

Memos from the M.E.

TWO MORE STEPS have been taken in our continuing effort to improve *The Republic*: A contract with Dr. Mario O. Garcia of the Poynter Institute to redesign the paper, and the hiring of **Howard Finberg** of the *San Francisco Chronicle* as our new assistant managing editor for graphics.

Garcia's redesign of *The Republic* will begin in July with research to understand how readers and editors perceive the newspaper.

He will be here the week of July 6. The schedule will give him a chance to live up to his nickname, "The Human Hurricane".

Garcia will supervise printing of *The Arizona Business Gazette's* tabloid prototype, speak to the Pulliam Fellows, participate in the University of Arizona's editing workshop for minority journalists and start work with Finberg on *The Republic's* redesign.

The redesign is a disciplined process that stresses content and quality. Publisher **Pat Murphy** charged Garcia with studying the market, spending time with the staff and creating a design that reflects the newspaper's mission.

The process involves four phases: research, prototype sketches; prototype evaluation; and design implementation. The project at a newspaper as large as *The Republic's* can take as long as a year.

In the research portion, Garcia will find out how readers perceive the newspaper in its current form and how *The Republic's* staff envisions the redesign and its benefits to the product.

Ellen Jacobs' Market Research Department will oversee focus groups of subscribers, single-copy buyers and non readers. The groups will start in early September. Proceedings will be videotaped.

Editors' perceptions will be drawn from work of the committee formed this week by **Alan Moyer**. The group will study *The Republic* as it is now and project it into the redesign.

Two persons will represent each key area and one or the other will attend each meeting: Art, **Patti Valdez** and **Kee Rash**; Photo, **Mike Spector** and **Pete Schwepker**; Pagination, **P.J. Erickson** and **Bill Hayes**; Features, **Mike McKay** and **Amy Carlile**; News Desk, **Jeff Dozbaba** and **Tami Thornton**; Sports, **Bill Huffman** and **Joe Hawkins**; Reporters, **Kathie Price** and **Carol Sowers**; and City Desk, **John Leach** and **Judy Nichols**. Coordinating the committee will be **Bob Franken**, **Howard Armstrong** and, when he arrives, **Finberg**.

"The purpose of the committee is to offer suggestions that will help come up with a better redesign plan," Garcia said. The committee will draft a report after its deliberations which may take as long as eight weeks.

With information from the focus groups and the internal committee, sketching of prototype pages begins. A 12-18 page prototype includes front pages, key news pages, the editorial page, sports cover and any other pages the editors decide should be approached. Garcia starts with tracing paper sketches and follows them through pagination.

Slides are then made of the prototype so it can be discussed and evaluated. Ideas are accepted or rejected. Revisions are made. A prototype may be printed to get focus-group readers' reactions and anticipate any problems of the new design.

"If we have inadvertently come up with a design that will shock, confuse or otherwise displease typical *Republic* readers, this is the place to discover and modify it," Garcia said. "If...the design is one which will sit well with readers, then (we) should have that information as input."

Finally, the stylebook is written and the new design is introduced.

Garcia brings a broad reputation to his work at *The Republic*. He designed more than 30 newspapers in the United States, Canada, Europe and South America. He is associate director of the Poynter Institute for Media Studies in St. Petersburg, Fla. and a professor of mass communications at the University of South Florida.

To provide additional resources for the redesign project, Librarian **Paula Stevens** has subscribed to newspapers Garcia recommended as background.

They are: *The Miami Herald*, the *St. Petersburg Times*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Seattle Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Orlando Sun-Sentinel*, *The Register* (Orange County), *USA Today*, the *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*, the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, *The Louisville Courier-Journal* and the *Lexington (Ky.) Herald-Leader*.

Paula will forward the newspapers to Finberg for discussion and exhibit in the department.

The library also acquired Garcia's books, *Contemporary Newspaper Design: A Structural Approach*, and *Color In American Newspapers*, edited with his Poynter colleague, **Donald Fry**.

