How the Associated Press puts data journalism in the heart of local newsrooms

Meet the Associated Press.

The Associated Press is an independent, not-for-profit news cooperative dedicated to telling the world’s stories, from breaking news to investigative reporting, providing its customers with compelling data ready to be turned into localized news stories.

- Over half the world’s population sees AP content every day
- Teams in 250+ locations, 100+ countries
- Clients include 3,000+ publishers
- 52 Pulitzers and counting
AP data is more valuable on data.world

We thought if we could put this data into the hands of our members and customers, they could find stories in the data we’d never see.

Troy Thibodeaux
Editor, Interactive Newsroom Technology

Challenge
- Members weren’t making the most of AP’s data: it went to the wrong people in an organization, was tough to connect with the right analytics tools, and was difficult to find.
- AP was investing significant cost and resources building infrastructure to support its data services.

Solution
- AP brings together clear, comprehensive data on a foundation designed to scale.
- Processes and production are structured to match today’s 24/7 news cycle: faster, more efficient, more transparent.
- Now, 300+ organizations instantly gain access to vetted, story-rich data.
- Increased collaboration powers a more engaged, self-supporting network of AP customers.

Results
- Doubled data production
- More than doubled customer reach
- Single point of contact to engage customers
- Data becomes more valuable as people work with it
- Consolidated, streamlined tech stack
- Less time cleaning and managing data
Clear results

**Grow AP’s business**
People are hungry for data access. With data.world, AP more than doubled customer reach.

**Reduce operational costs**
AP eliminated redundant tools and avoided spending significant cost on building a tech solution from the ground up. With data.world, AP got to market faster and more cost effectively.

**Get more done**
AP doubled its average data output and increased speed to publication. Less time managing data and supporting members means more time is spent developing stories that influence the world.

**Give customers a better experience**
AP spends less time on support and more time deepening client relationships. Unlike past solutions, AP gets fewer questions about how to use data.world. People just intuitively know how to use it.
The challenges of data dissemination

Providing the right data to the right people in AP's broad network comes with extensive operational needs.

The Associated Press provides quick and reliable access to compelling content that's ready to be turned into local news stories. But getting data from those stories into the right hands in local newsrooms is no small task. Previously, data would reach the wrong people, get distributed at times that did not match user needs, and get lost in inboxes far from those who could leverage it. Often, using data required more time and work than busy journalists had. Advanced data professionals wished they could easily bring AP data into their favorite analysis tools while non-technical users felt overwhelmed.

Before data.world:

- Data was scattered, lost
- Data didn't reach the right people
- Redundant, expensive tools
- Too much time spent disseminating resources
- Diminishing engagement and value-add for users
Data should be easier to discover

Customers weren’t making the most of AP’s data because it wasn’t reaching the right individuals within newsrooms. Individuals who needed AP data had no way to find it.
Build a better foundation

Organize scattered data. Bring together every asset and user—of any type—into a single, powerful platform.

AP began by bringing together strengths they already had: rigor and passion for data and an extensive customer base hungry for insights. They replaced disparate tools with data.world to provide members with a unified, robust, integration-ready platform that made it easy to find and use data.

For AP, data.world was the best option to have immediate impact on the data subscription service. Other tools needed extensive infrastructure investments, lacked key capabilities, or wouldn’t scale with the program’s success.

Impact

- Consolidated, streamlined tech stack
- Less time cleaning and managing data
- Single point of contact to engage customers
Make insights accessible

data.world helps AP support the full spectrum of newsroom data literacy

Those who wish to dig deeper get direct access to clean, consistent underlying data. Managing editors no longer need to serve as the only data access point. With data.world, new data resources reach everyone that can use them.

AP wanted to help everyone get the data they need. Insights make it simple for non-technical users to gather key takeaways.

Alerts instantly notify users of new assets, questions, and insights. Stories publish faster.
Data should be easier to explore

Data workers rely on highly customized toolchains. AP needed a tool-agnostic data offering so it could provide “something for everyone,” regardless of tool configuration, workflow, or persona.
I often say that most of the work in a data project is caught up in that *unglamorous* 80%—finding the data, vetting it, cleaning it, coming to understand its limitations.

