



**BRENT OZAR**  
UNLIMITED®

## Dynamic SQL Pro Tips

How to build fast, efficient multi-parameter procedures.

2.4 p1

## Agenda

What we're trying to do

A few ways we shouldn't do it, and why

The “right” way: `sp_executesql`

The drawbacks of the right way

Pro tips: troubleshooting and tuning



2.4 p2

**“I want a search page.”  
Every user, ever**



2.4 p3



Q&A site: you ask, other people do your job

Whole database is available under Creative Commons

Download it free: [BrentOzar.com/go/querystack](https://BrentOzar.com/go/querystack)

We'll use the `dbo.Users` table



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## How big is our Users table today?

```
1  /* Make sure we don't have extra indexes on the Users table: */
2  DropIndex @TableName = 'Users';
3  GO
4
5  /* Turn on Actual Execution Plans and our tuning options: */
6  SET STATISTICS IO ON;
7  GO
8
9  SELECT COUNT(*) FROM dbo.Users;
10 GO
```

Stored proc in your resources

50 %

Results Messages Execution plan

(No column name)

1

299611

StackOverflow2010

9 SELECT COUNT(\*) FROM dbo.Users;  
10 GO

150 %

Results Messages Execution plan

(1 row affected)  
Table 'Users'. Scan count 5, logical reads 7715, physical reads 0, read-ahead 0

9 SELECT COUNT(\*) FROM dbo.Users;  
10 GO

150 %

Results Messages Execution plan

Query 1: Query cost (relative to the batch): 100  
SELECT COUNT(\*) FROM dbo.Users

SELECT Cost: 0 %

Compute Scalar Cost: 0 %

Stream Aggregate (Aggregate) Cost: 0 %

Parallelism (Gather Streams) Cost: 0 %

Stream Aggregate (Aggregate) Cost: 2 %

Clustered Index Scan (Clustered) [Users].[PK\_Users\_Id] Cost: 98 %

Remember that number

That's what a clustered index scan on dbo.Users costs

## Our proc has to look like this:

```
CREATE OR ALTER PROC dbo.usp_SearchUsers  
    @SearchDisplayName NVARCHAR(100) = NULL,  
    @SearchLocation NVARCHAR(100) = NULL,  
    @SearchReputation INT = NULL...
```

And folks want to pass in 1, 2, or 3 parameters, like just DisplayName, OR both Location and Reputation, and filter both.



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## But we wanna do less reads, so...

```
CREATE INDEX IX_DisplayName  
  ON dbo.Users (DisplayName);  
  
CREATE INDEX IX_Location  
  ON dbo.Users (Location);  
  
CREATE INDEX IX_Reputation  
  ON dbo.Users (Reputation);
```



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# **Version 1: the really bad idea**



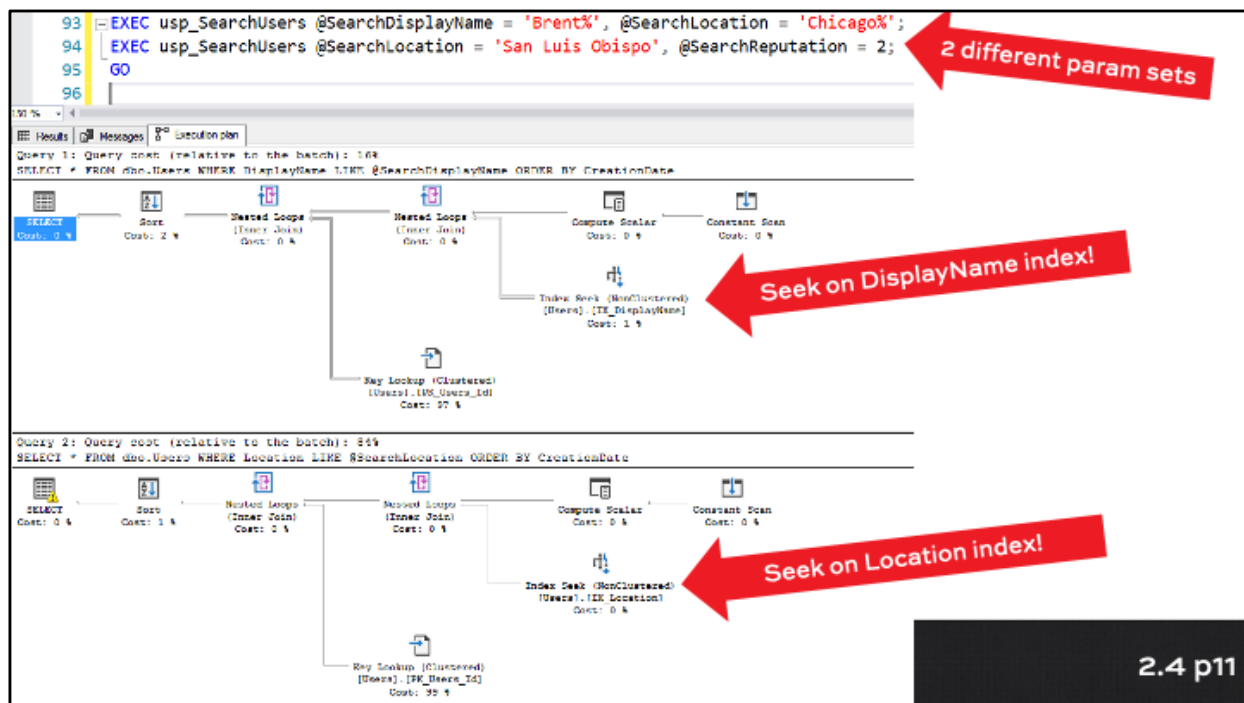
2.4 p9

```

CREATE OR ALTER PROC dbo.usp_SearchUsers
    @SearchDisplayName NVARCHAR(100) = NULL,
    @SearchLocation NVARCHAR(100) = NULL,
    @SearchReputation INT = NULL,
    @OrderBy NVARCHAR(100) = 'CreationDate'
BEGIN
    /* OrderBy isn't implemented yet in this version - I swear I'll do that later. Love, The Last Guy */
    IF @SearchDisplayName IS NOT NULL
    SELECT *
        FROM dbo.Users
        WHERE DisplayName LIKE @SearchDisplayName
        ORDER BY CreationDate;
    ELSE IF @SearchLocation IS NOT NULL
    SELECT *
        FROM dbo.Users
        WHERE Location LIKE @SearchLocation
        ORDER BY CreationDate;
    ELSE IF @SearchReputation IS NOT NULL
    SELECT *
        FROM dbo.Users
        WHERE Reputation = @SearchReputation
        ORDER BY CreationDate;
END
GO
/* Will that work? Is there a bug in that logic? */

