

Self-aware stories: the next gen of news

Posted by [Colin Heilbut](#) on June 29, 2010 at 3:10 PM



Imagine if your news site let you do a search for the names of every Fortune 500 executive who has announced at least four million dollars in eco-friendly real estate purchases in 2009? Or a search for a restaurant within a mile of a railway station in a town with a theatre that offers vegetarian lasagna and at least one lamb dish. These tasks will be trivial once the semantic web technologies have been widely adopted. In a conference last week, **Thomson Reuters** VP **Tom Tague** was joined by *New York Times* Semantic Technologist **Evan Sandhaus**, **Allvoices** CEO **Amra Tareen**, and **Read It Later** creator **Nate Weiner** to discuss how the semantic web can connect news and make stories more accessible.

The semantic Web is a strategy for enabling communication between independent databases on the Web. For example, Sandhaus said, there's a wealth of priceless data in databases at **Amazon**, the **Environmental Protection Agency**, the **Census Bureau**, **Twitter** and **Wikipedia**. "But they don't know anything about one another," he said, so there's no way to answer questions like, "What is the impact of pollution on population?" or "What do people tweet about on smoggy days?"

For newspapers, semantic technology improves reader engagement by linking together related media. For readers, that means more context on each story and a more personalized experience. And for advertisers, it means better demographic data than ever before.

The companies represented at that conference use semantic technology to intelligently sort data in closed or semi-closed uniform systems (like music databases or RSS news feeds). But just five days ago, the **World Wide Web Consortium (W3C)** announced the release of protocol specifications for building rule systems on the web that will eventually enable semantic searches across the entire Web. Sir **Tim Berners-Lee**, the man who is widely-credited with inventing today's world wide web, now leads the work in developing the semantic web. He explains the task as an effort to change the Web from a massive searchable text file into a queryable database. In other words, W3C its working on a standard for assigning labels to the information that will be stored in any given website.

Sandro Hawke, a W3C systems architect predicts that "it'll happen so quickly that no one will know, they'll [users] just notice the internet doing more cool things."

Click [here](#) for an interactive demonstration of Thompson Reuter's semantic technology, or see below for a short explanatory video.

Sources: [eWeekEurope](#), [Poynter](#), [MIT News](#)

Posted in : [Newspaper](#)

Tags : [search](#)



Related Entries

James Murdoch criticizes search engines and **British Library** newspaper scanning project

China: reform to state secrets law further threatens journalists

Do newspaper websites need **Google**?

Twitter's latest homepage design tries to draw in new users

Gawker focuses on "branded traffic" to increase ad revenue