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See True listed in the unique visitors rankings as #5 (see the bottom)

16% of surfers visit dating sites

by Eric Gwinn.

J. Lo used to sing that her love don't cost a thing, but then she never used the Web to find the loves of her life.

From January to June in 2004, Web surfers spent \$235.3 million on online personals, according to the Online Publishers Association and comScore Networks. That figure is about 10 percent more than the \$214.3 million spent in the first half of 2003. Just think, in the first half of 2001, people spent only \$22.6 million on Web personals.

A lot of people are visiting Web dating sites, even if they aren't subscribing to the services. Of America's 161 million Internet users, 16 percent visited a personals site in December 2004, according to comScore Media Metrix. That includes surfers who were just reading ads and those paying to write their own and reply to others. Yahoo Personals, the most-visited dating site in December, charges subscribers \$19.95 a month.

Keeping an eye on things

Eventually, cable TV subscribers will be able to watch more than "The Sopranos" -- they'll be able to watch their house while on vacation.

Using the Internet and Web cameras, RCN cable customers with Windows operating systems can pay \$10 a month to join WebWatch (via www.rcn.com), a new service that installs a wireless gateway and wireless color camera in the home (for a onetime \$100 installation charge). With that setup, you could go to any computer hooked up to the Internet and check in on your home through the same kind of password-protected connection that online shoppers and Web bank customers use.

Whenever the camera senses motion, it will record 10 seconds of video to RCN's server (RCN says it has no way to see this video; only you and others with your password can).

WebWatch also lets you send out e-mail invitations to a number of friends (RCN wouldn't reveal the limit of people you can invite), allowing them to log onto their computers and see whatever the camera in your home sees: nice, if you're having a birthday party for your 1-year-old but your parents can't attend -- they can be there via the Internet.

New Jersey-based RCN, which emerged from bankruptcy protection last December, has subscribers in Philadelphia, Boston, San Francisco and other areas, including 78,000 customers in the Chicago area.

Save the date

March 24 is the date the video game landscape will change. That's when Sony will offer its PlayStation Portable, or PSP, for \$250, going head-to-head against the \$150 Nintendo DS that launched Nov. 21. While the DS concentrates on gaming, the PSP also will play movies and music using Sony's proprietary 1.8 gigabyte media discs or a Memory Stick.

The DS has sold more than 2.8 million worldwide. Sony had 800,000 PSPs in Japan's stores when the units went on sale for about \$190 in December. Sony says it will have 1 million PSPs in U.S. stores in March.

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Millions surf for love

Top 5 Web dating sites, ranked by number of unique visitors in

December 2004:

Yahoo Personals, 5.7 million

Match.com sites, 4.4 million

MatchNet, 3.89 million

Eharmony.com, 1.9 million

*******True.com, 1.5 million *******