

PERSONAL JOURNAL.



◀ The science and the mystery behind the latest dieting craze. **Aches & Pains** Page

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Dow Jones & Company. All Rights Reserved.

TUESDAY, APRIL 4, 2006

Social Networking Goes Mobile

MySpace, Facebook Strike Deals With Cell Companies; A New Set of Safety Concerns

By LI YUAN
And REBECCA BUCKMAN

IN A DEVELOPMENT likely to generate dismay from some parents and teachers, social networking sites MySpace and Facebook are going mobile.

Tens of millions of teenagers spend countless hours logging on to such sites, updating their profiles, posting pictures, writing blogs and exchanging messages. Until now, the services have been largely tethered to desktops or laptops. Now, Facebook Inc., a hugely popular social-networking Web site among college students, and Cingular Wireless and Sprint Nextel Corp. are preparing to launch a service that will make it possible for users to post messages on Facebook's home pages or search for other users' phone numbers and email addresses from a cellphone.

MySpace, the most popular social networking Web site, has made a deal with wireless venture Helio Inc. that later this spring will allow MySpace users to do such things as send photos and update the blogs on their MySpace online profile by cellphone. Others who access that profile would instantly be able to see and read about what's happening at, say, a local hot spot.

While scaled-down social networking services have been available to cellphone users for a few years, the latest deals aim to make the sites' core features and functions available anywhere. Previously, such mobile features consisted of updates and alerts via text message that users often had to log back on to the site to respond to. The cellphone services of MySpace and Facebook, so far, have been mostly limited to text messages. A Facebook spokeswoman adds that extending some Facebook services to cellphones "doesn't pose any additional privacy risks" since the same privacy settings and controls that people put on their Facebook home pages apply to phone services.

The new features, while not the equivalent of using the full Web site on the go, are a significant step forward for the social net-

Please Turn to Page D2, Column 4



New to cellphones: **MySpace** features (foreground) and **AirG** services (background).

Below: **PhoneTag**, a cellphone game that resembles *Capture the Flag*, but on an urban scale.



Beyond Brick Breaker

By NICK WINGFIELD

CELLPHONE USERS have long killed time in buses and airport lounges by playing the simple puzzle and action games that come with most mobile devices. Coming next to cellphones are games that require players to race around real-life cities hunting for other players to "tag" and games that challenge sports fans to guess the next moves of athletes in NFL games.

In recent years, there has been an explosion in games that users can purchase for an extra fee and download wirelessly to cellphones, including everything from racing titles to shooting games that let players bag deer. Now, game makers are seeking ways of entertaining users on the go with a new

generation of cellphone games that encourage players to interact in the physical world or with other media, such as television.

Many of the latest offerings from the mobile-games business will be on display at CTIA Wireless 2006, a big cellular-phone industry gathering in Las Vegas this week. Among them: PhoneTag, a game from an entertainment company founded by actors Ben Affleck and Matt Damon that is something like capture the flag—the old Boy Scout game in which players hunt for an opposing team's flag—on an urban scale. Another company, AirPlay Network Inc., is expected to announce a deal with Sprint Nextel Corp. to bring a range of

Please Turn to Page D2, Column 4

Social Networking Goes Mobile

Continued From Page D1

working concept, allowing users to look up names and browse message boards wirelessly.

Social networking sites have become hugely popular on the Internet, especially among teenagers and college students, by allowing users to create personalized Web pages and share them with others. In February, Facebook sites had 10.5 million unique visitors, compared to 37.3 million visitors to rival MySpace.com, according to research firm comScore Media Metrix, which makes it the second most-visited site on the Internet, behind Yahoo.com of Yahoo Inc.

Facebook has recently talked with media and Internet companies, including Viacom Inc., about possible partnerships or being acquired by them. News Corp. last year paid \$580 million, plus a \$69 million loan, to buy the parent company, Inter-mix Media Inc., of MySpace.com.

Wireless companies are pushing to offer more social networking features because the young people that gravitate to these services also tend to be the heaviest users of text messaging, picture messaging and ring tone downloads. These services are becoming increasingly important as growth in cellphone service subscription is expected to decline and rate competition intensifies.

Cellphones can also take social networking beyond what is possible on computers because of their ability to identify the approximate location of callers and help users search for kindred spirits in the area. Cingular subscribers, for example, have access to CoolTalk, a service from AirG Inc., and Rabble, developed by Inter-casting Corp. Users of these services can specify whether they want to search for other members within a one-mile, five-mile or 20-mile radius or search by ZIP Code, neighborhood or city. Once they have found an interesting person they can communicate with them by phone, text message and even ex-

change photographs before deciding to meet. So if the other person is nearby, such as in a coffeeshop, the two people can meet up immediately.

Wireless companies usually charge five to 10 cents for each text message received and sent. They also sell a bucket of text messages for \$5 to \$10 a month. Picture messaging cost much more. Sprint charges \$5 a month plus bandwidth usage if phone users only send a few messages a month. For people send a lot of pictures or want to browse

Wireless carriers are expected to be held responsible for what appears on cellphones.

the Web on their phones, Sprint recommends \$15 to \$25 a month data packages that allow unlimited usage.

Yesterday Facebook's new mobile services were made available to students at three colleges—Harvard University, Stanford University and the University of California at Berkeley. They will be available to students at more than 2,000 universities by the end of this month and high school Facebook users by early May, company officials say.

Any phones with text-messaging capabilities can support the new Facebook services; students don't have to download special software or pay extra, though they may pay more total fees for data usage if they send more text messages.

Facebook also has moved its popular "poking" application to phones: Users "poke" others on Facebook by sending quick, blank messages—recipients get a notification that says "you've been poked"—that indicates someone is think-

ing about them. In addition, students can now use their phones to locate phone numbers or email addresses of other Facebook users; they send a text message to the address "fbook", a centralized directory, which looks up the name. (Facebook users can use privacy controls to limit those who can access phone numbers and other identifying information.)

Industry analysts say that social networking on cellphone is still in its early stage, and it isn't clear if it will become popular. Cellphones that support more sophisticated services can cost as much as \$300, which may be out of reach for many teenagers and college students. They also would have to pay an extra \$10 to \$25 a month for data packages.

Meanwhile, some concerns have been raised by parents, educators and law-enforcement officials about the potential dangers of social-networking sites. Some of the sites have been accused of exposing children to risqué content and sexual predators. Jo Anne Swyers, a lieutenant at a sheriff's department in Dodge County, Wis., for instance, says the new wireless social networking features will make it harder for law enforcement to protect children.

All major cellphone carriers say they offer free parental-control services. Parents can either disable or lock data services if they would like to keep their children from using such social-networking services, or they can call the providers to turn off certain features. Chris DeWolfe, MySpace chief executive officer, says that the Web site "takes our users safety very seriously" and reviews pictures and other materials. Helio says it will require MySpace users to affirm that they're 18 years and older when signing in. AirG has a staff of 15 that monitors traffic and filters out inappropriate words, pictures, and numbers and texts that look like phone numbers and addresses.

—Jessica E. Vascellaro contributed to this article.