



# FIRST DAY

Popular Science VP and publisher Ron Bernstein has been named publisher of the new media unit at Hachette Filipacchi Magazines.

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## **Tennis Anyone? NYT Titles on the Block**

The New York Times Co., after years of rumors, has put six of its magazines up for sale, including *Tennis*, *Snow Country*, *Cruising World* and *Sailing World*. Meanwhile, The Golf Company, which includes *Golf Digest* and *Golf World*, is not for sale and will remain part of the Trumbull, Conn., operation headed by magazine group president James Fitzgerald. "We're mildly interested," said Petersen Publishing Co. president Neal Vitale. "One major concern we have is most of Petersen's titles have a strong endemic advertising base, and these titles tend to be supported by nonendemic, for the most part." Those advertisers are relatively small, Vitale added, and might not be able to support larger titles. Also included in the NYT sale are the trade titles *Snow Country Business* and *Tennis Buyer's Guide*. Other publishers expected to take a look include Times Mirror Magazines, Hearst Magazines and K-111 Magazines. Another name being bantered about is that of former Time Inc. Ventures president Robert Miller, who may want to use the titles as a platform to build a larger group for his new company Goldrush Media. The Times

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## **\$223 Million Libel Verdict Against Dow Jones Could Prove Chilling to Journalists if Upheld**

When a federal jury last week awarded MMAR Group Inc., a defunct investment firm, \$223 million in actual and punitive damages in a libel judgment against Dow Jones & Co., it was just the latest in a string of recent libel decisions against the media. Most notable was the case involving ABC News and the Food Lion grocery chain. Media lawyers believe if the Dow Jones verdict is upheld, it could have a chilling effect on resources media organizations commit to investigative journalism. "It is a matter of concern, because if the judgment stands and is upheld, it sets a precedent for damages that would

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## **Industry Backing Banner Ad Standards**

Responding to industrywide concerns over the proliferation of online banner ad sizes, publishers are lining up to support standardization. International Data Group, CMP Publications and the New York Times Co. are just a few of those adopting banner guidelines recently proposed by the Internet Advertising Bureau (IAB) and the Coalition for Advertising Supported Information and Entertainment (CASIE). "If its acceptance isn't universal, it's at least widespread," said Mike Donahue, executive VP/member services of the American Association of Advertising Agencies (AAAA), which in 1994 set up the CASIE task

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## **Upside Corners Conqueror Gates--in Burger King**

When the enterprising Albert P. Frankley--pseudonymous contributor to the San Mateo, Calif.-based techie magazine *Upside*--spotted Microsoft's Bill Gates in the Zurich airport Burger King after the recent World Economic Forum, he just couldn't resist approaching the famously press-loathing mogul. Surprisingly, the reporter got an earful from Gates, who sounded off on Time Warner, Viacom, Disney, the future of Microsoft--and boasted of his intention to buy the Internet. "But you can't buy the Internet, Bill," Frankley pointed out. "No one owns the Internet." "So," answered Gates, "I'll just buy all the ISPs and I will virtually own the whole damn thing. Then I'll change the standards on their asses, and before you know it, they'll be kissing me where the sun doesn't shine!" The interview--pure fiction, by the way--appears in the April issue of *Upside*. "It was their idea of an April Fool's joke," said spokeswoman Ellen Ryder--who noted that Gates was indeed seen chowing down at the Home of the Whopper following the Swiss conference.

### **CBM Sells *Inside Media*, Cuts Staff**

Stamford, Conn.-based Cowles Business Media, parent company of FIRST DAY, has suspended publication of New York City-based *Inside Media*, a biweekly controlled circulation title for media buyers, and sold the assets to ASM Communications, publishers of *Adweek*, *Mediaweek* and *Brandweek*. CBM president Dan McCarthy commented: "Although *Inside Media* was profitable, it did not meet the company's growth and earnings objectives. I reluctantly concluded that continued investment did not promise any improvement for the foreseeable future." *Inside Media* was started in 1989 and had a circulation of 20,000. Thirteen *Inside Media* staff positions were eliminated, and 13 additional CBM staffers in New York and Stamford were let go.

### **Dow Jones...*(continued from page 1)***

cripple most media organizations," said Lawrence Savelle, a lawyer with New York City-based Chadbourne & Parke. "The effect of the judgment is that it will cause media companies to seriously consider what they put into print, and also the amount of libel insurance that they carry." Dow Jones, in this case, is only insured up to \$45 million. The jury awarded actual damages amounting to \$22.7 million, but decided Dow Jones should pay an additional \$200 million in punitive damages. The jury found eight statements in an October 1993 *Wall Street Journal* article by staff reporter Laura Jereski to be false and defamatory. MMAR lawyers blamed the article for the firm's demise. *Journal* managing editor Paul E. Steiger defended the story, saying, "We were chronicling the difficulties of this company; we did not cause them." The *Journal* is asking the judge to set aside the award, and Steiger said he is "optimistic, based on applicable law, that it will not stand." Media lawyers believe the general public is sending a message to the media with these sizable awards. "It's clear that there is this ambient anger at the press and it is something quite menacing," said David Korzenik of Miller & Korzenik. "When doing these sorts of cases, somehow we need to be sure that we prevent juries from treating trials as referenda as to how they feel about other media."

### **Banner Ads...*(continued from page 1)***

force with the Association of National Advertisers (ANA). The AAAA and ANA together represent the sellers, buyers and creators of Internet advertising--who have practically been driven to the brink accommodating the 250-plus banner sizes available on the Web. IAB/CASIE, in their "Proposal for Voluntary Model Banner Sizes," identify eight commonly accepted sizes. "It's such a simple, common-sense thing," AAAA's Donahue said. "There are so many variations in sizes that require so much time that could be spent creating better banners. We are very encouraged by the pick-up on this thing." Robin Webster, ANA senior VP, said the groups were "extremely happy" that so many publishers were jumping on the bandwagon. "It's not going to happen overnight, but [adoption of the guidelines] will be very beneficial to our members--the advertisers--who were spending a tremendous amount of money just resizing the same ads. We hope to see those funds put into media spending or more creative."

Nobody expects the guidelines to be a panacea, of course--but, as Webster pointed out, they are a start. "We know there will be alternative sizes out there--and that's fine," she said. "But the more standardization there is, the easier it is." Bill Reinstein, senior VP/business development at Boston-based IDG's *Network World*, said his company's major U.S. publishing operations--which also include *Macworld* and *PC World*--are going to follow the guidelines. "It's just a sign of the maturation of the medium," he said. "It shows that folks have gotten together on the publishing and client and agency sides to cooperate on this issue." The guidelines have also garnered support within Manhasset, N.Y.-based CMP, which produces *Windows*, *Information Week* and *Tech Web*. Mitchell York, *Tech Web* VP, said the variety of banner sizes had been "a real barrier to sales. We were glad to see some agreement on what the standards should be." Perhaps Martin Nisenholtz, president of the *New York Times'* electronic media unit, spoke for the whole industry when he said, "If it makes things more efficient, then [adopting the guidelines] is really a no-brainer."