```

You'll deal with this later



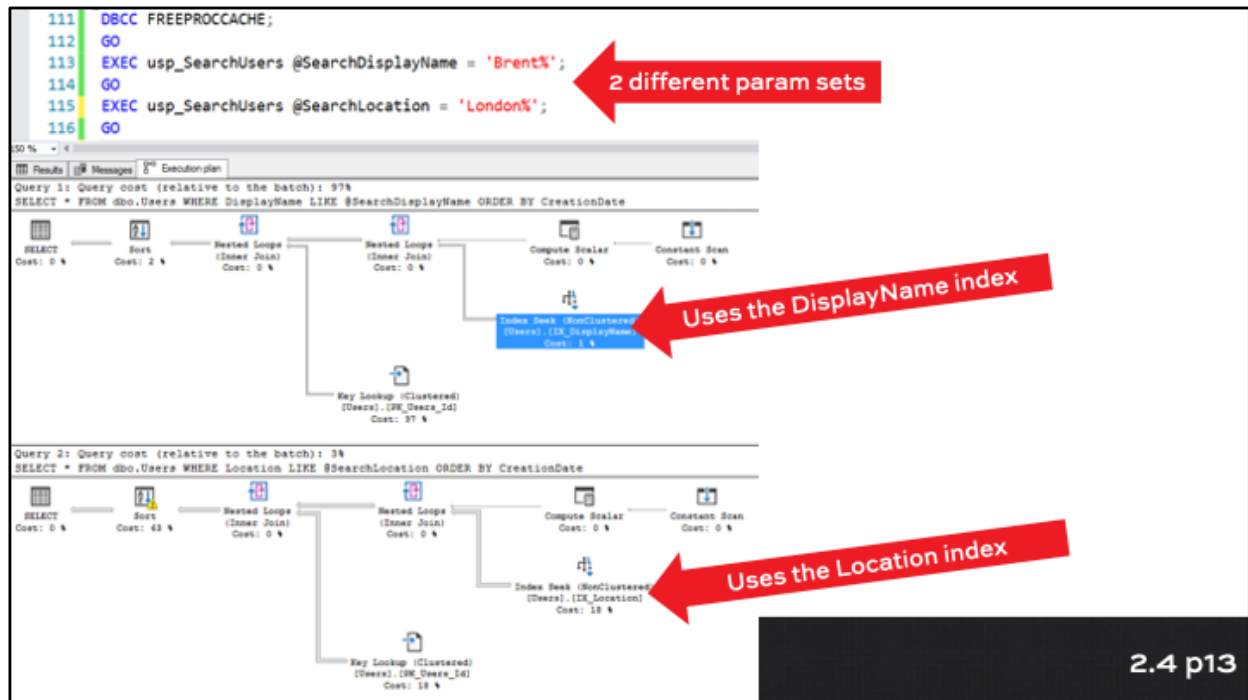
## **At first glance, it works.**

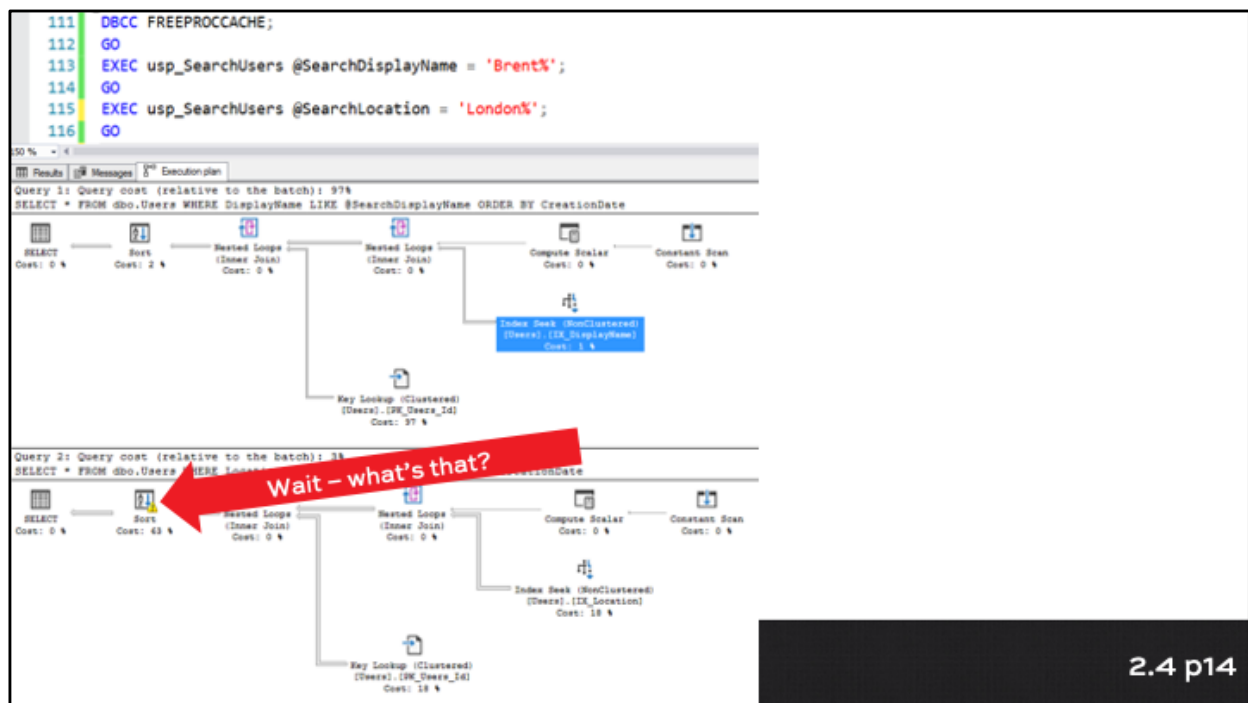
Granted, the results aren't accurate,  
but it is willing to use indexes.

But there's a catch.



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## The London sort is spilling to disk

Query 2: Query cost  
SELECT \* FROM dbo.Users

Actual Rewinds 0  
Node ID 0

Output List  
[StackOverflow2010].[dbo].[Users].Id,  
[StackOverflow2010].[dbo].[Users].AboutMe,  
[StackOverflow2010].[dbo].[Users].Age,  
[StackOverflow2010].[dbo].[Users].CreationDate,  
[StackOverflow2010].[dbo].[Users].DisplayName,  
[StackOverflow2010].[dbo].[Users].DownVotes,  
[StackOverflow2010].[dbo].[Users].EmailHash,  
