

“The TTS Revolution”

From TIME MAGAZINE, July 13, 1953

(COURTESY OF TIME; COPYRIGHT, TIME INC., 1953)

Introductory Note by MLC Co. This item from *The Press*, a department of TIME MAGAZINE, is appended to the ITU article which appeared some six months earlier. Developments in the uses of TTS have spread rapidly—as a phase of the “technology problem” confronting ITU and all of us in the graphic arts, TTS is currently the most spectacular.

IN THE ASSOCIATED PRESS bureau in Charlotte, N. C. one morning two years ago, an operator punched out a message that set a revolution in motion. The message: “Greetings. This is the opening of the first Teletypesetter circuit.” With those words, A.P. started the biggest mechanical change in U.S. newspaper publishing since the invention of the Linotype machine more than 60 years ago. By last week, more than 900 of the 1,786 dailies in the U.S. were getting A.P., United Press and International News Service news—and setting it in type—by Teletypesetter (TTS)*. In wire-service bureaus, often far from the paper taking the service, an operator punches keys at a machine similar to a standard teletype, thus perforates a tape. The perforations set up electric impulses in a transmitter that go out by wire to a reperforator machine in the newspaper office. The reperforator duplicates the tape while printing the words on a monitoring machine so that editors can read the “taped” story. The tape is then fed into a typesetting machine which automatically sets columns of type ready to be placed in forms and put on presses (*an illustration showed a typical TTS equipment*).

The only difference a reader could notice between wire-service TTS and hand-operated typeset stories is in the style, *e.g.*, capitalization and punctuation. This week, after polling newspapers all over the U.S., A.P. took a long step toward eliminating even these small differences. It sent out 20,000 copies of its *TTS Associated Press Style Book*, which papers all over the country will follow to bring their own style in harmony with TTS circuits.

* TIME has been using its own more complicated TTS since 1940 to set identical type in plants in Philadelphia and Chicago (and later in Los Angeles). Since then, more than 200 other magazines, weekly newspapers, book publishers and regional chains of dailies have started using TTS.

The Bugaboo. To newsmen, notably on papers of 50,000 or less circulation (more than 75% of all TTS users), TTS is a great timesaver. “With TTS,” says Alden C. Waite, boss of the eight-paper Southern California Associated Newspaper chain, “you free your wire editor from doing all the clerical work of going through and marking capital letters [on ordinary teletype copy which is all in caps], and allow him to do real selective editing.”

“The idea that TTS might lead to more standardized news,” says Santa Rosa (Calif.) *Press-Democrat* General Manager Dan Bowerman, “is a phony bugaboo. Papers have been getting leased-wire news for years, and they seldom do any fancy editing on it anyway, except for a local angle here and there.” A.P. Traffic Executive Harry Montgomery ran a test of dailies taking TTS, found they not only played their stories differently, but had more time and manpower to concentrate on their own state and local news. Many papers that buy TTS from the wire services also now use their own TTS machine to set local copy. Some even hire typists to operate the typewriter-keyboard punching machines at half the salary Linotype or Intertype compositors get, use one compositor to supervise as many as five tape-fed typesetting machines. The Miami *Herald* uses its own TTS circuits to cover local stories, *e.g.*, the *Herald* punches tape in the press box at the Orange Bowl Stadium, feeds it directly into typesetting machines at the plant.

“Cheap Tape.” No one was more wary of TTS originally than Woodruff Randolph, president of the powerful International Typographical Union. But the ITU now goes along with it, except for “cheap tape,” *i.e.*, syndicated features like Columnists Pearson, Winchell, the Alsops and 47 others, which Manhattan’s Tape Production Corp. mails out in rolls of tape to more than 130 dailies for 50 cents a column. The union also still bitterly opposes the use of typists instead of compositors to set TTS copy, sarcastically calls it a “promising means of union-busting.” Thus far, TTS has not created unemployment among ITU members. Papers like the Boulder (Colo.) *Camera* have simply been able to expand their coverage, fatten up their pages and grow with the same printing staff they had before.

Said Business Manager Alfred Chapman Jr. of the Columbus (Ga.) *Enquirer* (circ. 21,971) and *Ledger* (26,589): “We are saving at least \$85,000 a year . . . TTS circuits are the salvation of many papers because they can run more news at less cost. The average reader . . . can get a better paper. We took the money we saved by TTS and plowed it back into the editorial department. That’s what TTS will do for the newspaper reader.”