

# Syndicates/News Services

## United starts Web site on the Internet

*The cyberspace area gives computer users access to comics, editorial cartoons, background info and more*

by David Astor

UNITED MEDIA LAUNCHED a huge World Wide Web site on April 1.

The interactive Internet site offers the work of nine comic creators and 10 editorial cartoonists, previews of new features, background information on features, material about United itself, photos, graphics and feedback areas for computer users to communicate with their favorite artists.

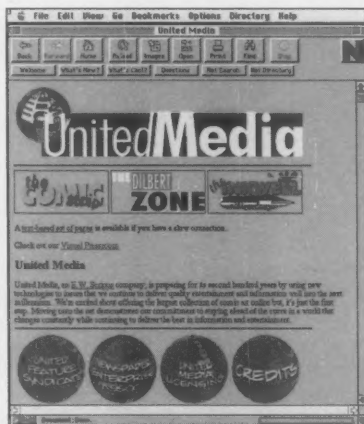
"It's appropriate that we launch this site during the centennial of the comic strip," stated United president Doug Stern. "We are using the digital power of the Internet to reaffirm the awareness of an ageless art form for a new generation. It's a way for readers to see talented cartoonists that they might not see in their local papers, and a way for us to create even larger followings for those of our strips they read every day."

Lisa Klem Wilson, United vice president/sales and marketing, added, "We're reaching a demographic — young, computer-savvy readers, who may not be subscribing to daily newspapers — and pulling them back to comics pages."

"The Comic Strip" part of the Web site features an enhanced area devoted to "Dilbert," the fast-growing strip by Scott Adams. This "Dilbert Zone" includes biographical information on Adams, sketches of the earliest incarnation of his comic, a "tour" of the cartoonist's studio, and an interactive map of the United States for locating "Dilbert" newspaper clients.

Adams already has a cyberspace presence on America Online, which will continue to showcase "Dilbert."

Other United Feature Syndicate (UFS) and Newspaper Enterprise As-



Two views of the Web site

sociation (NEA) comics available on the new Web site include "Alley Oop" by Dave Graue and Jack Bender, "Arlo and Janis" by Jimmy Johnson, "Committed" by Michael Fry, "Jump Start" by Robb Armstrong, "Marmaduke" by Brad Anderson, "9 Chickweed Lane" by Brooke McEldowney, "Robotman"

by Jim Meddick and "Rose is Rose" by Pat Brady.

"It's nice to know that a worldwide system of interactive computers was developed just so people could read the funnies without getting ink on their fingers," said Brady.

The comics will be collected in a two-week archive, and appear online one week after they run in newspapers.

A United spokeswoman said "Peanuts" by Charles Schulz will first be featured on the Web site around the time of the UFS strip's 45th anniversary this October.

The 10 UFS and NEA editorial cartoonists in "The Inkwell" area of the site include Pulitzer Prize winner Steve Benson of the *Arizona Republic*, as well as "Berry's World" creator Jim Berry, Matt Davies of Gannett Suburban Newspapers, Jerry Holbert of the *Boston Herald*, Henry Payne of Scripps Howard News Service, Rob Rogers of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, Bill Schorr of the *Kansas City Star*, Jeff Stahler of the *Cincinnati Post*, Ed Stein of the *Denver Rocky Mountain News* and Dick Wright of the *Providence Journal-Bulletin*.

Stahler stated, "Finally, cartoon 'cynergy' has been created. Just point and click, and you can go toon surfing for cartoons with a byte! The mother of all inventions . . . the laff-top computer."

"The Inkwell" site features regularly updated cartoons and background information on the artists. Future plans call for commentary on current events by the cartoonists.

United's Web site may also eventually feature animation, contests, a columns area, sales of licensed products and ad sponsorships.

"Six months from now, the Web site could be a much different place," said Alma Derricks, United's director of new media development, and the head of the Internet project. "We're using only 10% of our capacity so far."

Sid Goldberg, United's senior vice president/general manager of syndication, added that users of the Web site will help determine what material will be added in coming months.

The site, which is reachable at <http://www.unitedmedia.com>, is an in-house operation for the E.W. Scripps Co.-owned United.

