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Delivering Free Personal Navigation with Travel and Shopping Guides
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Earthcomber, touted as "the ultimate personal navigator," is introducing itself to users of Windows-powered PDAs and smartphones. This free service has already generated substantial buzz among Palm-powered loyalists.

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To the naked eye, Earthcomber first appears like any other type of navigation software - except that its GPS-enabled maps for all territories in the U.S. are conspicuously missing a price tag. All maps, "Look Lists" and "Community" features are entirely free, providing users with tremendous new travel tools at no cost.

However, the power of Earthcomber is its unique exploration ability. Unlike search-box style, web-dependent mobile search programs, Earthcomber's trademark and patent-pending service lets people set up and automate the equivalent of "play lists," then searches constantly for vast and diverse personal interests as the user moves around the local landscape or distant destinations.

Users can specify exact types of restaurants, shops, ATMs, hotels, landmarks and plot them on a map - as well as join or create groups that let them share or discover spots like where movies were shot, where crimes occurred, sites of public art or places to spot wildlife or enjoy dog parks, pictures, picnics, or freebies.

The new Windows Mobile version of Earthcomber includes a point-to-point direction feature that requires a phone or Internet connection. Earthcomber makes it easy to connect from a mobile device via the "WiFi hotspot location" data set included with every Earthcomber map.

Even for basic PDAs that do not have any WiFi connection, cell service or GPS capability, Earthcomber can still provide "combing" or sweeps of a person's current surroundings via its touch-screen maps calibrated to figure out distances. For instance, a person can simply plant their "X" by tapping the screen on the intersection where they are, or by looking up an address.

Then Earthcomber reports any and all "hits," just as if a GPS signal spotted the location on the map.

Users can also purchase a new breed of guidebook from publishers such as Mobil Travel Guides, Avalon Publishing's Moon Metro Series, and Fairchild & Gallagher's Where to Wear insider fashion shopping guides.

These "spot guides" feature un-abridged versions of the paper editions, but empower them with GPS awareness and personalized search so that unlike the bookshelf variety, they can produce instant results ordered on what is nearby and interesting to each individual user.

"While Google can give you a zip-code full of what look like Chinese restaurants, it can't tell you where the Kung Pao Chicken is excellent," said Jim Brady, Earthcomber CEO. "There is a huge difference between having search-box access to millions of points-of-interest, and having a program that looks through millions of POIs - constantly - for the 40 or 50 exact things you actually care about."

The new Windows Mobile version of Earthcomber includes maps of every region in the United States. The patent-pending technology maintains individual privacy while constantly combing the area each person travels for anything from an ATM to a waterfall, cup of coffee, museum, bistro, school, golf course, bar or even local events.

Earthcomber Spot Guides range from free to \$19.85. Spot Guides let users customize their interests - and how far to search for each one - and then alert them when they come within a certain distance or nearby any location that has one or more of their personal favorites in food, shopping, public places, natural features, historic sites or private pursuits.

The key difference between Spot Guides and their print version, other than the entire content is stored on a compact handheld computer, is that a person has the option of exploring the electronic guide through hot-linked pages, special icons, photos and searches -- all within the context of a book title. And, as the reader considers any place mentioned, Earthcomber displays the distance from where the person is standing. As the person moves, the distances are updated.

"Imagine your bookmarks tapping you on the shoulder and letting you know that you are within a mile of a place that would make your trip complete," says Mr. Brady, a former Oprah exec, who came up with the concept for Earthcomber during personal travels. "The idea is that life is so much more interesting, and we get so much more out of every day, if only we can know what's right around us."

Earthcomber supports devices based on Windows Mobile 2003 and newer WindowsMobile versions. Spot Guides are available at publisher sites or on www.earthcomber.com. Free Earthcomber software, service and mapping are available at the Earthcomber.

