



Alamy Search Features . . .

*Stock Asylum Staff Report
June 19, 2007*

New technology to be rolled out by Alamy during the third quarter of this year could improve the quality of search results for image buyers. But, the new scheme could also mean more work for Alamy contributors, especially those who want to make sure their images appear high in search results, where the images are more likely to be seen and licensed.

Alamy CEO James West described the upcoming changes in an entry posted to the Alamy blog on this date. Among other things, West announced a new keywording structure that will ask contributors to grade their keywords based on relevance. He also announced that Alamy will for the first time share information about search activity involving each contributor's images.

In another matter, West noted that Alamy believes its collection will grow to 10

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million images by the end of this year, a significant increase over previous years. At the end of 2005, the Alamy library contained about four million images. Currently, the British stock photography company says it has more than 8.9 million images online.



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The new keywording page is designed to increase the relevancy of images displayed during customer searches and to prepare the collection for greater use by commercial buyers, West noted. Until now, the editorial market has accounted for most Alamy sales. However, the company recently has expressed greater interest in courting design and advertising clients.

On the new keywording page, West said, contributors will divide keywords into three categories, "essential," "main" and "comprehensive."



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There will be a description field for more information, which also will be used by the company's new search engine. The new search engine, which also will be launched during the third quarter of this year, will consider information in the description field as being of the lowest priority.



Besides the keywords themselves, the new keyword page will ask about the number of people in an image, the type of image (photograph, illustration or "cut-out") and the date the image was made. Alamy also wants to know if an image was digitally enhanced.

By layering the keywords and asking for additional information, Alamy believes its new search engine will efficiently return the most relevant images high in each search order.

"So as not to disadvantage contributors who keyworded their images under the old system, the new search engine will take into account whether an image was described under the old or the new keywording structure," West wrote in his blog

entry



The availability of relevant statistics through a feature called AlamyMeasures should help contributors determine how often images are seen and clicked on by customers. The feature will tell contributors how well their images are performing when compared to the rest of the Alamy collection, West said. This could help contributors fine-tune their keywords and descriptions. AlamyMeasures also will provide information about which key words are most often being used to find the images in each contributor's collection.

A figure for "total zooms" on a sample of the new statistics page would seem to indicate that the new search engine will have some sort of mid-sized pop-up preview.

Such previews are a relatively new convenience provided on a number of stock photography web sites. The pop-ups let buyers quickly see a mid-sized version of an image without having to open a new browser preview window.



Alamy has been trying to improve its search results for some time. The company launched a feature called AlamyRank last October. AlamyRank is designed to reward image suppliers who provide high quality work and keyword images well. Based on customer actions, AlamyRank attempts to show images from the most popular collections high in the search orders.

The company recently announced it is building a new search engine. West wrote that "The initial launch version will be a minor change compared to our existing system, but it has been built to be compatible with a new generation of products and tools from Alamy. These include a new keywording structure, future versions of AlamyRank, customer search activity reporting tools, greater speed, and stronger relevancy."

"The projects outlined above mark the start of an exciting time for our company. Giving finer control to our contributors over how their images are seen by the search engine will, in time, improve the quality and accuracy of the customer experience," wrote West.



The Alamy web site can be found at: <http://www.alamy.com>.

For West's blog entry: [click here](#).

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