

ROBOT



WRITE



Robot journalists are writing more stories than you think

By Ross Miller

Minutes after Apple released its quarterly earnings this week, the Associated Press published (by way of CNBC, Yahoo, and others) “Apple tops Street 1Q forecasts.” It’s a story without a byline, or rather, without a human byline — a financial story written and published by an automated system well-versed in the AP Style Guide. The AP implemented the system six months ago and now publishes 3,000 such stories every quarter — and that number is poised to grow.

Quarterly earnings are a necessity for business reporting — and it can be both monotonous and stressful, demanding a combination of accuracy and speed. That’s one of the reasons why last summer the AP partnered with Automated Insights to begin automating quarterly earnings reports using their Wordsmith platform.

You wouldn’t necessarily know it at first blush. Sure, maybe reading it in the context of this story it’s apparent, but otherwise it feels like a pretty standard, if a tad dry, AP news item. The obvious tell doesn’t come until the end of an article: “This story was generated by Automated Insights.” According to AI’s public relations manager James Kotecki, the Wordsmith platform generates millions of articles per week; other partners include Allstate, Comcast, and Yahoo, whose fantasy football reports are automated. Kotecki estimates the company’s system can produce 2,000 articles per second if need be.

Philana Patterson, an assistant business editor at the AP tasked with implementing the system, tells us there was some skepticism from the