

Advertising | Lisa Napoli

The Internet magazine Salon gets a new address and plans its first extensive marketing campaign.

OF all the changes set to be announced today by Salon, the on-line magazine published by Salon Internet Inc., perhaps the biggest is a new address.

After three and a half years of haggling, David Talbot, Salon's editor and founder, has persuaded the owner of the Internet address, www.salon.com, to sell his domain name.

Mr. Talbot is counting not only on the new Internet address but on a national advertising campaign, a newly designed site and a larger staff to help attract many more visitors to his digital publication. More visitors, in turn, would attract new advertisers. Regular advertisers in Salon already include the Saturn unit of the General Motors Corporation, DaimlerChrysler A.G.'s Mercedes-Benz division and the AT&T Corporation.

Mr. Talbot and his staff have been rethinking Salon and the role it should play in the ever-dense media universe since late last year, primarily because of the news media attention and the controversy Salon attracted as Congress moved toward impeaching President Clinton. In September, the magazine reported that Representative Henry Hyde, the Republican chairman of the House Judiciary Committee who would lead the impeachment effort, had once been involved in an extra-marital affair. That report sent potential readers searching for the Web site of the magazine.

But many could not find it. Instead, when readers logged on to the address where they thought they would find Salon, they instead found themselves at a Web site owned by Roy Frederickson, who owns two beauty salons in Austin, Tex. Mr. Frederickson said he was planning to use the site as a portal for the hairdressing business.

Salon magazine, meanwhile, had been residing at three Internet addresses — www.salon1999.com, www.salonmagazine.com and www.salon.net — since its debut in November 1995.

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Mothers Who Think

Monday, April 5, 1999



► **Birth of a reader** Louise May Alkon closed a gap for me when I was a bookless country girl; now I find myself trying to close a gap for her.
 By Bobbie Ann Mason

Elsewhere in Salon today

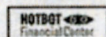
► **Sex police** Should doctors perform surgery on mixed-sex babies without the parents' consent?
 [Health & Sex - 04/05/99]

► **All about women** Natalie Angier's new book on women's bodies, "An Intimate Geography"
 [Books - 02/02/99]

Illustration by Barbara Pollack

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The on-line magazine Salon has a new Web address. "Mothers Who Think" is part of one of the two sections being introduced today.

Though Mr. Talbot would not disclose the exact price he paid for www.salon.com, he did say a promise of stock, an undisclosed sum of cash and the salon.net domain finally persuaded Mr. Frederickson to sell.

"The only reason I agreed to the deal is I respect what they're doing," Mr. Frederickson said. "Nothing they could have said would have convinced me if I didn't think they had a great future."

Even with its old address, however, Salon had been attracting 1.2 million different visitors a month, according to Mr. Talbot.

But to expand the magazine from a haven for intellectual essays and commentaries from the likes of Sallie Tisdale, Camille Paglia and Anne Lamott, Mr. Talbot knew the domain name was key. Still, he also saw the Web growing from a curious oddity to a critical information source, and he decided he needed to change his publication as the public perception of the Web matured.

"This is not a medium for New

Yorker-type content. It's a medium for newspaper-type content," he said. "What the Web is mostly known for at this point is cud-chewing punditry. That's fine. It's a good medium for that. We decided we want to go beyond that and start breaking stories."

But he acknowledged that breaking news on a Web site, where boutique magazines sit side by side with behemoth news-gathering institutions like CNN and where publishing cycles never cease, will be a challenge.

"We can't compete on that level," he said. "We can make a contribution, as we did with coverage of Ken Starr and the impeachment hearings. It's a huge goal and we don't take it on lightly."

Salon will be introducing two sections today, focusing on health and people. Obituaries are being added to the site as well, Mr. Talbot said, along with a daily gossip column. And the magazine is opening an office in Washington, where it has

hired two staff reporters. In all, 20 new staff members have been added.

Mr. Talbot said he was now attracting much financial interest from venture capitalists who had once shunned companies like Salon that created original content for the Web.

"When we started, no one wanted to invest in content companies," he said. "Everyone said, 'We're interested in E-commerce.'" But those attitudes have changed this year, Mr. Talbot said.

Salon posted revenue of \$3.5 million in its fiscal year ended April 1, derived largely from advertising, but Mr. Talbot said the magazine was not yet profitable. As for whether the company would file for an initial public offering and seize the frenzied momentum from Internet stocks, he said, "We'd have to be crazy not to consider it seriously."

The latest round of venture capital financing is helping to pay for the expanded staff and to start Salon's first advertising campaign, created by **Odiorne Wilde Narraway & Partners** in San Francisco, in print magazines including The New Yorker, American Monthly, Rolling Stone, Entertainment Weekly and Fast Company next month. A radio campaign will begin shortly thereafter. Except for one advertisement a year in The New York Times Book Review to announce its annual book awards, "we haven't spent a dime," Mr. Talbot said, "unlike people like Candice Carpenter and iVillage," referring to the co-founder of the on-line site for women. "We obviously need to do more of what they've done. We're taking an aggressive stance."

This is another reason he considers the simplified Web address to be so critical. There is nothing particularly catchy or memorable about having to explain that Salon can be found anywhere other than www.salon.com.

"That's gold," he said. "It's priceless."