PlayOnline

PlayOnline is an online gaming service created by Square Co . (now Square Enix) in January 28 , 2000 , and has been the launcher application and Internet service for many of the online PC , PlayStation 2 and Xbox 360 games the company publishes . Games hosted included Front Mission Online , Fantasy Earth : The Ring of Dominion , Tetra Master , and the Japanese releases of EverQuest II , Dirge of Cerberus : Final Fantasy VII and JongHoLo .

The service hosted hundreds of thousands of players at its peak , and was one of the first cross @-@ platform gaming services . It was shutdown during the 2011 earthquake in Japan for twelve days . The platform was also subjected to denial of service attacks and players attempting to cheat who were subsequently banned .

Starting with Final Fantasy XIV , Square Enix began moving their online games off of the service , and many of the social networking features the game was released with failed to catch on , with the service being described as " clunky " . The termination date of service for Final Fantasy XI and PlayOnline for PlayStation 2 and Xbox 360 was March 2016 , with only the PC version of Final Fantasy XI still supported .

History

Launch

PlayOnline was originally conceived as an all @-@ in @-@ one solution to house multiple types of game content . At the " Square Millennium " event in Japan on January 28 , 2000 , Square announced three Final Fantasy games , including Final Fantasy XI , to be released in the summer of 2001 , and that Square had been working on an online portal called " PlayOnline " with Japanese telecom company NTT Communications , and would feature online games , chat , email , online comics , Internet browsing , online shopping , sports , and instant messaging . The service was first announced as costing ￥ 500 for monthly membership and a ￥ 1000 monthly user fee . Final Fantasy XI , then nicknamed " Final Fantasy Online " , was the first game to use the online service . The WonderSwan Color portable gaming system was also planned to be able to connect to PlayOnline through an adapter connected to one of the PlayStation 2 's USB ports . PlayOnline opened on June 6 , 2000 to both Japanese and English speaking countries with news about upcoming software titles , interviews , and wallpapers . The site 's merchandise included pieces from Parasite Eve , Vagrant Story , Chocobo Racing , Front Mission , Chrono Cross , and Final Fantasy .

Service

PlayOnline was seen as part of Sony 's strategy to turn the PlayStation 2 into an Internet set @-@ top box . Accordingly , Sony brought broadband equipment and a hard drive to the PlayStation 2 . The quality of the browser was noted in its " clean " graphics , excellent page layouts , and " high quality sound " . The browser was not a general purpose Internet tool , but only accessed Square content , such as news about Square products and a comic @-@ strip walkthrough of Final Fantasy XI .

Porting Final Fantasy XI to the Xbox proved difficult due to compatibility issues greater than was hoped for between Xbox Live and PlayOnline , likely because the latter was designed first . After negotiation , Xbox 360 players were able to play the game through PlayOnline 's servers exclusively , despite Microsoft 's initial wish that Square Enix would use its own platform . Downloadable content was also not available on the platform since the game played through PlayOnline . It was hoped that content would eventually be offered through the Xbox Live Marketplace . Final Fantasy XII started out as a game designed for the PlayOnline game platform .

Security and Outages

In February 2005 , 800 players were banned from the card game Tetra Master and from Final Fantasy XI for monopolizing areas where high level items and monsters would spawn , making it impossible for other players to become stronger . In March 2009 , Square Enix announced a new security system for players beginning April 6 , 2009 , involving a security token players could purchase for $ 9 @.@ 99 and including an in @-@ game bonus called a " Mog Satchel " . On April 9 , 2005 , a distributed denial of service attack against PlayOnline 's servers shut down Final Fantasy XI access for players in North America and Europe for three hours : the attack continued for over a week , leading Square Enix to involve law enforcement . At the time , Square Enix did not reveal if the Japanese server which hosted Front Mission Online , Fantasy Earth , and Japanese players of EverQuest II were affected .

After Japan 's 2011 earthquake , Square @-@ Enix , Co . Ltd. voluntarily disabled servers to conserve energy due to the incapacitated state of the region 's nuclear power plant . This led to a temporary halt of the Final Fantasy XIV , Final Fantasy XI , and PlayOnline games and services from March 13 to 25 . During the power shortage , air conditioning and lighting was reduced , and the subscription fees for Final Fantasy XI were waived for the month of April .

= = = Decline = = =

In June 2009 , Square Enix announced they had decided not to use PlayOnline for Final Fantasy XIV due to the marked decrease of content on the service . Instead , they would migrate to a new service that still allowed cross @-@ platform gameplay , including the use of a universal Square Enix ID that would allow players to play from wherever they left off . In June 2011 , Square Enix announced that they would merge the account management portion of the PlayOnline service into Square Enix accounts from July 2011 and culminate on August 31 , 2011 . However , PlayOnline is still required in order to actually play Final Fantasy XI . Square Enix replicated the idea of the friends list from Final Fantasy XI in Final Fantasy XIV . The termination date of service for Final Fantasy XI and PlayOnline for PlayStation 2 and Xbox 360 was March 2016 .

= = Reception = =

In December 2001 , Square Enix projected it would have 250 @,@ 000 users by the end of 2001 , and 400 @,@ 000 by year end 2002 : the service charged $ 10 per person , and thus needed 200 @,@ 000 participants to break even .
On January 7 , 2004 , Square Enix announced they had more than 500 @,@ 000 registered users on the PlayOnline gaming service , and slightly under one million active players . In September 2004 , Square Enix stated they had 1 @.@ 2 million characters , with most players having two to three characters . In May 2005 , Front Mission Online became the second game to utilize the service , retailing at ¥ 7 @,@ 140 with a monthly subscription price of ¥ 1 @,@ 344 . In June 2009 , a San Francisco , California resident sued Square Enix for " deceptive advertising , unfair competition , and unjust enrichment " from Final Fantasy XI , and sought a $ 5 million settlement .
Composer Nobuo Uematsu stated that Square 's efforts to push forward with online gaming was important to the video game industry 's development . The PlayOnline Viewer was criticized as being nothing more than a longer way to get to Final Fantasy XI 's content . The game also had unmoderated chat rooms that ended up with explicit content . The interface was also described as " clunky " , with " strange functional restrictions " .