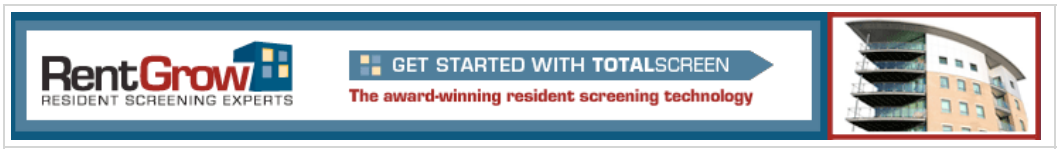

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Ultimate ILS Aggregator: Too Good to Be True?

Cazoodle claims it can crawl the Web and pull all apartment listings onto a single site.

By: Chris Wood

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A Google for the apartment industry? Perhaps, though maybe not as ubiquitous. From the same team at the University of Illinois' National Center for Supercomputing Applications that brought us things such as Telnet, Mosaic, and Netscape comes Cazoodle.com, a crawler-bot-empowered Web site that pulls apartment listings from virtually every ILS out there and displays them in one simple interface.

Promising "one search, all rentals, entire Web," Champaign, Ill.-based Cazoodle went live three months ago and is currently working out kinks like how to display pay-per-click featured listings and allow partnerning ILSs to gain better edit control of their listings. "It was born from our need as graduate students to find one simple location on the Web that aggregates all apartment listings," Cazoodle CTO and director Govind Kabra told MFE last week at the National Apartment Association's Education and Conference Exposition in Las Vegas. "But in actuality, it is something our industry has been looking for for a long time."

Integrated with Google Maps, Cazoodle allows users to narrow their apartment searches to the block level and offers street-side views that could create a renaissance in the need for curb appeal—at least in a virtual sense.

One hitch—Cazoodle doesn't yet crawl Craigslist, and company reps aren't sure that it ever will, citing the proliferation of fraud and advance-fee scams inherent to that site, as well as the flake factor: Craigslist posters who are unresponsive to inquiries on their own listings. In addition to getting more ILSs to partner up and offer more standardized and/or souped-up listings (Apartments.com is rumored to be interested), Kabra says his team is looking at ways to otherwise leverage the rent fundamentals data aggregated on the site.

"There are so many opportunities from vendor lead generation to getting true, real-time rent statistics and data," Kabra says. "We think the aggregation of data alone could enable many new online applications for the multifamily industry."

All optimism aside, multifamily ILS observers don't expect an overnight sensation. "You really have to wait and see how successful Cazoodle can become," says Eric Wu, co-founder of Atlanta-based Rentwiki.com, which launched earlier this year and has listings featured on Cazoodle. "Breaking into the established multifamily ILS space is not easily done."

A video interview with Kabra explaining the technology behind Cazoodle is available on the company's Web site here.

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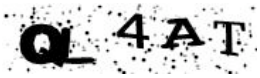
Enter code:  Enter the code shown in the image.

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