We were doing that for all of these stories anyway, so why not let our members benefit from that head start?

Troy Thibodeaux
Editor, Interactive Newsroom Technology

**Impact**

- 300+ AP members gained instant access to a pilot program with reliable, pre-prepared data
- Increased activity: AP’s datasets have been queried over 5,000 times

Centralizing data prep *substantially reduces time-to-publication for member newsrooms.*

AP collects, prepares, and packages the data so its members can easily discover local stories.

Every dataset ships with ready-to-fire SQL queries and simple instructions to guide less-technical members to easily segment and explore the data. Data-savvy journalists start with powerful building blocks for sophisticated analysis.
data.world extends the technical capabilities of AP customers’ teams to everyone else. Technical users quickly create and share queries without leaving the platform or spinning up a database. Results can be exported in common formats so anyone can dig in.

Everyone reaps the benefits: customers no longer have to start from scratch by creating their own queries; they can use and adapt what AP provides centrally.
Data should be easier to share

AP needed to easily manage access control and permissioning so the right people always have the right level of access to the right data at the right time.
data.world helps AP expand its footprint. Already, AP reports that it has more than doubled customer reach. AP also notes increased activity on datasets, meaning user growth and engagement are trending together.

AP’s data offering is available to 3,000 publishers and a range of businesses. Assets are always created and maintained centrally, while each customer can use the content as-is or adapt it as needed.

This ensures AP shares fully vetted, up-to-date, and relevant data that meets the agency’s stringent quality standards.

AP also manages access to each dataset. Private datasets offer exclusive access for members; public datasets boost brand visibility.

Maintain control

Reach new audiences

data.world helps AP expand its footprint. Already, AP reports that it has more than doubled customer reach. AP also notes increased activity on datasets, meaning user growth and engagement are trending together.
Data should be easier to **scale**

AP needed to spend less time building infrastructure and more time building data products for members. Encouraging open, collaborative discussions could also reduce time spent answering FAQs — and help customers go from data to insights even faster.
Move at the speed of news

Skip starting from scratch.

Creating and sharing an ongoing stream of fresh datasets has allowed AP to sustainably expand its data business. With data.world, AP doubled its data production. More than 20 datasets have been produced in the past six months alone.

Creating a platform for shared insights give data journalists a better starting point, powering more informed, collectively-optimized journalism.

“They just intuitively understand.”

AP reports a reduction in customer support needs. Thanks to annotation in the form of descriptions, sample insights, and data dictionaries, members find it easier to explore, understand, and apply insights from new datasets.

We have almost no questions from our members about data.world. Questions focus on the story and how to use the data, and that’s exactly what we want: a tool that gets out of the way and lets us communicate and share.”

Troy Thibodeaux
Editor, Interactive Newsroom Technology
Data’s value increases over time

Instead of discussion and documentation getting buried and fragmented across emails and in-person conversations, AP's data becomes more valuable as people work with it.

Members now have self-help tools that make it easier to explore the data. Discussions help surface common questions, insights that others can use, documentation needs, and more.
Measure impact

The unified platform gives AP the ability to manage data provenance more effectively.

As journalists use AP datasets in their content, the activity can be attributed and measured.


When news organizations use data.world to understand and share localized stories from AP data, the content is accounted for.

Source: https://bangordailynews.com/2017/12/06/mainefocuswhite-maine-students-are-least-likely-in-nation-to-see-kids-of-another-race-at-school/
Lead the market

As journalists increasingly tap into AP's data subscription service, it is being recognized for pioneering a new model for data journalism that bridges the resource and data literacy gaps between larger and smaller news organizations.

The new model has earned AP conference speaking opportunities at SXSW as well as the industry's most prestigious events, including the Investigative Reporters and Editors annual NICAR conference and the Online News Association's annual conference. The new model has also been covered in publications like TechCrunch and Poynter.
About data.world

data.world taps into more of your team’s collective brainpower to achieve anything with data, faster. The Austin-based Public Benefit Corporation serves the enterprise, journalism, and public sector communities by speeding up data work and creating shared context to preserve and perpetuate essential project knowledge.

To learn more about data.world, please contact support@data.world