 06 product that will be out this summer, it will have expanded Eastern European coverage. We are making huge investments in Europe and very soon we will be able to zoom in to much greater detail with Live Local in many countries around Europe.

Europe obviously is very important to us, and we have a long history of CD products as well as the MSN Maps and Directions service which is the precursor to Windows Live Local. We are heavily investing to expand the Windows Live Local experience to many European countries, and obviously that will roll out over time. Many of the European countries will get a Windows Live Local experience this calendar year.

## Are there plans to integrate MapPoint or Streets and Trips into Live Local?

Streets and Trips and MapPoint are to become more integrated with the Windows Live Local consumer destination on the web. In the 2006 version there is the capability to show any of your streets and trips views in Live Local, by simply right clicking on the map - it will say "show in Windows Live Local" and it will open (in the US) a screen in Live Local which you will be able to evaluate and with which you can do the same thing as in Windows Live Local; such as view the aerial imagery, and Birds Eye Views to help enhance your trip planning experience. This is the first of many integration points of what can be done between the offline rich win32 client application and the online service.

## Is there a way to set units for to anything other than feet and miles?

Units will be localized when we launch in Europe.

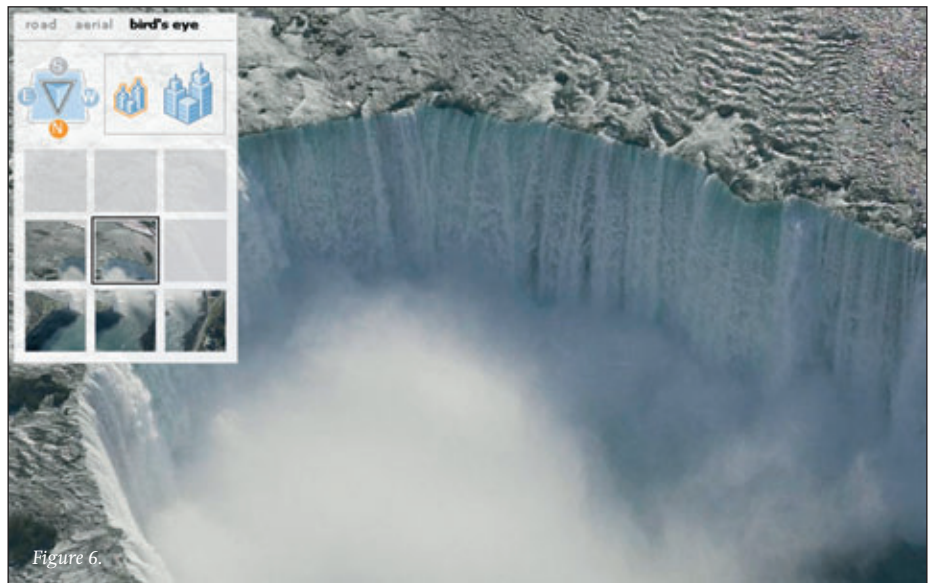


Figure 6.

aerial view to a Bird's Eye (45 degree) view of the map. Currently, this feature includes about twenty-five percent the United States including major cities such as New York, LA, San Francisco, and Boston (a list of Bird's Eye locations are provided in 'Help'). The service brings up a text box notifying us that there is Bird's Eye imagery available when we are located in an area with Bird's Eye imagery. We navigate the Birds Eye view the same as the map or image view, in addition we have a group of thumbnails that are

clickable and a large feature/small feature scale zoom, as well as a compass to rotate the view North, South, East or West. Take a look at the Bird's Eye View of Niagara Falls located on The US Canadian border oriented from the North, see Figure 5, and South, see Figure 6.

Greg Baca ([gBaca@geoinformatics.com](mailto:gBaca@geoinformatics.com)) is a freelance writer for GeoInformatics. Windows Live Local can be found at <http://local.live.com>.

Be sure to take Live Local and other location services for a test drive and judge for yourself which you like the best. There are a number of web based mapping/location/routing services; some are listed below:

Mapquest - [www.mapquest.com](http://www.mapquest.com)

Yahoo Maps - [www.maps.yahoo.com](http://www.maps.yahoo.com)

Google Local - [www.google.com/lochp](http://www.google.com/lochp)

Very Interesting Historical maps - [www.davidrumsey.com/index.html](http://www.davidrumsey.com/index.html)

European Sites:

<http://rp.rac.co.uk/rp/routeplanner>

[www.multimap.com/](http://www.multimap.com/)

<http://mappoint.msn.com>

Developers will also want to check out:

- Virtual Earth Developer APIs:  
Free versions for both commercial and non-commercial use: Virtual Earth APIs easy-to-use JScript Map control
- MapPoint Developer Center on MSDN (<http://msdn.microsoft.com/mappoint/>)
- The Virtual Earth developer blog (<http://blogs.msdn.com/virtualearth/>) for news and other information about the Virtual Earth APIs.
- Via Virtual Earth ([www.viavirtualearth.com](http://www.viavirtualearth.com)), is a third-party

web site sponsored by Microsoft and dedicated to Virtual Earth development. There you will find code samples, a gallery of existing Virtual Earth powered applications, and other information to help start creating applications that incorporate a Windows Live Local-like experience by utilizing the Virtual Earth APIs.

Other Virtual Earth links can be found in the article on Microsoft's Proposed Take-Over of Vexcel, page 6 of this issue of GeoInformatics.

Live Local credits the following companies as providing content for Windows Live Local: NAVTEQ, TeleAtlas, USGS, NASA, Pictometry, Harris ImageLinks, OrbImage and EarthData.

[www.navteq.com](http://www.navteq.com)

[www.teleatlas.com](http://www.teleatlas.com)

<http://terraserver-usa.com>

<http://seamless.usgs.gov>

<http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov>

[www.pictometry.com](http://www.pictometry.com)

[www.harris.com](http://www.harris.com)

[www.es-geo.com/](http://www.es-geo.com/)

[www.orbimage.com](http://www.orbimage.com)

[www.earthdata.com](http://www.earthdata.com)