[StackOverflow2010].[dbo].[Users].LastAccessDate,  
[StackOverflow2010].[dbo].[Users].Location,  
[StackOverflow2010].[dbo].[Users].Reputation,  
[StackOverflow2010].[dbo].[Users].UpVotes, [StackOve...]

Warnings  
Operator used tempdb to spill data during execution with spill level 1 and 1 spilled thread(s). Sort wrote 165 pages to and read 165 pages from tempdb with granted memory 1024KB and used memory 1024KB

Order By  
[StackOverflow2010].[dbo].[Users].CreationDate  
Ascending

ORDER BY CreationDate

ops in) %  
Compute Scalar Cost: 0 %  
Constant Scan Cost: 0 %  
Index Seek (NonClustered) [Users].[IX\_Location] Cost: 18 %

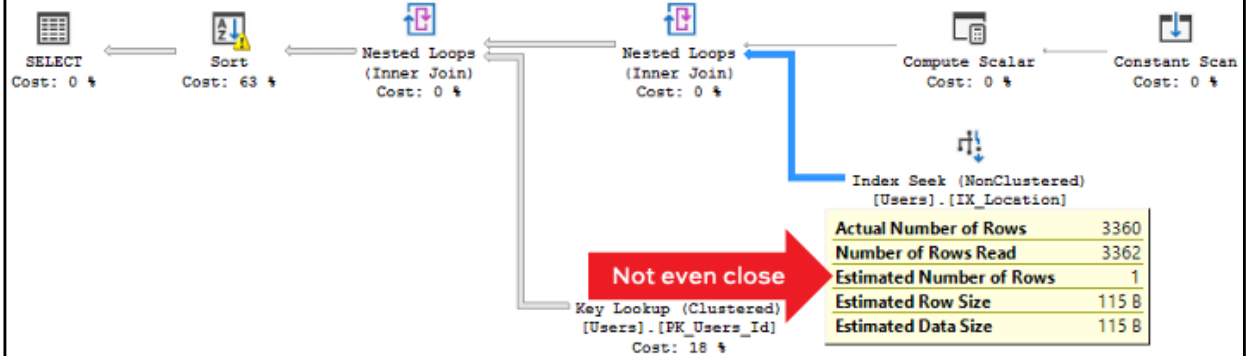
Uh oh

Query executed successfully.

