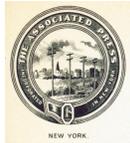


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**From:** Paul Stevens [stevenspl@live.com]  
**Sent:** Monday, June 30, 2014 10:21 AM  
**To:** stevenspl@live.com  
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# Connecting

June 30, 2014

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Colleagues,

Good morning. Here's to a great week, on this, the last day of the first half of 2014.

## A leap forward in quarterly earnings stories

The Associated Press announced in an advisory to customers today that the majority of U.S. corporate earnings stories for our business news report will eventually be produced using automation technology.



Here, **Lou Ferrara**, the AP managing editor who oversees business news, explains how this leap forward takes advantage of new technologies to free journalists to spend more time on things like beat reporting and source development while increasing, by a factor of more than 10, the volume of earnings reports for customers.

### **Why is the AP doing this?**

Like all media companies, AP is constantly reviewing what content it needs to provide to customers and the best use of its reporting resources. At the same time, we analyze the value of the content we produce in the marketplace.

For many years, we have been spending a lot of time crunching numbers and rewriting information from companies to publish approximately 300 earnings reports each quarter. We discovered that automation technology, from a company called Automated Insights, paired with data from Zacks Investment Research, would allow us to automate short stories - 150 to 300 words - about the earnings of companies in roughly the same time that it took our reporters.

And instead of providing 300 stories manually, we can provide up to 4,400 automatically for companies throughout the United States each quarter.

We believe technological automation will be a part of many businesses, including those in media. As part of its business relationship with Automated Insights, AP participated in the company's latest round of investment financing with other strategic partners.

### **Does it mean we are no longer providing editorial coverage of earnings reports?**

No. If anything, we are doubling down on the journalism we will do around earnings reports and business coverage.

We are going to use our brains and time in more enterprising ways during earnings

season. Rather than spending a great deal of time focusing on the release of earnings and hammering out a quick story recapping each one, we are going to automate that process for all U.S. companies in the 4,400. (We are exploring whether we can automate earnings from companies outside the United States.)

Instead, our journalists will focus on reporting and writing stories about what the numbers mean and what gets said in earnings calls on the day of the release, identifying trends and finding exclusive stories we can publish at the time of the earnings reports.

AP's staff breaks a lot of business news and obtains numerous exclusives throughout the year from many of the top companies in the world. We know that is what our customers want and we are going to deliver more of it through this process.

### **Are we eliminating jobs to do this?**

No. This is about using technology to free journalists to do more journalism and less data processing, not about eliminating jobs. In fact, most of the staff has been receptive to the effort and involved for the past few months of discussion.

### **How does it work?**

Zacks maintains the data when the earnings reports are issued. Automated Insights has algorithms that ping that data and then in seconds output a story. The structure for the earnings reports stories was crafted by AP with Automated Insights. All conform to AP Style, the standard of journalistic style.

The stories will be labeled as being produced automatically with material from Zacks.

As we begin using automation technology in July, we will check each automatically generated report and then publish to the AP wire. As we work out any problems, we hope to move to a model of more fully automating the reports and spot-checking the feed for quality control.

### **Will you be automating other parts of the AP report?**

Interestingly, we already have been automating a good chunk of AP's sports agate report for several years. Data comes from STATS, the sports statistics company, and is automated and formatted into our systems for distribution. A majority of our agate is produced this way.

By comparison, though, the earnings reports are produced into stories - not just data feeds. And we are looking at whether there are other things we should be automating in this way. Last football season, we introduced an automated NFL player ranking on the website for pro football that we host for newspapers. That ranking included automated text descriptions of player performances each week, which were produced by Automated Insights. We also are examining the potential for automating results

stories for lower-audience sports.

### **When will the automated earnings reports be available?**

We are planning to go live in July, and we will be paying close attention to all of the reports as we adapt to this new process. We will address any concerns or bugs, and then keep moving ahead.

Our hope is that customers will begin to see the benefits almost immediately through more breaking business news and an increased volume of earnings reports. Many customers will receive info for companies in their markets that they never received from AP before.

## **For Email Newsletters, a Death Greatly Exaggerated**

Is our AP retiree newsletter, Connecting, ahead of its time?

Well, it would seem so, based on the following story published Sunday by New York Times media writer **David Carr**, which begins:



Here at the Media Equation, we pride ourselves on keeping our readers abreast of the newest technologies and approaches in reaching audiences. So it gives us great pleasure to reveal a radical publishing technology that is catching on in news media companies big and small. Ladies and gentlemen, behold: email.

