

Non-porn players rush to grab .xxx websites

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File illustration photo shows a woman surfing the web at an Internet cafe. Colleges and museums have rushed to grab online addresses in the ".xxx" domain to prevent porn purveyors from using their names in the Internet's new red light district.

Colleges, museums and well known groups have rushed to grab online addresses in the ".xxx" domain to prevent porn purveyors from using their names in the Internet's new red light district.

Public sales of .xxx addresses began last week after ICM Registry gave companies, groups, actors, porn stars and other well known people or groups opportunities to secure websites related to their names.

Well-known colleges were among those quick to stake claims to .xxx websites, paying \$200 for a decade of exclusive control over addresses based on their names.

Despite painful budget woes in the California State college system, the University of California, Berkeley, paid \$1,200 for six .xxx web addresses based on name variations for the school and its Golden Bears football team.

UC Berkeley also opted to pay an annual fee of \$102 to maintain a "calbears.xxx" website it did not intend to use, according to college spokesman Robert Sanders.

While the university football team is referred to as the Cal Bears, the name did not meet trademark requirements for sidelining an address for a decade for \$200, he explained.

"Basically, we're trying to safeguard the university's name and its trademark from being used by people in a manner we would find inappropriate," Sanders told AFP on Tuesday.

"We wouldn't want to be associated with the industries that might use these kinds of sites," he added.

The state university in Kansas said it regretted spending it also believed necessary: almost \$3,000 for a range of .xxx addresses from the school's name to "KUgirls.xxx" and "KUnurses.xxx" -- all to safeguard its online image.

Florida-based ICM Registry is overseeing the top-level domain (TLD) geared for [adult entertainment](#) and reported that it is seeing nearly a million visits daily to buy.xxx website showing where the addresses can be purchased.

A check of website name indexing service WHOIS Lookup showed that .xxx addresses "reserved from registration" included UCBerkeley, Stanford, MOMA, Louvre, Sony, CocaCola, Vatican, and AFP as well as

GirlScouts and BoyScouts.

Lifetime rights to a trademarked brand .xxx could have been purchased during a 30-day "sunrise period" prior to general availability last week, according to ICM spokeswoman Loren Pomerantz.

"These names are not being 'blocked,' they are simply being bought up so as not to be purchased by anyone else," she told AFP.

"Prelaunch, governments were able to submit names to be reserved," Pomerantz continued. "They typically included politicians and culturally sensitive names."

Web addresses are sold through registrars such as Go Daddy and Network Solutions, and names not qualifying as trademarks are doled out the same ways that .com, .net, .edu and other domain addresses are purchased.

"Since there is no categorization of names that are purchased, and they are done through dozens of different registrars, there is no way to know who has bought what for what price," Pomerantz said.

Some popular web addresses such as gay.xxx were sold at auction. The gay.xxx address sold for several hundred thousand dollars, according to ICM.

San Francisco was among .xxx Web addresses being held for auction, since city names don't qualify as trademarks.

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) was among the groups that bought .xxx addresses with apparent plans to attract support for its cause, ICM said.

The non-profit Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) board in March approved a petition to add .xxx to the list of "generic top level domains," those endings that include .com, .net, and .org.

ICM chief executive Stuart Lawley estimated between \$10 million and \$20 million were spent on the campaign, which began in the year 2000.

He depicted the .xxx domain as "win, win, win" since it creates an online district clearly marked for those intent on finding or avoiding adult content and which automatically scans websites for viruses or other malicious codes.

The sites are also designed with tags to be easily identified by parental filter features in commonly used Web browsers, according to Lawley.

The risque online neighborhood was opposed by some adult industry firms that feel they are compelled to buy new website [addresses](#) to avoid others capitalizing on their names and by conservative groups opposed to porn.

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