## Because we underestimated rows

Query 2: Query cost (relative to the batch): 3%

```
SELECT * FROM dbo.Users WHERE Location LIKE @SearchLocation ORDER BY CreationDate
```



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## Remember, table has ~7000 pages

```
113 EXEC usp_SearchUsers @SearchDisplayName = 'Brent%';  
114 GO  
115 EXEC usp_SearchUsers @SearchLocation = 'London%';  
116 GO
```

Results Messages Execution plan

DBCC execution completed. If DBCC printed error messages, contact

(121 rows affected)

Table 'Worktable'. Scan count 0, logical reads 0, physical reads 0,

Table 'Users'. Scan count 1, logical reads 382, physical reads 0.

(1 row affected)

(3360 rows affected)

Table 'Worktable'. Scan count 0, logical reads 0, physical reads 0,

Table 'Users'. Scan count 1, logical reads 10108, physical reads 0.

This one is awesome

This is worse than a table scan



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## We're hitting parameter sniffing.

```
DBCC FREEPROCCACHE;  
GO  
EXEC usp_SearchUsers @SearchDisplayName = 'Brent%';  
GO  
EXEC usp_SearchUsers @SearchLocation = 'London%';  
GO
```

SQL Server compiles the entire plan  
the first time it runs,  
using the parameter values it was first run with.

So it's optimizing the @SearchLocation branch with a  
null @SearchLocation value.



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## **This design has 3 big problems.**


1. It produces the wrong results for param combos.
2. It's a little TOO willing to use indexes, even when they're worse than a table scan.
3. It underestimates memory grants.



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## Version 2: Accurate Results

```
CREATE OR ALTER PROC dbo.usp_SearchUsers
    @SearchDisplayName NVARCHAR(100) = NULL,
    @SearchLocation NVARCHAR(100) = NULL,
    @SearchReputation INT = NULL,
    @OrderBy NVARCHAR(100) = 'CreationDate'
BEGIN
SELECT *
    FROM dbo.Users
    WHERE (DisplayName LIKE @SearchDisplayName OR @SearchDisplayName IS NULL)
        AND (Location LIKE @SearchLocation OR @SearchLocation IS NULL)
        AND (Reputation = @SearchReputation OR @SearchReputation IS NULL)
    ORDER BY CreationDate;
END
GO
```



```

187 DBCC FREEPROCCACHE;
188 GO
189 EXEC usp_SearchUsers @SearchDisplayName = 'Brent%';
190 GO
191 EXEC usp_SearchUsers @SearchLocation = 'London%';
192 GO

```

2 different param sets

Query 1: Query cost (relative to the batch): 100%

SELECT \* FROM dbo.Users WHERE (DisplayName LIKE @SearchDisplayName OR @SearchDisp

Uses the DisplayName index – but – SCAN?

Query 2: Query cost (relative to the batch): 50%

SELECT \* FROM dbo.Users WHERE (DisplayName LIKE @SearchDisplayName OR @SearchDisp

Wait, what?!?

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```
189 EXEC usp_SearchUsers @SearchDisplayName = 'Brent%';
190 GO
191 EXEC usp_SearchUsers @SearchLocation = 'London%';
192 GO
```

Results Messages Execution plan

DBCC execution completed. If DBCC printed error messages, contact your system administrator.

(121 rows affected)

Table 'Worktable'. Scan count 0, logical reads 0, physical reads 0, bytes on disk 0, average degree of parallelism 1, optimizer cost 1, estimated number of rows for each predicate 121

Table 'Users'. Scan count 1, logical reads 1514, physical reads 1514, bytes on disk 1514, average degree of parallelism 1, optimizer cost 1, estimated number of rows for each predicate 121

(1 row affected)


(3360 rows affected)

Table 'Worktable'. Scan count 0, logical reads 0, physical reads 0, bytes on disk 0, average degree of parallelism 1, optimizer cost 1, estimated number of rows for each predicate 3360

Table 'Users'. Scan count 1, logical reads 918702, physical reads 918702, bytes on disk 918702, average degree of parallelism 1, optimizer cost 1, estimated number of rows for each predicate 3360

Not as good as the SEEK was

HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA



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```

187 DBCC FREEPROCCACHE;
188 GO
189 EXEC usp_SearchUsers @SearchDisplayName = 'Brent%';
190 GO
191 EXEC usp_SearchUsers @SearchLocation = 'London%';
192 GO

```

SQL Server builds a plan for a name

But it may not ALWAYS have a name

So it has to build a SCAN plan, not a seek

But thinks it won't have to do many key lookups

Query 1: Query cost (relative to the batch): 100%

SELECT \* FROM dbo.Users WHERE (DisplayName LIKE @SearchDisplayName OR @SearchDisp

Execution Plan for Query 1:

- SELECT (Cost: 0%)
  - Sort (Cost: 1%)
    - Nested Loops (Inner Join) (Cost: 16%)
      - Index Scan (Clustered) [Users].[IX\_DisplayName] (Cost: 58%)
        - Key Lookup (Clustered) [Users].[PK\_Users\_Id] (Cost: 26%)

Query 2: Query cost (relative to the batch): 50%

SELECT \* FROM dbo.Users WHERE (DisplayName LIKE @SearchDisplayName OR @SearchDisp

Execution Plan for Query 2:

- SELECT (Cost: 0%)
  - Sort (Cost: 1%)
    - Nested Loops (Inner Join) (Cost: 16%)
      - Index Scan (NonClustered) [Users].[IX\_DisplayName] (Cost: 58%)
        - Key Lookup (Clustered) [Users].[PK\_Users\_Id] (Cost: 26%)

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**Oddly, this performs fine  
IF you don't have any indexes.**

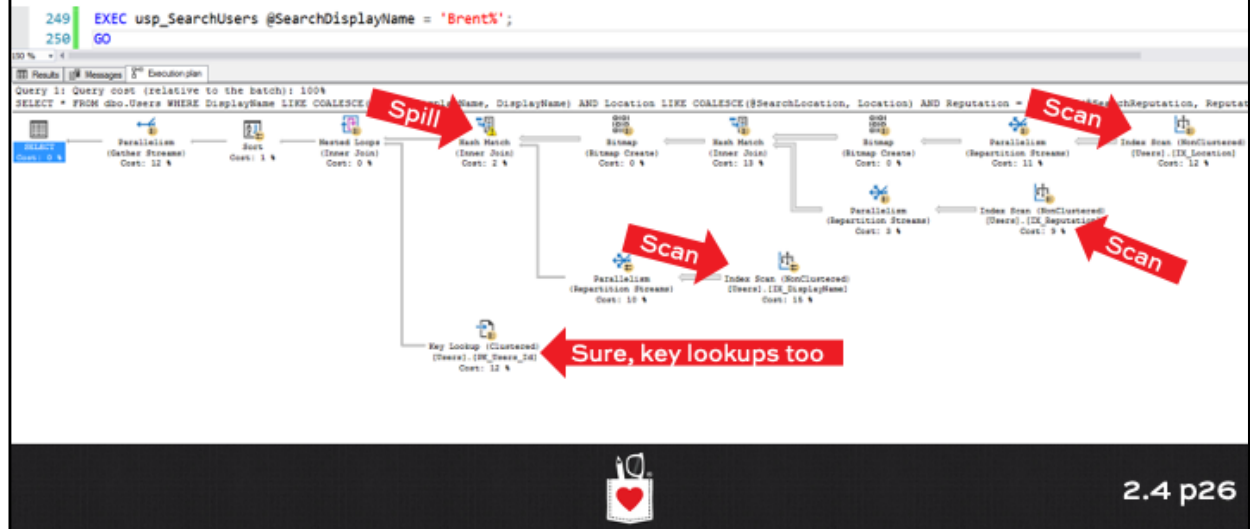
```
CREATE OR ALTER PROC dbo.usp_SearchUsers
    @SearchDisplayName NVARCHAR(100) = NULL,
    @SearchLocation NVARCHAR(100) = NULL,
    @SearchReputation INT = NULL,
    @OrderBy NVARCHAR(100) = 'CreationDate' AS
BEGIN
SELECT *
    FROM dbo.Users
    WHERE (DisplayName LIKE @SearchDisplayName OR @SearchDisplayName IS NULL)
        AND (Location LIKE @SearchLocation OR @SearchLocation IS NULL)
        AND (Reputation = @SearchReputation OR @SearchReputation IS NULL)
    ORDER BY CreationDate;
END
GO
```



## Version 3: COALESCE

```
CREATE OR ALTER PROC dbo.usp_SearchUsers
    @SearchDisplayName NVARCHAR(100) = NULL,
    @SearchLocation NVARCHAR(100) = NULL,
    @SearchReputation INT = NULL,
    @OrderBy NVARCHAR(100) = 'CreationDate' AS
BEGIN
SELECT *
    FROM dbo.Users
    WHERE DisplayName LIKE COALESCE(@SearchDisplayName, DisplayName)
        AND Location LIKE COALESCE(@SearchLocation, Location)
        AND Reputation = COALESCE(@SearchReputation, Reputation)
    ORDER BY CreationDate;
END
GO
```

# Welcome to Scandinavia



## Not great on reads, either

```
249 EXEC usp_SearchUsers @SearchDisplayName = 'Brent%';  
250 GO
```

Results Messages Execution plan

(64 rows affected)

Table 'Users'. Scan count 15, logical reads 2851, physical reads (

Table 'Worktable'. Scan count 0, logical reads 0, physical reads (

Table 'Workfile'. Scan count 24, logical reads 768, physical reads (

Table 'Worktable'. Scan count 0, logical reads 0, physical reads (

1/3 of the table

Hello, TempDB



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```

CREATE OR ALTER PROC dbo.usp_SearchUsers
    @SearchDisplayName NVARCHAR(100) = NULL,
    @SearchLocation NVARCHAR(100) = NULL,
    @SearchReputation INT = NULL,
    @OrderBy NVARCHAR(100) = 'CreationDate' AS
BEGIN
    DECLARE @StringToExecute NVARCHAR(4000);
    SET @StringToExecute = N'SELECT * FROM dbo.Users WHERE 1 = 1 ';

    IF @SearchDisplayName IS NOT NULL
        SET @StringToExecute = @StringToExecute + N' AND DisplayName LIKE @SearchDisplayName ';

    IF @SearchLocation IS NOT NULL
        SET @StringToExecute = @StringToExecute + N' AND Location LIKE @SearchLocation ';

