

Time Inc. owns up to goofed 'mine' magazine

April 16 2009, By RYAN NAKASHIMA , AP Business Writer



FILE - This file magazine cover illustration released by Time, Inc., shows Time Inc's customized magazine "mine" that combines reader-selected sections from eight publications as it tries to mimic in printed form the personalized news feeds that have become popular on the Internet. Time Inc.'s experimental made-to-order magazine shipped out this week, but many subscribers got a version that looked like it belonged to someone else. (AP Photo/Time, Inc., file)

(AP) -- Time Inc.'s experimental made-to-order magazine, "mine," shipped out this week, but many subscribers got a version that looked like it belonged to someone else.

Subscribers to the free publication were allowed to select five of eight magazine titles, and content from each would make it into their personalized copy. Many readers got versions that didn't match their

picks.

Time Inc. Media Group President Wayne Powers apologized for the problem in an e-mail Wednesday to the group that may have been affected, blaming a "computer error" and promising a sixth free issue, instead of the five originally planned.

The print run was limited to the first 31,000 respondents who signed up online at <http://www.timeinc.com/mine> while an online version was available for another 200,000. Neither maximum was reached and signups are still possible.

Readers can select from titles published by subsidiaries of [Time Warner Inc.](#) and American Express Co.: Time, Sports Illustrated, Food & Wine, Real Simple, Money, In Style, Golf, and Travel + Leisure. Editors preselect the stories that make it into each biweekly issue.

Several of the stories picked by editors from each title were up to two years old, and some could be found on the Internet. One Sports Illustrated story about soccer fans, for instance, refers to a World Cup qualifier match "two weeks from now." That game wrapped up last June.

For that, the publisher had no qualms.

"Stories leaned certainly more toward the evergreen side," said Kris Connell, a spokeswoman for Time Inc., adding that future editions are likely to contain more recent copy. "It was never the intent for this to be a breaking news vehicle."

Joshua Benton, director of Harvard University's Nieman Journalism Lab, pointed out many of the flaws of the first issue.

He also called the personalized ads - all featuring Toyota Motor Corp.'s

new Lexus sport utility vehicle - "slightly creepy" because they referred to where he lives, included his name and described him driving one on Route 6 to Cape Cod.

"I don't think anyone would look at this and say we've found the answer to the crisis in journalism," he said, referring to plunging ad revenue that has resulted in job cuts and bankruptcy filings by five newspaper companies.

But he gave the creators credit for printing thousands of personalized copies, something unusual in an industry that has historically specialized in reaching mass audiences.

"That's a pretty big task," Benton said. "And it doesn't surprise me that they messed some of it up."

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