Email newsletters, an old-school artifact of the web that was supposed to die along with dial-up connections, are not only still around, but very much on the march.

In addition to the long-running morning must-haves like Mike Allen's political tip sheet Playbook, other topics and approaches are gaining momentum across publishing. Quartz, Atlantic Media's smart business site, has an increasingly popular daily newsletter. The revamped Newsweek has done well with Today in Tabs, a cheeky look at content that is so bad it's good. And webby writers including Ann Friedman, Jason Hirschhorn, Alexis Madrigal, Robin Sloan and Maria Popova all put out much-followed newsletters.

Click [here](#) to read on.

## **Tribute to News Media Guild's Norma Love**

**From the News Media Guild**

**Norma Love**, a News Media Guild member who worked for The Associated Press for more than 30 years and who was instrumental in forcing the company to provide benefits for domestic partners, was described as "a consummate professional who holds herself to the highest standards of journalism" in a tribute that's part of the Congressional Record.

Sen. Kelly Ayotte, R-N.H., read the tribute to Love, who covered the statehouse in Concord for 29 years. Love's last day on the job was Friday, June 27. In the photo at right by Jim Cole, Love looks on with her partner, Merry Fortier.



Retiree Adolphe Bernotas, a former member of the the News Media Guild's Executive Council and longtime bargainer who worked with Love in AP's bureau in Concord, said Love "was as stalwart as stalwarts come in the News Media Guild." She was a pioneer, he said, in securing domestic partner benefits in NMG-AP contracts.

"She would become outraged at the company's casually dismissive response that 'we will follow the law' on the Guild's demand for gender equality," Bernotas said. "Conveniently, there was no domestic partner law at the time. Norma acted against AP's stonewalling more than once as she would join the union's negotiating team. Facing AP executives across the table one afternoon, she spoke for gender fairness with such grace, quiet passion, logic and heart that it moved me to tears. I predicted accurately to her that day it would be but a matter of time before the Guild would win gender equality for AP employees."

The Guild and AP agreed to domestic partner benefits in 2003.

Love, recalling her days at the bargaining table, said she remembered coming to New York City twice to get the AP "to recognize us as equals. The day after each presentation AP turned us down. The first time, I knew I was outing myself to AP management but it was a fight like all our fights to be treated with respect and dignity that had to be fought regardless of any consequences \_ and the only consequence was rejection despite any of my fears. I like to think we moved AP forward. Union members should always take heart that all efforts for the values that are dear come in increments, important increments.

"I wish you all the best in the difficult days ahead."

In her Congressional Record tribute last week, Ayotte said "the people of New Hampshire are so fortunate that Norma Love has been asking hard questions on their behalf for the past 31 years. Norma brings tremendous credit to the profession that she

loves, and she will leave behind big shoes to fill in the statehouse press room."

In addition, New Hampshire Gov. Maggie Hassan and the Executive Council declared June 18th as Norma Love Day.

The Guild also thanks Love for being a dedicated union member. Here's to a long and happy retirement, Norma!

(Shared by Bill Beecham)

## Prank and tell

Want to share a favorite prank related to the work place?

Poynter recently put out such a request to journalists for their favorite pranks. And from that came this story - click [here](#).



I was the occasional target of a prank by **Mandy Davis**, former AP newswoman in Kansas City now with the St. Louis Post-Dispatch - and, important to this story, a Missouri journalism grad.

When my Kansas Jayhawks would (very) occasionally lose a big basketball game, I could count on arriving in my office the next morning to see my stuffed Jayhawk hanging in effigy from the ceiling. And Mandy feigning being hard at work in the newsroom and resisting a smile. Kansas still loses some games, but my Jayhawk is safe from her evil clutches here at home.

Want to share your favorite prank? If so, send it along to Connecting.

## Connecting mailbox

### Letters gone awry

[Neal Ulevich](#): Regarding letters gone awry, when I was Asia Chief of Communications in Tokyo a missive arrived from NY. Someone cleaning out a desk at 50 Rock Plaza found a letter about five years old from a Honolulu radio enthusiast who had monitored the back beam of Tokyo's SE Asia radiophoto cast. He had a few technical questions. I sat down to write a response, which began: "I do apologize for this somewhat belated response to your letter..."