## Events to mark the birthday of comics

SEVERAL MORE EVENTS marking the centennial of comics have been announced by the Newspaper Features Council (NFC).

America Online (AOL) will host a series of live chat sessions with cartoonists every Sunday night from May through at least the end of the year.

"Beetle Bailey" creator Mort Walker of King Features Syndicate will be the first cartoonist to appear. He goes online May 7 — two days after the 100th anniversary of the first comic, "Hogan's Alley," starring the Yellow Kid.

The appearance of Walker and subsequent guests will be announced under the cartoonist's comic of that day.

Starting May 5, AOL will also have a special area devoted to the centennial. Computer users will be able to access material about the history of comics, participate in a trivia quiz, learn how to become syndicated, and examine the 20 new cartoon stamp designs — which will be unveiled by the U.S. Postal Service on May 4.

The next day, the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., will open a comics exhibit. As part of the opening, syndicated cartoonists will draw their characters on a wall of the exhibit space. The show runs to Aug. 10, before moving to other U.S. venues.

On Oct. 1, a comic fair is scheduled for Bryant Park in New York City, where the Yellow Kid started.

The following day, the cartoon stamps will go on sale to the public, with celebrations planned at a number of post offices across the country.

The NFC — which previously announced other upcoming centennial events (*E&P*, March 18, p. 40) — is an organization comprised of cartoonists, columnists, syndicates and newspapers. Its president is Ron Patel, associate managing editor for features at the *Philadelphia Inquirer*.

## Universal columnist examines statistics

A WEEKLY COLUMN that examines statistics, and the way they can be wrong or misleading, is being offered by Universal Press Syndicate.

"Unconventional Wisdom" is written by Richard Morin, director of polling at the *Washington Post*, where



Richard Morin

he is also a staff writer and columnist.

He has also been a reporter and an editor for the *Miami Herald*, and a reporter for the *Arizona Republic*.

The award-winning Los Angeles native earned an M.A. in journalism from the University of Missouri and studied survey methodology, computer programming, and applied statistics at the University of Michigan.

Morin's column clients include the *Dallas Morning News*, *Phoenix Gazette*, *Salt Lake Tribune* and *St. Paul Pioneer Press*.

## Syndicate launches 'True!' comic panel

A COMIC PANEL that comments on unusual facts in pop culture, world history and people's daily lives has been



"True!"

introduced by Tribune Media Services.

"True!" is by Daryl Cagle, an award-winning artist who has done ad cartoons, worked with Jim Henson's *Muppets* and "Sesame Street," invented and licensed toys, and taught.

## Comics featured on new Internet locale

AN "ONLINE COMIC book publisher" has made its debut on the Internet's World Wide Web.

Tool User Comics carries the work of such creators as editorial cartoonist Ted Rall of *Chronicle Features*, and the self-syndicated Tom Tomorrow ("This Modern World"), Ruben Bolling ("Tom the Dancing Bug") and Nina Paley ("Nina's Adventures").

"Local papers can't carry everything, and usually opt for the most popular strips," said Ford Prefect, Tool User's chief editor. "With the net, we can bring less-known strips to the fore."

The Web site address for Tool User — which is based at 305 McMillan Drive, Santa Cruz, Calif. 95060 — is <http://www.tooluser.com/>

## Walker promoted to news editor of KRT

RAY WALKER HAS been promoted to news editor of the Knight-Ridder/Tribune News Service (KRT), based in Washington, D.C.

Walker, 44, joined KRT as an assistant news editor in 1987, and moved up to sports editor the following year.

Before that, he was copy desk chief at the *Lexington (Ky.) Herald-Leader*, news editor of the *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, and an editing instructor at Eastern Kentucky University, his alma mater.

## Weekly service has 'Hollywood' feature

"JILL JACKSON'S HOLLYWOOD" is being syndicated by the King Features Weekly Service (KFWS).

Jackson is a former Hollywood correspondent for the *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, past president of the Hollywood Women's Press Club and a former actress.

KFWS is distributed to more than 1,500 weeklies and dailies.