

Folio:

THE MAGAZINE FOR MAGAZINE MANAGEMENT

Robust increase in
circ salaries ... page 69

DO THREE-YEAR SUBS MAKE SENSE?

DILEMMA OF HARDWARE OBSOLESCENCE

MEDIA KITS THAT GET RESULTS

DECEMBER 1, 1993

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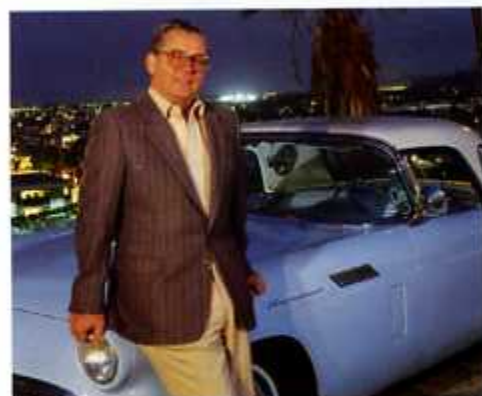
MAKE YOURSELF A BIG FISH IN THE ONLINE OCEAN

Magazines that will be successful in the future will not just dictate or reflect their readers' interests. They will embody them by becoming readers' 24-hour companions in the burgeoning world of online services. 64



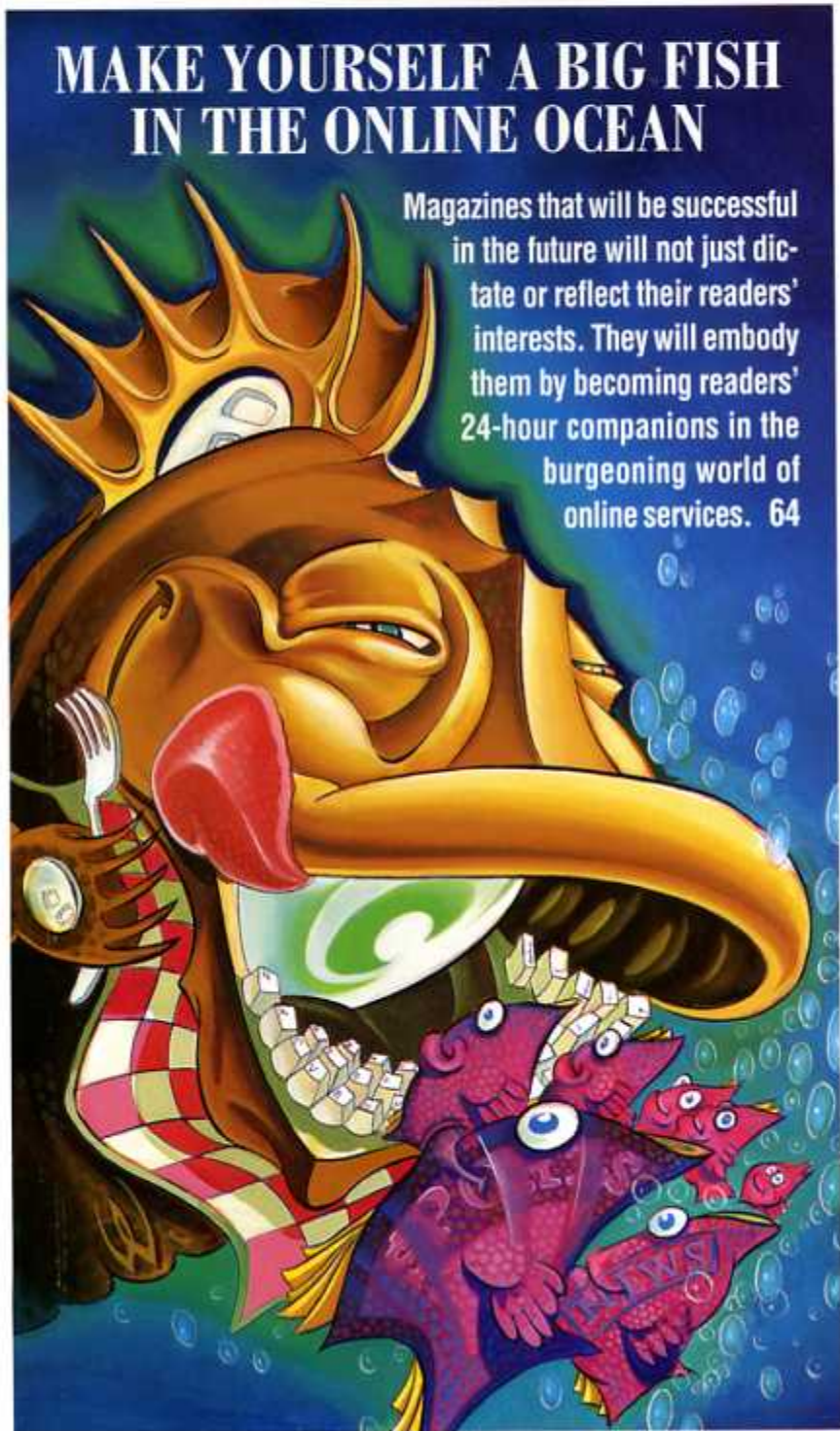
ASSOCIATION TITLES GET DATABASE SAVVY

Waste Age editor John Aquino (*above*) epitomizes association magazine execs' new approach to maximizing their access to member databases. 78



