Tribune is creating information warehouse
Multimedia company to market computer-driven information clearinghouse

By David Tobenkin

Tribune Broadcasting by January will launch a new service that allows its media companies and third parties paying a fee to access by computer film stills, clips and sound bites from Tribune's television, newspaper, radio and cable programming efforts, a company official said.

"We are beginning to create a system that allows us to capture, store, catalogue and transport images across all of our properties, including an ability to find images based on the idea embodied in that picture," said William Murray, director of information systems and strategic technology at Tribune, during last week's Broadcast Cable Financial Management Association annual meeting in San Diego.

The system, Picture Network International, is a venture between Tribune and computer software company SRA. Murray had no comment on the project's price tag or pricing to consumers.

Initially limited to "tens of thousands" of still photos derived from the company's six newspapers, the service will be expanded to full-motion video from the company's other media operations.

Users will be able to use Apple or IBM personal computers to search by name or subject, receive a screen of eight postage-size photo possibilities from which to choose, and then order by computer negatives, finished prints or photo data that can produce camera-ready stills with a high-end printer.

The service also will feature an intelligent searching system. "If you told the system you wanted a picture of beverages or of romance, it might pull the same still of a young couple sharing a bottle of wine," said Murray.

Content will come from Tribune's newspapers, eight television stations, six radio stations, six radio networks and its Chicago area cable system.

Also contributing will be computer software company Compton's New Media, publisher of the popular Compton's multimedia encyclopedia that recently was acquired by Tribune.

Toasting a new talker

There was a party in New York last week to celebrate the launch of Multimedia Entertainment's Dennis Prager Show, which debuts in syndication in the fall. Shown at the gathering at New York's Trattoria dell'Arte are Fred Petrosino, VP, national sales manager; Thomas F. Shannon, senior VP, director of station sales; Prager, and Edward T. Reilly, president of McGraw-Hill Broadcasting, whose WRTV(TV) is carrying the show.