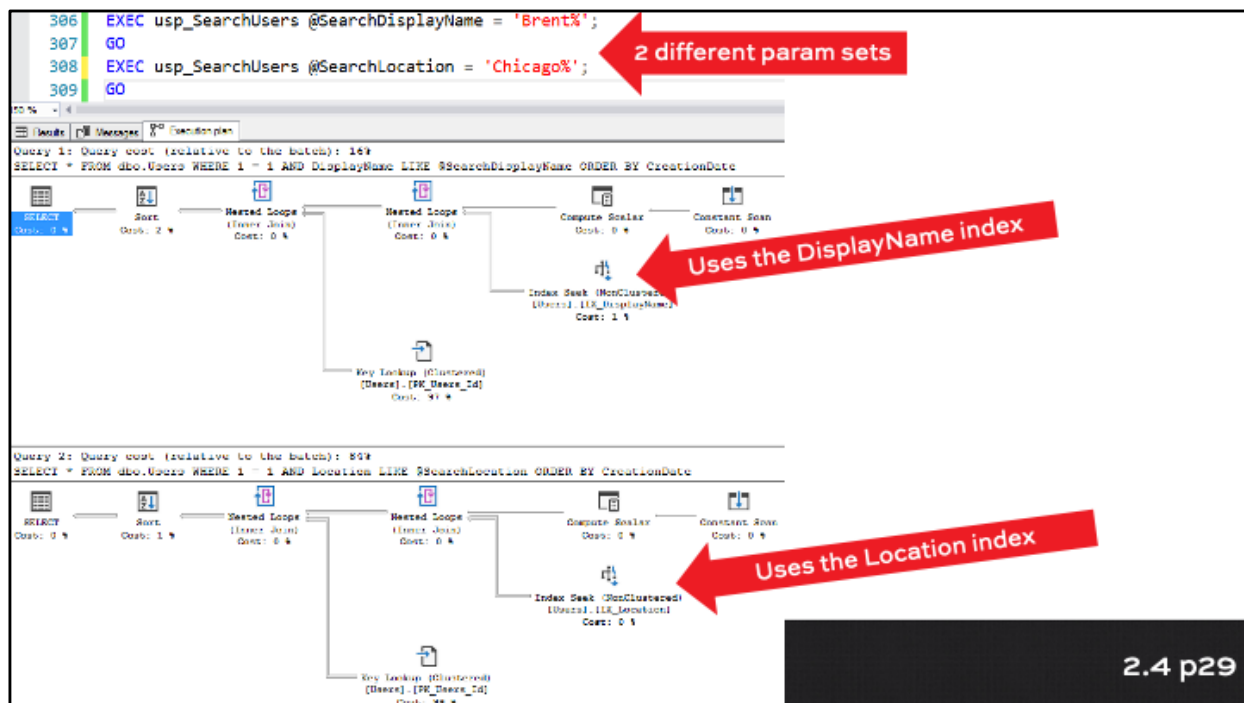
    IF @SearchReputation IS NOT NULL
        SET @StringToExecute = @StringToExecute + N' AND Reputation = @SearchReputation ';

    SET @StringToExecute = @StringToExecute + N' ORDER BY CreationDate; ';

    EXEC sp_executesql @StringToExecute,
        N'@SearchDisplayName NVARCHAR(100), @SearchLocation NVARCHAR(100), @SearchReputation INT',
        @SearchDisplayName, @SearchLocation, @SearchReputation;
END
GO

```

## Version 4: Dynamic SQL



## Logical reads look good, too

