

Outsider trading

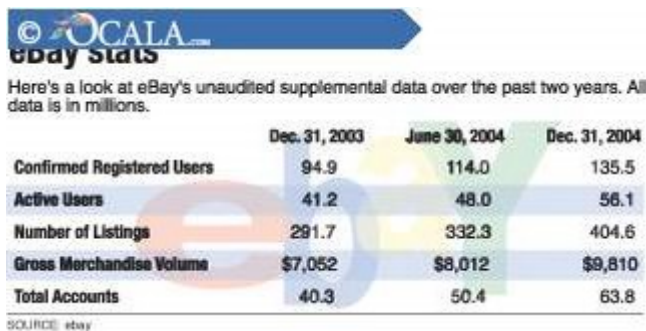
World of eBay moves beyond computer and modems

By HARRIET DANIELS
STAFF WRITER

Published: Sunday, March 13, 2005 at 6:30 a.m.

Last Modified: Saturday, March 12, 2005 at 11:47 p.m.

OCALA- Bruce and Terri Richardson have sold several items online through eBay in recent years, but since the couple opened a franchise location of iSold It in Ocala they have had little time to pursue the virtual marketplace at their leisure.



Here's a look at eBay's unaudited supplemental data over the past two years. All data is in millions.

	Dec. 31, 2003	June 30, 2004	Dec. 31, 2004
Confirmed Registered Users	94.9	114.0	135.5
Active Users	41.2	48.0	56.1
Number of Listings	291.7	332.3	404.6
Gross Merchandise Volume	\$7,052	\$8,012	\$9,810
Total Accounts	40.3	50.4	63.8

SOURCE: ebay

[Enlarge](#)

They now visit eBay on behalf of customers wanting to sell an item and use iSold It as an authorized trading post. Several rows of storage bins hold a variety of items for active eBay auctions which will be shipped to the highest bidder when payment is received.

The iSold It Corp., based in Pasadena, Calif. is one of numerous emerging businesses benefiting from the multibillion-dollar eBay Inc. The local impact of eBay is also evident with several independent drop-off sites, businesses using the online auction to increase sales, and in January classes started at Central Florida Community College through Continuing Education and the newly formed Internet Business Education Institute.

Tom Burke, a local eBay education specialist, said the popularity of the site and growth of spin-off businesses is phenomenal. Burke is a certified eBay instructor and works through AuctionInstructor.com. It is through AuctionInstructor.com that Burke formed the partnership with CFCC to offer eBay classes based on eBay University curriculum.

According to eBay's 2004 fiscal report issued in mid-January, the company had 404.6 million listings and a merchandise volume of \$9.8 billion. The company went online in 1995.

The local iSold It store in the Hillside Shopping Center near Albertson's on East Silver Springs Boulevard is the first franchise store to debut in Florida. The company currently has 60 franchise stores in operation and reports another 400 are under contract in 32 states since launching in 2003.

In the local region the Richardsons have committed to opening three other franchise locations to cover Citrus County, the Villages of Lady Lake and Gainesville.

So far business at the Ocala store is already ahead of six-month projections since opening in early December. Once a customer decides to list an item on eBay through the iSold It network, in-store staff take several photographs for Internet use, write a description of the item and then catalog it in the database and store it. After the item sells and payment is received, the staff packs it and ships it to the receiving customer.

"It's been so busy, we don't get to look at eBay for fun anymore," Terri Richardson said.

Bruce Richardson, a retired mortgage broker, said many curious and savvy eBay sellers are using this new local alternative to either familiarize themselves with the online auctions or they are too busy to post and track items themselves.

A computer station in the lobby is for customer use and Terri Richardson said some come and use the terminal to track items they have on auction or just to learn about the system.

The company makes a percentage of the profit of listed items that sell, "so if it doesn't sell we don't make anything," Bruce said.

Once an item is sold which is listed through iSold It, the commission, which averages 20-30 percent, an eBay processing fees and shipping charges are deducted before the seller receives a check.

Eric Spivey stopped in last week to check out the going rate on eBay for a couple of his golf clubs. Friend Karla Pladna tagged along with Spivey and offered advice whether or not to list the clubs.

He made the decision to go ahead and list a 3-wood in his first posting on eBay through iSold It, but opted to hold off on posting the driver thinking he could likely get more for it elsewhere.

Burke said the student mix in his classes at CFCC span the age gamut and employment background and range from those just learning about eBay to those who want to use eBay to create a business. He teaches the basics of eBay to more advanced sessions on eBay business tools and hopes to be able to offer similar sessions at local public libraries.

On the business end, Burke advocates using eBay as an option to save in traditional brick-and-mortar overhead costs. He said it's a good source to generate extra income or for the more experienced.

Lee Willis, a former Microsoft engineer and one of eight students in Burke's class last week, plans to become a certified eBay instructor and help teach local classes. He said buying and selling on eBay made him want to put the expertise to work for himself.

"You don't have to be a rocket scientist to do this," Willis said.

Another student, Karin Blacquier is an administrator at NHC Home Care and a part-time artist. She said a longtime interest in the Internet and a desire to own a business led her to consider an eBay-based business. She hopes to start selling her art through the online auction site in the next six months.

"There are a lot of things I needed to understand about eBay and that's why I'm here," she said.

Harriet Daniels can be reached at harriet.daniels@starbanner.com or 867-4125.

Reprinted with permission from:

<http://www.ocala.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?P=1&TC=PG&AID=/20050313/NEWS/203130314/1009/money>