BUSINESS IN VANCOUVER

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New economy

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Fairchild expands media empire with Web

Competitors already target Chinese Canadians with Internet news

Glen Korstron

he media company with the largest reach among Chinese-Canadians is expanding its grasp with a Web site catering to North American audiences.

Fairchild Group has swallowed Vancouver-based Web site developer and Internet service provider Lynx Communications (www.lynx.net), created a new Internet portal site dubbed Eseenet.com, and changed the name of the company to Eseenet.com Ltd., which will now have Lynx Communications as one division.

The Fairchild Media Group (www.fairchildtv.com) is a division of the Fairchild Group and it includes Chinese-language TV stations in Vancouver and Toronto and five Chinese-language radio stations across the country. It also produces the monthly Popular Lifestyle and Entertainment Magazine, which has a circulation that exceeds 45,000.

Eseenet.com has had nine million hits—a respectable number—since rate e-commerce in

its July 26 launch, according to Eseenet.com vice president of operations **David Lai**, who formerly owned Lynx Communications.

Lai said that in the past month his company has spent more than \$40,000 to launch the site and the hits are coming from all across Canada. Eseenet.com offers news articles and shopping links and hopes to add online education courses.

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"We're going to be able to pick and choose some of the stories for the site from Fairchild TV and radio," said Fairchild Group chair and CEO Thomas Fung, who closed the deal for

the new acquisitions in late June.
"All the Chinese [language] Internet sites are mostly from Asia and their content is very much focused in Asia. None of them focus on Canada or North America so we see that there's a big market there."

Although Vancouver-based Fairchild Group claims it's a unique approach, it's already being done in

the competitive world of Chinese Canadian media.

Toronto-based Netvigator.ca focuses on Chinese Canadians. That site is owned by Pacific Century Cyberworks, a company that formed on August 17 from a merger between two Hong Kong-based companies – Pacific Century Cyberworks and Cable and Wireless HTK.

Launched in September 1999, Netvigator.ca averages one million page views per month, said Johnny Cheng, who is the Vancouver office's marketing manger. The site plans to include an English version and incorporate e-commerce in

September.

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operates a family of sites including one for Vancouver news accessible through www.SingTaoNA.com. The Sing Tao Media Group and the TorStar Corp. jointly own Sing Tao's Canadian papers in Toronto and Vancouver.

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Ming Pao Enterprise
Corporation Ltd., which
owns Vancouver's Ming
Pao Daily News, also publishes editions of the paper
with the same name in
Toronto, New York and
Hong Kong. The chain also
includes papers such as the

Yazhou Zhoukan, Ming Pao Weekly, and Ming Pao Monthly in Hong Kong. Its only online edition is for its Hong Kong paper (www.mingpao.com).

Despite the competition, the Fairchild Group, which employs about 500 people in the Lower Mainland alone, is doing well, Fung said.

"We're doing OK, otherwise we wouldn't be able to afford to burn



Esee picking: Thomas Fung buys Web firm

money," he said, referring to the expenditures getting the Eseenet.com portal site off the ground.

Fung said he would double the 20person staff at Lynx Communications' Vancouver office while adding five new people in Toronto, where there were none before.

Fung, a high-profile member of Vancouver's Asian community, hinted there could be future restructuring to incorporate another Asian portal site or Chinese media site.

"In the future either we will buy somebody out or somebody will buy us out. I think those are the rules of the game," he said.

"There are a couple deals in negotiation but I can't say more."

Fung owns holdings such as Richmond's **Aberdeen Centre**.

A.C. Nielsen DJC research from 1998 noted Fairchild Television reached 82,900 people each day and Fairchild's radio station, AM 1470, reached 60,100. The daily newspapers Ming Pao reached 46,700 readers and Sing Tao reached 45,700 people.

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ncreasing numbers of home offices have mo computer. Some surve that there are more than multicomputered North homes. Add in the large small businesses with me PC and there's a growing products that make it entiles, printers and, increasenet connections between

Now, a number of to offer the benefits of netwout most of the costs. Idtechnology could be us having to open the comwithout needing to wiring, without needing server and with softwar mere mortals can run. Point series of netwadapters almost does it.

The company is us that brand name for two ferent types of technolo The original products us are so-called Home P (phoneline network ad ters). In other words, th plug into existing pho lines. While PCI mod require cracking open case, Universal Serial I (USB) models, paralle port models, and notebo models simply plug much fuss. Intel's orig ran at a somewhat po but a later revision runs Ethernet's 10 Mbps. T models cost about \$10 slower models are still around \$70.

Recently, the compa pair of wireless AnyPoir The (approximately \$16 PC Card models offer 1. working within more metres without any ca This is especially attractive a notebook, which may variety of locations, while ing it to share files, pri Internet connection with computer.

Both the Home PNA models offer exception installation software. T greatly simplifies the son bersome task of setting dows-based network and ves and printers. Option