

AP to take on Web piracy, cut rates

April 6 2009



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The US news agency the Associated Press announced plans on Monday to take legal action against websites that publish stories from the AP or its member newspapers without permission.

The AP, which has been facing subscription cancellation threats from a number of struggling US newspapers, also announced it will significantly cut the rates its charges newspapers for its news services.

The moves were unveiled at the AP annual meeting in San Diego, California, and in a press release by the New York-based news agency, a cooperative owned by more than 1,400 US newspapers.

In a crackdown on Web piracy, the AP board of directors said they were launching a "[newspaper](#) industry initiative to protect news content from

misappropriation online."

"We can no longer stand by and watch others walk off with our work under misguided legal theories," AP chairman Dean Singleton said.

The AP statement said the news agency would work with Internet portals and other partners who legally license content "and would pursue legal and legislative actions against those who don't."

AP president Tom Curley said the news agency will develop "a rights management and tracking system" for text content and "new search pages that point users to the latest and most authoritative sources of breaking news."

The AP did not mention any particular websites in its copyright initiative but many US newspapers have openly criticised aggregators such as [Google](#) News, which links to their content without sharing advertising revenue.

Other newspapers have not complained, however, saying Google News is driving traffic to their websites that they would not otherwise receive.

The AP, and Agence France-Presse, have licensing agreements with Google.

Google chief executive Eric Schmidt is scheduled to speak on Tuesday at the Newspaper Association of America meeting, also being held in San Diego.

The AP statement said pricing changes for newspapers would result in 35 million dollars in rate assessment reductions for 2010, on top of 30 million dollars in rate reductions for 2009.

It estimated that revenue from US newspaper members will have fallen by about one-third between 2008 and 2010.

The AP also said it would allow newspapers that do not require a full world news wire to purchase a "limited" service and allow members to provide only one year's notice to cancel the service instead of the current two.

Facing a backlash from some member newspapers over new fees, the AP was forced last year to suspend a planned repricing and repackaging program.

US newspapers have been struggling in recent years with steady declines in circulation and a loss of readership and advertising to online media. Two major US newspapers have shut down in recent weeks and several large newspaper chains have declared bankruptcy.

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Citation: AP to take on Web piracy, cut rates (2009, April 6) retrieved 7 August 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-04-ap-web-piracy.html>

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