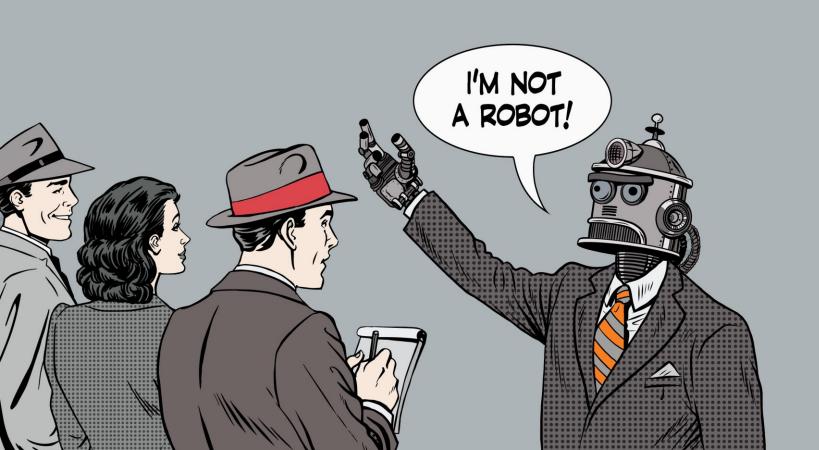
Automated journalism: an overview



Laurence Dierickx
Université Libre de Bruxelles
2018

What is automated journalism?

- A **technological process**: from data to text
- A subfield of computational linguistics (first experiences of NLG in 1970s)
- An editorial process: human intentions designed into computer processing

A matter of choices made by human beings





What is not automated journalism?

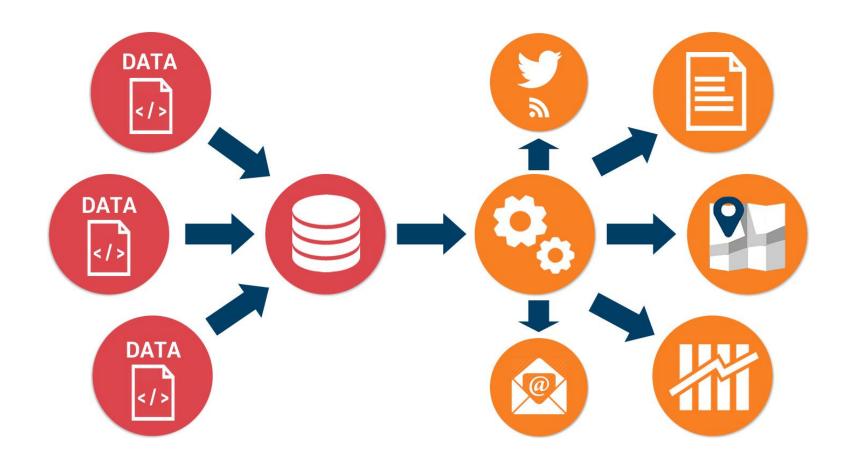
- A technology that will act by itself
- An uncontrolled process full of bias (bias or errors are from humans or from bad data quality, a computer software never repeat the same mistake... if it is detected!)
- A 3D robot even if the metaphor is widely used (except in Asia)







How does it work?

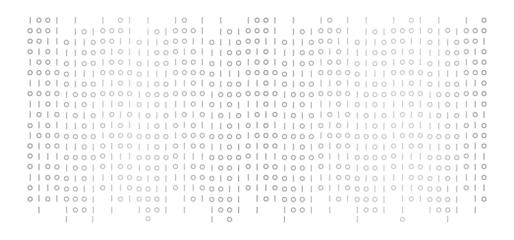


WHAT TO SAY?

HOW TO SAY IT?



What are the requirements?



Structured data

Rights to use the data

Reliable source

Data must be up to date

Good data quality = accurate, complete,...

Relevance for a journalistic use



What are the covered domains?



Limitations are consequences of the requirements. Everything cannot be automated!



