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When **Scripps Nets Interactive** set out to find a new pres for **Travel Channel**, it found someone with more than just a proven track record in cable. Former **National Geographic Channel** chief **Laureen Ong**, who joins the net Apr 19, is also quite the jet-setter, having spent the last 3 years in Hong Kong as COO of **News Corp s STAR**. I have always been a passionate traveler, especially the last 3 years living in Asia, Ong said. The ability to take something that I am passionate about and to combine it with other things I love doing, which is building great businesses and great teams, was really an extraordinary opportunity for me.

Scripps acquired Travel in Dec and began a nationwide search for a pres, with **Pat Younge** leaving at the end of 09, fulfilling a promise to return to London when his youngest child started high school. The net will continue to be based in Chevy Chase, MD, with Ong already starting the house hunt (she s familiar with the area given that Nat Geo is also DC-based). Scripps is hoping to expand the brand into new ventures within the travel category, similar to what it has done with **Food** and **HGTV**. What I m hoping we ll be able to do, similar to what Food Network has done for cooks, is demystify cooking so that more and more people will become avid home cooks just because they ve shown them the way to do it. It s the same thing HGTV does for home decorating, Ong said. Hopefully, what we re going to be able to do is allow people to go, Wow, you know what? That s not that difficult to do. Traveling is not that arduous.

So, does that mean a shift to more how-to programs? That s a very literal translation of travel. We want to become a destination for travelers, however they define it, she said, adding that includes armchair travelers as well as globetrotters. She ll be building off the strength of what already exists. And what does exist are some of the highest-rated shows in the history of the network, including **Man v. Food**. Scripps also named **Jonathan Sichel** as gm of Travel, a new post at the net. As Travel s former svp, commercial affairs and ops, he has served as interim gm since the acquisition by Scripps.