

**Address of Tom Curley
President and CEO, Associated Press
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Some of you may be asking yourselves how a company as quintessentially “old media” as The Associated Press ended up the host for an initiative that aims to bring new opportunities for publishing online.

But, I assure you, you are in exactly the right place.

This ACAP conference is about using digital tools to promote content use online, while safeguarding commercial interests. And that’s something we at the world’s oldest international distributor of news know a lot about.

Building businesses by distributing content across far-flung networks has been our mission since before there WERE any networks.

AP’s members have always understood that our vitality – and theirs – depends on seizing every opportunity that advancing technology affords to make networks ever more useful.

So nobody here should really be surprised that AP sees the Internet – mother of all networks – as the mother of all opportunities.

In that spirit, I welcome you here.

It may be, as well, that some of you have been asking yourselves, why now?

After all, the audience for news content on traditional media has been in decline.

But, I assure you as well, this is exactly the right moment.

While the news audience in traditional media may be in decline, the public’s appetite for news continues to grow online. Having access to objective, comprehensive and accurate news on a timely basis is essential. The news is more valuable than ever before, and having it sooner is a premium. Getting the news content online is the fastest way to get the news on a 24 x 7 basis.

We know this from our experience at AP. A wide variety of Web properties license AP content for a wide variety of uses online. They include newspapers, broadcasters, Internet portals and proprietors, aggregators, syndicators and distributors of news services, displays and tickers.

But, with more and more of AP’s news content being displayed online first, with more and more news being consumed online, both opportunities and challenges arise.

The opportunities take the form of a steady stream of new business models, which take advantage of automated spiders, crawlers and new distribution engines to aggregate information across the Web within minutes of the information being published and to syndicate that aggregated content in innovative ways.

The challenges follow directly from the opportunities: A lot of this aggregation and syndication of AP content in new business models occurs without our permission.

Basically, these new models free ride on the investment and efforts of AP. In addition, they dilute the value of content licensed by AP's thousands of licensees.

This is a real problem if you operate a business like the AP, which spends hundreds of millions of dollars yearly in journalistic, technical and administrative resources to gather, report and transmit news through a wide network of bureaus in nearly every country in the world. And, to get it right, every time, on time.

The free-riding deprives AP of economic returns on its investments.

AP's investments are not limited to time and money, however.

Let me explain.

AP reporters and photographers often put their lives in jeopardy to gain access to and report from dangerous and unstable regions. The numbers say it all. Thirty-two AP journalists have lost their lives gathering news since AP was established. We have lost six journalists in Iraq alone. Since 2005, more than two dozen AP journalists have been incarcerated or otherwise detained, and more than that have been harassed, intimidated or beaten. And, that includes Bilal Hussein, AP's Pulitzer winning photographer, who has been detained by the US military for 19 months without charges.

Why do our journalists take such risks? Real journalism is all about access. Journalists must be present, to the greatest extent possible, at the moment news occurs.

They must travel quickly to where news happens, overcome any obstacles, and endure the hardships or risks required to reach a position where the event may be witnessed. And they must be equipped to record and transmit their original material immediately to an AP bureau or editing or distribution center.

Such access may require exercise of great skill, ingenuity and improvisation or, in some cases, even litigation, in order to evade or overcome resistance by those in control of a news venue.

Once a news report is submitted, editors must make rapid decisions on the selection, arrangement, style and presentation of the information it contains, in conformance with AP's editorial policies and The Associated Press Stylebook.

Thus, AP's news reports are original works created through significant economic, professional and personal investment and sacrifice by AP and its employees.

Some free riders argue that they are only freely distributing a portion of each story—like the headlines and the lead paragraph, a thumbnail of each photo and so on.

They wonder why we complain.

What the free-riders overlook is that taking a little of something does not lessen the free-riding.

What the free-riders ignore is the history of breaking news. Walter Mears captures it in his report entitled “A Brief History of AP” in the recent book, “Breaking News.” As early as 1883, AP agents were instructed to put the vital news first and add the story detail later, if at all. This policy was codified in an instruction sent to correspondents in 1903: “When the news is of extraordinary character or very sensational, file at once a bulletin of 100 words and await instructions before sending the details... The news should be given in the first paragraph.”

Mears explains that the “lead first, details later” writing style is taught as the inverted pyramid, and emphasizes the five Ws of news: who, what, when, where and why.

You can see why AP would complain about the free-riders who claim to be only taking the five Ws of news in real time, at no cost to themselves and at with no revenue to AP.

You can see why AP, like other content creators and publishers, seeks to have greater control over access, distribution, use and protection of its valuable digital content.

That is about to become a possibility today.

The ACAP project offers one approach to tackle these issues.

ACAP will unveil today an open, nonproprietary standard through which content owners can communicate permissions for access and use to online intermediaries.

The joint effort among content creators, publishers and search engines to agree on standard machine-readable rules for access and use of content online deserves applause.

The protocol to be unveiled is the essential first step toward greater power and flexibility in generating new value from digital content assets.

The AP, for its part, is working in parallel with the ACAP effort to create a standard metadata set for news providers. Already, we have created a robust set of categories to parse the news for more accurate targeting of online consumers and – by extension – advertising.

In addition, we are maintaining authoritative lists of famous people, places and things that appear frequently in the news and are applying those tags to our content as well.

This past summer, we began extending these metadata services to our daily newspaper members, and we hope to add as many of our members as possible in 2008. To give you a sense of the scale we’re aiming for, we’re hoping that most of the 3,600 newspaper and broadcast news sites in our domestic membership will soon adopt these AP metadata standards, as they have our well-known “stylebook” for content usage rules.

One of the reasons we’re so excited about ACAP’s rights-management protocols is that we believe the combination of those protocols and standardized metadata will be a great boon to the news experience online.

It will help consumers will find more of what they're looking for. Advertisers will pay more to know what the audience is consuming. And, those of us who pursue the news can get on a reasonable path to a digital business model.

It is not the joy of searching that drives a global audience online every day. It is the joy of finding . . . the joy of finding what we and our enterprises create.

Insuring our capacity to continue underwriting that creativity will help keep that alive for everyone in the future.

Of course, search engines are important to this content economy. We are pleased that the collaborative approach taken by the ACAP project has brought content creators, publishers and search engines together.

ACAP holds out the promise of efficiency and opportunity to all participants in the digital content economy.

Again, I welcome you all. We're proud you've chosen to be here at The Associated Press for this important event.