```
306 EXEC usp_SearchUsers @SearchDisplayName = 'Brent%';  
307 GO  
308 EXEC usp_SearchUsers @SearchLocation = 'Chicago%';  
309 GO
```



(121 rows affected)

Table 'Worktable'. Scan count 0, logical reads 0, physical reads 0,  
Table 'Users'. Scan count 1, logical reads 382, physical reads 0,

Not a lot of Brents

(1 row affected)

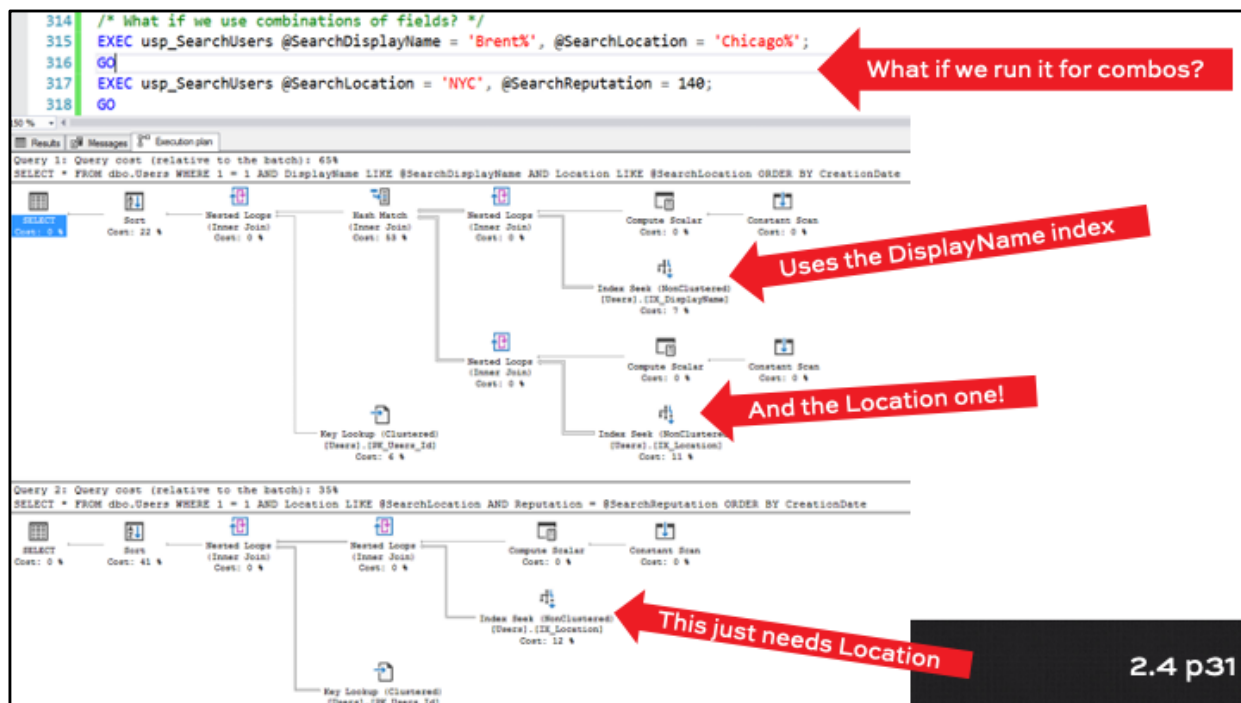
(913 rows affected)

Table 'Worktable'. Scan count 0, logical reads 0, physical reads 0,  
Table 'Users'. Scan count 1, logical reads 2813, physical reads 0,

Many Chicagoans



2.4 p30



## The Cache Catch

```
DBCC FREEPROCCACHE
GO
EXEC usp_SearchUsers @SearchDisplayName = 'Brent%';
GO
EXEC usp_SearchUsers @SearchLocation = 'Chicago%';
GO
EXEC usp_SearchUsers @SearchReputation = 2;
GO
EXEC usp_SearchUsers @SearchDisplayName = 'Brent%', @SearchLocation = 'Chicago%';
GO
EXEC usp_SearchUsers @SearchLocation = 'NYC', @SearchReputation = 140;
GO
EXEC usp_SearchUsers @SearchDisplayName = 'sp_BlitzErik', @SearchReputation = 140;
GO
sp_BlitzCache
GO
```



## We bloat the plan cache a little.

