

# Playboy magazine offers Internet service

## Unpublished playmate shots popular

By Jay Dougherty  
DEUTSCHE PRESSE AGENTUR

**W**ith all the talk of sex in cyberspace these days, it was only a matter of time before the Playboy Entertainment Group, publishers of Playboy magazine, got in on the act.

"We learned from a story in the Wall Street Journal that the most searched-for word on the Internet was 'sex,'" says Eileen Kent, director of new media at Playboy. "The second most searched-for word was 'Playboy.'"

So last year Playboy became the first mainstream adult magazine to test out a new Internet-based service for its readers around the world.

The Playboy "home page" on the Internet's World Wide Web — that part of the Internet growing fastest because it allows companies to combine text, graphics and links to other services — is booming.

With as many as 300,000 people from more than 50 countries logging on each day, the Playboy home page — called the "Bunnynet" by some in the business — has quickly established itself as a firm fixture in the company's repertoire of sexy offerings.

The official word from Playboy is that it established a presence on the Internet in order to have, as Ms. Kent says, "a really direct connection to the Playboy fan."

With market research showing that most Internet users are male, well-educated and upper-income, however, the move seems an obvious one for Playboy and other magazines like it.

So far, though, Playboy's competitors haven't caught on. But that likely will not remain the case for long, given the popularity of the service and the reaction of its users.

Right now, Playboy makes no money from the Bunnynet. That will change, however, once new data encryption methods, which should appear later this year, allow Internet users to give out their credit-card numbers safely.

"When there is credit-card security, then we'll be there for the business opportunities," says Ms. Kent.

The main attraction of Playboy's service, as one might imagine, is not the normal text-based fare that one generally finds on the Internet. "Everyone wants to see the unpublished pictures of our playmates," says Ms. Kent.

So Ms. Kent and company have complied by making unpublished pictures of each month's playmates a regular feature of the Bunnynet.

Concerns have been raised that because the Internet is a totally free, uncensored world, it's impossible to impose restrictions on publications like Playboy, which some see as degrading to women and harmful to children.

Ms. Kent, however, discounts such concerns.

"We believe that we represent a certain kind of freedom, and we've always been an advocate of freedom-of-speech rights," she says. "I'm sure there are people upset by nudity, but the fact is there is nudity on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, so live with it."

• Distributed by Scripps Howard.