

“
This ability to cover live,
breaking stories
on the Internet,
the same way it is
covered on CNN on air,
will bring a new level of
excitement and
immediacy to Web users.
”

—Harry Mobro

CNN spokesman about CNN's new
multimedia news service at
<http://www.cnn.com>

Notepad

U.S. West Interactive Services Group and The Orlando Sentinel announced they will jointly market GOtv, an interactive entertainment guide, in the Orlando market later this year. GOtv is a local movies, dining, and events guide developed by U.S. West. The two companies will join to develop video and other content to test the service on the U.S. West/Time Warner Entertainment Full Service Network.

NewsLink Associates is offering its first publicly available research report, embodying the essence of advice previously offered only to clients of its consulting service. Called "Tomorrow's News Today: A guide to strategic planning for on-line publishing by general-circulation newspapers," the book documents the growth and current state of on-line publishing and looks at how to evaluate which market strategies might work best for individual news organizations. The price is \$99.945. Contact NewsLink at report@newslink.org or send a check to Tomorrow's News Today, NewsLink Associates, N22-W26969 Knollwood Road, Pewaukee, Wisconsin 53072.

LexisNexis, a full-text, on-line legal, news, and business information service, and CNN announced the launching of the Tell Me More service on the World Wide Web. Tell Me More offers expanded information from LexisNexis about a story or topic on CNN's WWW site, <http://www.cnn.com/>

BY J.T. JOHNSON

When mighty rivers flow together, treacherous whirlpools are bound to form. And if those rivers are rivers of ideas and technology, the currents are especially challenging. Three such rivers conjoined this summer, but their future course across the economic and political plain is not yet clear.

The first flow was the more-dramatic-than-usual drop in prices of digital storage devices. Ten years ago, I bought my first hard drive—standard off the shelf 20 megabytes—for about \$500. That works out to \$25 per megabyte.

Recently I opened a computer magazine stuffed with ads. The price tag on a 1.2 gigabytes (1,200 megabytes!) hard drive is \$275. That works out to 23 cents per megabyte.

This drop in price and surge in capacity means every newspaper and magazine should be archiving every bit and byte of every page published. All of it: editorial, photos, and display and classified ads.

Follow the example of Alameda Newspapers, a five-newspaper chain in the San Francisco Bay area. Its editors are indexing and storing 200 pages every day. A week's worth of pages is written to one \$10.50 CD-ROM.

Why bother? As more and more readers turn to on-line retrieval of specific information, the archive will become as valuable as the backlist of major book publishers.

The archived records of city council expenditures will become grist for the mill of every aspiring politician and interest group, and they will pay for that data. And the on-line publisher doesn't have to pay for ink and paper at prevailing rates.

Nora Paul, director of the news research program at the Poynter Institute in St. Petersburg, Florida, calls this revenue center the "Information Recycling Center." Editorial systems consultant David Cole goes so far as to predict that by 2005, one half of a newspaper's revenues will flow from non-ink-on-paper activities.

That existence of large-scale, cheap digital storage has given rise to the second river. That is, the amount of digital content stored rises to fill the available space if the time to access the content stays the same. Or, should it take longer to get specific data, the increase in time must be balanced by greater utility of content.

For example, if you're a reporter or editor at a newspaper like the Raleigh, North Carolina, *News & Observer* you can tap into approximately 350



in-house data bases.

The *News & Observer* editors created the paper's "Public Employee Salaries" data base, for example. It holds the salaries of city, county, and state employees, along with individuals on the payroll of the state's universities, and is searchable by the paper's reporters.

If information such as an easily searchable, on-line database of political campaign contributions or driver's license records is made available to the public, politicians, at least initially, are going to start squirming.

Even though such data has been available for a decade in ink-on-paper form, the ease and speed of access is dramatically increased.

Which brings us to the third stream.

Money, technology converging to help media's bottom line

Decency standards hasten strategies for data survival

Politicians around the world have ranted about what they perceive as "indecent" material available on the Internet. They threaten action, ranging from Hong Kong authorities attempting to shut down out-going Internet connections to amendments attached to telecommunications legislation in the U.S. Senate.

That digital content out in cyberspace is a threat to "the values we hold as a community," says George Yeo, Singapore's minister of information and arts.

But what happens when a publication develops a database the authorities perceive as violating those so-called community values?

Frank Daniels III, publisher of the *Raleigh News & Observer*, has been thinking about digital survival strategies in a coming age where the flow of information is threatened.

At a meeting of journalism educators this past summer, he said, "In Washington, D.C., and the state capitals I'm familiar with, the politicians and bureaucrats are afraid that Internet technologies will erode their control and so many are throwing up barriers.

"As government officials get worried, they will be increasingly likely to listen to their fears and shut down access." ❏

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