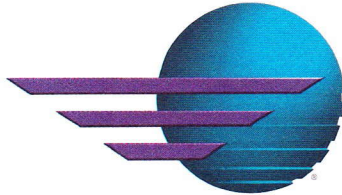


Phoenix Newspapers, Inc.

The Arizona Republic  
The Phoenix Gazette  
Arizona Business Gazette



For immediate release

## **Phoenix Newspapers, Inc., introduces Arizona Central, its online service**

(PHOENIX, Ariz. Dec. 8, 1995) — Just five months after it announced its partnership with America Online, Inc. (AOL), Phoenix Newspapers, Inc. (PNI) has launched its online service called Arizona Central. The launch was simultaneous on AOL and the Internet's World Wide Web, and both sites already have been visited by thousands of cybertravelers.

A subsidiary of Central Newspapers, Inc., PNI publishes two dailies — *The Arizona Republic* and *The Phoenix Gazette* — and the *Arizona Business Gazette*, a weekly business publication.

Howard Finberg, senior editor/information technology, said "PNI undertook the ambitious project of developing for two services — AOL and the Web — simultaneously because we wanted to give our customers information regardless of the computer platform they use. There's a different audience for each platform.

"We decided to become a partner with AOL because of its huge subscriber base — 4.2 million customers — and because of the way AOL is able to organize information. AOL subscribers tend to be new to online services and like the advantage of being able to navigate easily and find information in an organized way."

AOL recently created a new technology called "hotlinks," an electronic method that, with a click of the mouse, opens up an area of information. Hotlinks help make the search for information easy, and PNI is the first AOL publication partner to take advantage of it in building its area on AOL.

120 East Van Buren Street  
Phoenix, Arizona 85004

P.O. Box 1950  
Phoenix, Arizona 85001

Phone 602-271-8000

“The hotlinks technology lets us do most of the content organization and display on Arizona Central, rather than call upon the AOL staff,” Finberg said. “It’s instant, and it’s exciting.”

On the World Wide Web, customers find information differently. Internet users typically have been in computing for a while and know their way around cyberspace. They navigate differently to find information, using hypertext, highlighted words or images, that, when clicked on with a mouse, send a person to a related topic or site.

Either through AOL or the Web, anyone with a computer and a modem can gain access to Arizona Central for news, sports, entertainment, travel, and advertising from the Southwest. It’s estimated there are at least 100,000 computer users with modems in the Phoenix metropolitan area. That number is growing at a rate of 30 percent a year.

“Arizona Central is going to significantly increase our ability to distribute information and news to people in Arizona,” said Executive Editor John Oppedahl. “Ultimately it will be used by people from throughout the metropolitan region and beyond for information and news in a depth and detail that is cost prohibitive to put into a newspaper. Our new effort online is a significant move forward for PNI. I look at this as the beginning of a new era.”

Finberg agreed. “PNI isn’t just putting its publications online. We’re planning to create nothing less than an online community, where customers can learn, communicate, buy and sell and have fun.

“We want to offer the best from the newspapers and much more. We can add past stories for context, additional stories and information for depth, and audio and video files that bring this information to life. In addition, Arizona businesses will be able to offer products for sale, and government agencies could offer details on regulations, demographics and business opportunities within the state.”

Online plans in the making include:

- An archive of *Republic, Gazette* and *Arizona Business Gazette* stories since 1987. Customers soon will be able to retrieve a story for a fee.

- A small-business area. “We plan to develop a very strong small-business area,” said Finberg, “to take advantage of *Arizona Business Gazette* resources and give the publication strong positioning online.”

- Classified advertising.

- Developing online partnerships with radio, TV and other print media. “We know we don’t have all the information our customers might desire,” Finberg said. “We want to offer the most complete service that we can. We want to be the most fun, most satisfying service and the best online experience we can be for our customers.

“A partnership with a radio station could provide sound clips and forums,” he continued. “For example, a host who has a 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. time slot can take only a limited number of phone calls. By using Arizona Online, he/she could extend the audience and the relationship with listeners. Call it a ‘cyber-symbiotic’ relationship. The radio station benefits, but so do Arizona Central customers.

