

Red Cross site spikes in Sept. readership

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In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, relief and assistance Web sites such as RedCross.org saw huge spikes in visitation in September, according to Internet audience measurement service comScore.

RedCross.org, the home page of disaster relief organization The American Red Cross, reached 9.6 million visitors in September, more than five times its audience for August, according to comScore information that was released this week.

"The Internet's role in these disasters has been multi-dimensional," said Peter Daboll, president and CEO of comScore's Media Matrix ratings company.

"Human outreach in the wake of these disasters has proven that the Internet is truly a community of communities, bringing together people and services to play critical roles in the process of recovery and rejuvenation," Daboll added.

In addition, FEMA.gov, the site of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, had 4.9 million visitors in September, almost four times more than the previous month.

September was also a good month for sports gambling Web sites, as the 2005 football season kicked off. Sportingbet PLC, a group that owns several sports betting sites, saw visitation rise 82 percent to 5.4 million.

Educational reference Web sites also did well in September, with school

back in session. Lexico Publishing Group, which owns Reference.com and Dictionary.com, saw a 48-percent increase in visitation from August to September, pulling in 9.5 million viewers in September.

Additionally, National Geographic's Web site's unique visitation rose 63 percent to 3.4 million.

Credit agency Equifax Inc. saw its Web holdings rise 44 percent in viewership to 3.5 million, and AnnualCreditReport.com's site rose 41 percent to 3.4 million.

Among categories of Web sites, the biggest gainers in September were community and religion sites, which increased readership 10 percent to 13.9 million. Also making big leaps were retail and entertainment sites, which both grew 8 percent in audience.

In comScore's monthly rank of the top 50 Internet properties, Yahoo! once again held down the top spot, getting over 123 million unique visitors in September. comScore listed the overall number of Internet users at 169 million, meaning 73 percent of Internet users in September came across a Yahoo! page.

In second place was Time Warner Network, with 119 million unique visitors, or 70 percent of Internet users. Microsoft MSN took third place, with 114 million visitors, or 67 percent of Internet users.

Google and eBay rounded out the top five, with 87 million and 70 million unique visitors respectively.

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