DESERT RAINMAKER

Milton W. Jones (*above*) has built an empire in the desert with an ad agency, visitor's guides, outdoor media and flagship *Palm Springs Life*. 80



TESTING THE WATERS

ONLINE

An art director's taste and an editor's hunch were about to collide. Tommi Lewis, editor in chief of *Disney Adventures*, had a gut feeling that maroon was *not* the right color for the magazine's sweatshirts.

At the time, *Disney Adventures* was experimenting with America Online. "So I said, 'why don't we go online and see what the kids say,'" Lewis recalls. "And over a period of three or four days we found out that maroon was absolutely the most uncool color." Lewis learned from the 'twens who were checking out the new *Disney Adventures*' "chat room" that navy or green were better bets. The magazine went with navy blue.

For Disney, feedback didn't end with the determination that maroon is a geeky color. This summer, *Disney Adventures* formally established a "forum"—an area on America Online that any subscriber to the service can reach with a few keystrokes or clicks of the mouse. Now the *Disney Adventures* staff holds thrice-weekly, real-time chat sessions with 12 to 15 kids (ages seven to 14). Topics for chat or electronic mail range from TV violence to weird sandwiches—or even whether Keifer Sutherland's or Chris O'Donnell's photo should grace the December cover.

Interactivity and reader empowerment

BRAD WALKER



MAGAZINES ARE SMALL FRY

IN THE DIGITAL POND. BUT BY SWIMMING WITH THE BIG FISH, PRINT PROPERTIES CAN PROSPER.

BY THOMAS FORBES

of this sort are no longer abstract buzzwords. Magazines that will be successful in the future will not dictate or reflect their readers' thoughts and desires. They will embody them by becoming readers' constant, electronic companions—available 24 hours a day.

"There's an aloofness that often infects American journalism," says Walter Isaacson, an assistant managing editor of *Time*, which went online in September with America Online, one of several commercial online services that are increasingly vying for partnerships with print media. "We tend to hand down our pronouncements as if they've been engraved in stone. Here we're going to have a chance to get a lot of feedback, and to react to it in a timely fashion."

Time is posted on America Online on Sunday afternoon; the earliest the magazine itself hits selected airport newsstands is Sunday evening.

The interactive generation

Until recently, prospective online readers had to have at least a touch of the computer nerd in them. Instructions for navigation online were as arcane as a textbook on cryptology. Consequently, the first print publications to go online were computer books aimed at the digerati—the computer elite. But all that

is changing. Computers today are cheap and powerful, and are usually sold with modems included. The modems, in turn, are packaged with trial offers from at least one of the commercial online services—Prodigy, America Online or CompuServe—and more often than not provide the computer buyer with graphical user interface (GUI, pronounced "gooey") software that makes connecting to and moving around the services relatively easy. All the services offer novices free time online so they can explore without fear of financial ruin.

Growth in online connectivity is expected to be exponential. The number of American households with a modem-equipped personal computer will rise from 13 percent this year to 25 percent by 1995. The number of public bulletin-board systems (BBSs) in the United States—most of which are nonprofit, mom-and-pop operations, but some of which are lucrative and sophisticated—has already zoomed from about 6,000 in 1987 to 45,000 in 1992. By the end of this year, that number should reach 60,000, according to Jack Rickard,

editor and publisher of *Boardwatch*, a 50,000-circulation magazine that covers online information services and electronic bulletin boards.

Commercial online services are setting records, too. According to Chris Elwell, editor of "IDP Report," a Wilton, Connecticut-based newsletter covering information services, the number of consumers subscribing to online services grew 10.6 percent in the first half of 1993, to a total

of 6.8 million users.

"People are buying PCs with modems left and right, and as they become more used to getting their information electronically the market will burgeon," says Thomas Falconer, manager, electronic publications at Consumers Union, publisher of *Consumer Reports*. Online pioneer *Consumer Reports* is currently available on CompuServe, America Online and Prodigy, as well as in full-text searchable databases produced by Dialog, Nexis and Information Access Co. Perhaps because its detached editorial stance invests *Consumer Reports* with such authority, there is no interactive aspect of the magazine's online offerings. Still, says Falconer, "We do know from our experience in electronic publishing that the more interactivity you offer users, the more usage is generated."

Falconer's comment really speaks to what all print publishers must face in coming years. If the Star Trek generation shows little tolerance for long essays, and the MTV generation demands quick-cut graphics and soundbite text, the Nintendo generation has been raised on—and wants—interactive entertainment.

The magazines that will be most successful online, predicts Susan Wylie, manager of electronic publishing at CompuServe, are those that offer necessary information—critical statistics,