Finberg, 37, is a journalism graduate of San Francisco State University. He's been a copyeditor at the *San Francisco Examiner* and at the *Chicago Tribune*, then assistant picture editor and graphics editor at the Tribune during 12 years (in two stints) there. He spent a year with *The New York Times* as assistant picture editor. He came to the Chronicle in 1985 as graphics editor.

A MINI-RETREAT has been scheduled the morning of Friday, June 12 to discuss three key issues: zoning, pagination and special sections. A cross-section of the staff is being assigned to three committees, each covering one of the topics, and will be asked to brainstorm ideas. Heading up the discussion groups are **Paul Schatt** (zoning), **P.J. Erickson** (pagination) and **Mike McKay** (special sections). Additional mini-retreats are planned involving different topics and participants.

YET ANOTHER REMINDER that, in the interest of completeness, our policy is to name competing media when mentioned in news stories. To say "a local television station" or "a suburban newspaper" not only raises the obvious questions (which station, which newspaper) but also makes us appear petty.

TWO RECENT LETTERS to publisher **Pat Murphy** seem to indicate that our efforts to create a newspaper of excellence and distinction are not going unnoticed. The letters reflect a common conclusion, but from two very distinct viewpoints — that of a pro and of an average reader. The pro, **Bill MacDougall**, is former senior assistant managing editor of U.S. News & World Report. He wrote: "I just wanted to tell you I was in the West recently (my old home town, Portland, specifically) and I got a copy of *The Arizona Republic*, which is impossible to find in Washington. It is now unquestionably one of the very top newspapers in the country, and I am really impressed by what you have accomplished. I remember that when I last read it fairly regularly, when I was covering Goldwater in the 1964 campaign, it was a good newspaper, but nothing too exceptional. Its coverage and breadth now are unmatched in the West, and better than all but two or three in the East. Why don't you start a Washington edition?" And the average reader, **Walter Penfield**, wrote: "Two or three months ago my wife and I were in the White Mountain area looking at our cabin which was then under construction. We had occasion to pick up a copy of *The Arizona Republic* at breakfast one morning. It had been the first time either of us had read the paper in many, many years, and we determined right there and then that we would subscribe to the paper during the summer months in Alpine. Last Sunday I bought the paper. I must tell you that I think you and your staff have done a tremendous job in turning that paper around. It has a vibrant nature to it and a quality that I have seen in some of the best known newspapers in the country."

Short takes

AS THE STYLE BULLETIN of the *New York Times*, *Winners & Sinners*, arrives, I will get it copied and available at the mail stations in news and features. If you did not get a copies of the past four issues, and want them, I have originals. — **Howard Armstrong**.

THE ARIZONA PRESS CLUB has gone through the first couple of rounds of changes in the rules for the club's annual contest for the best in Arizona journalism, and here are some of the key ones:

- New category: Any Publication Sports Column Writing. Columns published this year will be eligible, so save your clips.

- Discontinued category: Any Publication Special Section or Project.

- Category under construction: Any Publication Feature Writing Medium Form will be replaced by a new category whose focus has not yet been determined. If you have any ideas, contact me or **Bruce Johnston**, features editor at the

Tucson Citizen. (Two other Any Publication categories, Feature Writing Long Form and Feature Writing Short Form, will continue.)

- Improved category: Magazines will no longer be eligible for the Any Publication Layout, Single Topic category and will have their own categories for layout and covers. The category will be limited to newspaper layouts.

- Revised category: Any Publication Editorial Writing will be limited to pieces expressing the opinion of a publication or its editorial board. Columns, which express an individual's opinion, will no longer be eligible.

- New rule: Publication dates will be required on all entries so that the judges can see who broke a story and who followed up on someone else's work.

- More money: The winners of first, second and third place for Any Publication Investigative Reporting, known as the Don Bolles Award, will receive cash prizes even if the category does not draw 15 entries. The rule limiting cash prizes, however, will apply to all other print categories.

- Change in the works: The club plans to require that slides be submitted instead of mounted prints for all photo categories and for the Press Photographer of the Year portfolio competition. If you have any ideas or comments on this proposal, contact **Tim Koors** of the *Gazette*.

Finally, if you have any other suggestions for improving the contest, please let me know by June 10. — **John Leach**