## Summer fun



Their band is called "The Beef Jerks" - and it comprises, from left, **Paul Caluori** on violin, **Rick Hale** on guitar and **Dan Day** on bass. Paul is AP's global director of digital services, Rick is the husband of Philadelphia CoB **Sally Hale** and Dan is a former AP bureau chief and executive who is director of news and information services at Princeton University. Says Paul, "We were ripping it up at **David Marcus'** annual summer kickoff - the Salute To Meat- in Yardley, PA. David and his wife **Janet Rosenzweig** prepared a variety of treats for carnivores, including kielbasa, lamb roast, ribs, brisket and Marcus' own dry aged steaks- 85 lbs in all."

Meantime, in Kansas, retired Atlanta CoB **Gary Clark** and his wife Fay have long had the golfing bug, and it continues into the next two generations. This photo from the Leavenworth Country Club shows Gary and Fay with their son Chad, 46, a retired Army officer, and their grandson, Zach, 8. The Clarks were out golfing a day after a lunch visit with Connecting editor Paul Stevens and his wife Linda.



# Welcome to Connecting



[Ric Feld](#) - former AP Atlanta staff photographer, 1982-2006, who continues photography work in Tallahassee.

## Stories of interest

### [Russian cameraman killed in east Ukraine](#)

A cameraman for Russia's state-owned Channel One television has been killed in Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region, the channel has said. Anatoly Klyan, 68, was shot in the stomach when his film crew came under fire overnight after they went to film near a pro-Kiev military unit in the region, the channel said on its website on Monday. The trip was organised by pro-Russia rebels. The statement said the journalists were accompanying a group of soldiers' mothers who were being driven to the unit "to meet their sons and take them home".

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### **Investigating Powerful Institutions: Inside and Out**

Here's a must-read: A two-page handout by New York Times reporter Matt Apuzzo, who shared a Pulitzer while at the AP for revealing NYPD surveillance of Muslims, from the annual Investigative Reporters and Editors conference in San Francisco: "You need to think about the organization as a network of people who have some stake in the company. [Their] lawyers, inside and outside. Worker bees and midlevel managers. Retirees. Shippers. Contractors. Union organizers. Analysts. Politicians. Economic development officials. Whistleblowers. Competitors. Suppliers. Regulators. Lobbyists."

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### **Time Inc. senior editors racing out the door** (Bob Daugherty)

Time Inc. senior editors, especially those of long standing, appear to be stampeding toward the exits. Betsy Gleick, an executive editor at People and responsible for most of the non-celebrity covers in recent years, will leave after Friday. "It just felt it was the right time for me to go," she said when reached at her desk on Thursday. Like Fortune deputy editor Stephanie Mehta, who recently hit the exits, Gleick said she has no new job lined up.

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### **Matt Drudge: News business is 'psychotic' now**

In a rare interview with Washington radio station WTOP on Friday, Matt Drudge said the media have become a little "psychotic" but that it's a vibrant era for the news.

"It's a little psychotic, the news business, because everyone's doing everything. That still doesn't mean there's not important events and information coming all of the time - think of what's just happened this year, the news has been so dynamic internationally and domestic," the founder of the popular conservative-leaning news aggregator DrudgeReport.com said. "This is a vibrant era of media, and it's not going away anytime soon."

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### **Is The Times Ignoring a Scandal at the I.R.S.?**

Margaret Sullivan, Public Editor: Has The Times been interested enough in the politically charged events involving the Internal Revenue Service? Many readers don't think so. One, Harry Koenig of Monroe Township, New Jersey, wrote to me this week with strong words of criticism. Noting that he had emailed earlier complaining about a lack of coverage of I.R.S. official Lois Lerner's missing emails, a situation that has caused accusations of a Watergate-style political cover-up, he wrote again to complain that the coverage, once it began, was inadequate.

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## **And finally...**

### **Newspapers That Aren't Dying**

There is no "digital first" strategy at 169-20 Hillside Avenue, a nondescript shop offering photo services, money transfers and video rentals in Jamaica, Queens. From its

basement, Khalil ur Rehman, a first generation Pakistani immigrant, has been publishing the *Urdu Times* for over two decades.

At a time when the death of print media is regularly predicted, Rehman's *Urdu Times* is going strong. And it isn't alone.

In his office are two computers, a fax machine, and a phone. "Before, we used to actually have a printing press here," said Rehman, amid the distant rumble of the F-train that passes under every few minutes. Less frequently, water discharged from a toilet above noisily whooshes down a pipe next to the publisher's desk.

It's a barebones operation, but Rehman's weekly newspaper has 14 editions today, with a total of nearly 100,000 copies printed every week. These include nine cities across the United States, and standalone editions in Canada and the United Kingdom. "Now, I'm trying to see if I can start an edition in the Middle-East," he said in early March. "I'm travelling there next week."



Paul Stevens  
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