“We’re excited about the launch, but we’re also eager to keep building our online service,” Finberg said. “Online has very few limits.”



Phoenix Newspapers, Inc.

The Arizona Republic  
The Phoenix Gazette  
Arizona Business Gazette



## **Arizona Central offers different information on America Online and the Internet's Web**

(PHOENIX, Ariz. Dec. 8, 1995) — Either through AOL or the Web, anyone with a computer and a modem can gain access to Arizona Central for news, sports, entertainment, travel, and advertising from the Southwest.

America Online customers visiting Arizona Central can simply click on electronic “buttons” that open up a topic. Information is presented in layers, so customers can continue to click on subtopics, going as deep as they like.

For example, the Sports area on Arizona Central has electronic buttons for Scoreboard, Phoenix Suns Spotlight, Plan on It (various team schedules), and High School Sports.

The News/Money area features news about various cities in metropolitan Phoenix, as well as News Extra. Other topics customers can click on include: Your Money (including Personal Finance, Investment Advice, and Business Update), Small Business, and Photo Album (including Photographer Portfolios and Best of Arizona Images).

Still more electronic buttons feature such topics as Your Life, At Ease and Destinations, each with additional layers of information.

The computer-savvy teen-age group also has a place on Arizona Central — ALT., which focuses on topics of special interest to young adults and offers stories written by local students.

Many of the areas feature a “What’s Hot” button highlighting people, places and things.

Part of the fun of an online service is its interactivity, and Arizona Central is no exception. By clicking on the Sound Off button, customers can have a live chat with well-known personalities in The Oasis, Arizona Central’s chat room. They also can contribute

120 East Van Buren Street  
Phoenix, Arizona 85004

P.O. Box 1950  
Phoenix, Arizona 85001

Phone 602-271-8000

to message boards, check out the latest cartoons by Pulitzer Prize-winning editorial cartoonist Steve Benson, read editorials and letters to the editor, and send messages to Phoenix Newspapers, Inc.

One of the first celebrity chats was with Phoenix Suns star Charles Barkley. Customers delighted to talk to him electronically filled the chat area quickly and shot a barrage of questions at him for an hour.

Other Arizona Central/AOL customers are migrating to other forums — chat areas and bulletin boards where they can give their two cents worth on a recently released movie or book. Or they can talk to *Republic* and *Gazette* editors, columnists and reporters electronically.

In fact, thousands of cyberspace travelers visited Arizona Central after its debut Nov. 27.

“I am overwhelmed by the response after only one week online,” said Howard Finberg, senior editor/information technology. “We’ve gotten some good ideas and suggestions, and I hope they keep coming in.”

### **On the World Wide Web**

An advantage to accessing Arizona Central on AOL is the ability to interconnect with the Web site and its somewhat different Arizona Central information.

Arizona Central’s Web site offers some of the same information that can be found on the America Online site — but in a different format. The Web site is accessible by typing in <http://www.azcentral.com/> to find such information as:

- 1) **Taste the Town:** Includes many of restaurant columnist Penelope Corcoran’s recent reviews and an index of recommended restaurants.

- 2) **Interactive TV listings:** Includes grids customized to match cable TV's channels and times. Also available: Movies, sports and other programming.
- 3) **Destinations:** An extensive guide to things to do and see in Arizona.
- 4) **Pick the Pros:** An online version of a *Republic* and *Gazette* contest offering Super Bowl tickets as the prize.
- 5) **Survey:** Individuals can click here to tell the online staff what they want in an online service and offer other feedback.
- 6) **Golf:** Includes news, a searchable database of courses, listings of upcoming tournaments and reviews of courses.
- 7) **GiftLine:** Online holiday shopping.

Has it been a challenge building two Arizona Central sites? Dan Hontz, online producer for the Web site, said he is "amazed at what we've done, considering that we've only had staff for about two months. And they're journalists, not technical staff. They've had to learn new computer systems and software in that amount of time, while editing and managing information for the two sites. It's a big accomplishment."

Jeff Unger, online producer for the AOL site, said that "what our team has created on AOL and the Web is a gateway to Arizona that can be entered from anywhere in the world. Our goal is to make visits to Arizona Central as informative and entertaining as possible."