```

340 sp_BlitzCache
341 GO

```

Database	Cost	Query Text	Query Type	# Executions
StackOverflow2010	0	CREATE PROC dbo.usp_SearchUsers @SearchDisplay/Name NVARCHAR(100) = NULL, @SearchLocation NVARCHAR(100) = NULL, @SearchReputat...	Procedure or Function [dbo].[usp_SearchUsers]	6
StackOverflow2010	2.77561	SELECT * FROM dbo.Users WHERE 1 = 1 AND Location LIKE @SearchLocation ORDER BY CreationDate	Statement	1
StackOverflow2010	0.051207	SELECT * FROM dbo.Users WHERE 1 = 1 AND Display/Name LIKE @SearchDisplay/Name AND Location LIKE @SearchLocation ORDER BY CreationDate	Statement	1
StackOverflow2010	0.537244	SELECT * FROM dbo.Users WHERE 1 = 1 AND Display/Name LIKE @SearchDisplay/Name ORDER BY CreationDate	Statement	1
StackOverflow2010	0.368951	SELECT * FROM dbo.Users WHERE 1 = 1 AND Reputation = @SearchReputation ORDER BY CreationDate	Statement	1
StackOverflow2010	0.0375929	SELECT * FROM dbo.Users WHERE 1 = 1 AND Display/Name LIKE @SearchDisplay/Name AND Reputation = @SearchReputation ORDER BY CreationDate	Statement	1
StackOverflow2010	0.0270339	SELECT * FROM dbo.Users WHERE 1 = 1 AND Location LIKE @SearchLocation AND Reputation = @SearchReputation ORDER BY CreationDate	Statement	1

The proc has its own entry, executed 6 times.

Each dynamic SQL string gets its own line.

But each dynamic plan is great\* for that set of parameters!



\* Not necessarily.

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## I got 99 problems plans

	Database	Cost	Query Text	Warnings
1	StackOverflow2010	0	CREATE PROC dbo.usp_SearchUsers @SearchDisplayName NVARCHAR(100) = NULL, @SearchLocati...	Plan created last 4hrs, Long Running With Low CPU
2	StackOverflow2010	2.77661	SELECT * FROM dbo.Users WHERE 1 = 1 AND Location LIKE @SearchLocation ORDER BY CreationDate	Downlevel CE, Expensive Key Lookup, Unused Memory Grant, Plan created last 4hrs
3	StackOverflow2010	0.051207	SELECT * FROM dbo.Users WHERE 1 = 1 AND DisplayName LIKE @SearchDisplayName AND Location LI...	Downlevel CE, Plan created last 4hrs
4	StackOverflow2010	0.537244	SELECT * FROM dbo.Users WHERE 1 = 1 AND DisplayName LIKE @SearchDisplayName ORDER BY Creat...	Downlevel CE, Unused Memory Grant, Plan created last 4hrs, Long Runn...
5	StackOverflow2010	0.368651	SELECT * FROM dbo.Users WHERE 1 = 1 AND Reputation = @SearchReputation ORDER BY CreationDate	Downlevel CE, Unused Memory Grant, Plan created last 4hrs
6	StackOverflow2010	0.0379809	SELECT * FROM dbo.Users WHERE 1 = 1 AND DisplayName LIKE @SearchDisplayName AND Reputation ...	Downlevel CE, Plan created last 4hrs
7	StackOverflow2010	0.0276889	SELECT * FROM dbo.Users WHERE 1 = 1 AND Location LIKE @SearchLocation AND Reputation = @Sear...	Downlevel CE, Plan created last 4hrs

Each dynamic SQL plan has its own:

- Plan cache entry
- Memory grant
- Row estimations
- Parameter sniffing issues



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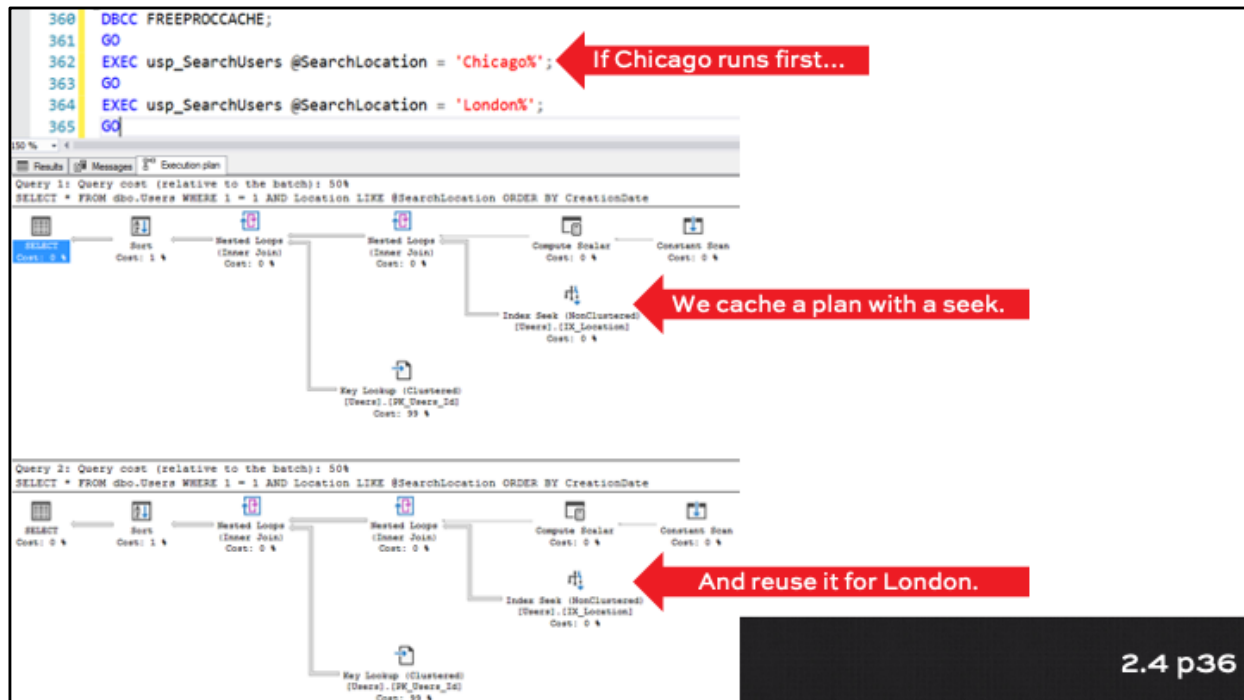
## **Yes, I can still have param sniffing.**

Chicago: big, but not huge.

London: big enough that a scan makes more sense.



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```

371 DBCC FREEPROCCACHE;
372 GO
373 EXEC usp_SearchUsers @SearchLocation = 'London%';
374 GO
375 EXEC usp_SearchUsers @SearchLocation = 'Chicago%';
376 GO
377

```

**If London runs first...**

**We cache a plan with a scan.**

**And reuse it for Chicago**

**But the memory grant is too big.**

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## Dynamic SQL

Gives you the luxury of multiple plans,  
one for each set of parameters

But curses you with multiple plans,  
each of which may have parameter sniffing issues.



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## There's much more to learn.

Your demo scripts continue with pro tips for:

- Using comments inside the dynamic SQL string itself for tracking down the source
- Formatting the strings with CR/LR
- Using debug variables to print at strategic times
- The perils of dynamic sorting



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# Erland goes even deeper.

Alternate tables, forced recompilation, CLR...

← → ↻ ⓘ www.sommarskog.se/dyn-search.html ☆ 📄 🔒 📺 ⓘ ⋮

## Dynamic Search Conditions in T-SQL

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### 1. Introduction

It is very common in information systems to have functions where the users are able to search the data by selecting freely among many possible criterias. When you implement such a function with SQL Server there are two challenges: to produce the correct result and have good performance.



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