Is it error free?

3 reported cases

2008

Google News

Outdated financial data published with the date of the day while it was much older, announcing the bankrupt of a company. Consequences: traders sells... (impact on markets).

2015

Associated Press

Netflix released second-quarter earnings at the same time as its stock underwent a 7to-1 split. Value were no split: misleading interpretation (71, fall of individual share). 2017

L.A. Times

Quakebot (2014): massive earthquake (magnitude 6.7), panic on social networks! This earthquake had happened well... but in 1925! Error came from wrong encoding (by a human) in the database (U.S. Geological Survey..)

Bad data value Human errors

HUMAN CONTROL NEEDED



Laurence Dierickx



Which European media do use it?

PRESS AGENCIES

NEWSPAPERS

MAGAZINES

PURE PLAYERS



WE DON'T KNOW EVERYTHING!

CONFIDENTIAL DISCLOSURES (Germany)

Readers are not ready?

Newsrooms are not ready?



Which European media do use it?

CHABLIS 8907

POPULATION EN 2012 : 17 355 habitants PRÉSIDENT DU CONSEIL GÉNÉRAL : André VILLIERS

Résultats du premier tour des élections départementales (22 mars 2015) : canton de Chablis

Le binôme constitué de Mme CHARPIGNON Sylvie et de M. GENDRAUD Patrick (Union de la Droite) est arrivé en tête du premier tour des élections départementales, dimanche 22 mars, dans le canton de Chablis avec 45,53 % des suffrages exprimés. Le tandem de l'Union de la Droite devance le binôme du Front National formé par M. BERTHOLLET Charles et Mme LAFAYE Alexandra, également qualifié pour le second tour, qui a obtenu 34,12 % des voix. M. SACKEPEY Gilles et Mme VASSEUR Mireille de Divers gauche sont éliminés. Le taux d'abstention a atteint le score de 44,41 % dans ce canton.

Ces textes ont été écrits en collaboration avec Data2Content, une marque de la société Syllabs





PARTAGER F

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| RÉSULTATS DES ELECTIONS DEL ARTEM | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|--|--|--|
| Saisissez une ville ou un code postal | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | BUBLIOITE | | | |

Automated journalism: an overview

Laurence Dierickx



Why do they use it?

To speed up content production

High speed level production: in France, more than 1 billion articles produced in one night (elections)

To extend media coverage

To cover events not covered before (f.e NTB sports coverage in Norway)

To provide a service to the readers

Real time information about hot topics

To make something that was not done before

Dealing with large amounts of data can be tricky. Automation can help in a fast and accurate way.

To assist journalists

By freeing them of repetitive and time-consuming tasks.

Not to replace human journalists

Nothing in this way is observed (employees) but there is no zero risk! Freelancers are more fragile.

Automation systems can be easily multilingual



What are the obstacles for development?

Data
Available, structured, reliable

Costs
Between 20 & 50k *Le Monde* // projects supported by Google DNI (UK 708k, Sweden 46k) // public funds (Netherland, T.U, 700k)

Resources
Need internal skills



Who are the humans behind?

- IT service
 Inside the media (f.e. NTB, Norway)
- Tech start-up (not claiming themselves as media cies)
 Mostly in France (Syllabs) and in Germany (Retresco, AX Semantics)
- Journo-dev
 Marginal cases



How do journalists react?

Enthusiastic

Free-up time, re

Free-up time, repetitive and boring tasks for the machine

- Pessimistic
 Fear that automated systems will replace journalists
- Fatalist
 If automation can destroy jobs, it can also create new ones



Do the audiences make the difference?

According to studies, the answer is no but...

- audiences find generated contents less pleasant to read
- automated stories are considered as less well written
- in the same time, those stories are judged more accurate and reliable



Tool for journalists?

Case study (Belgium): Bxl'air bot



Bulletin du 14 mars 2018

Pas d'alerte pollution

7h03. L'indice de la qualité de l'air bruxellois est bon, communique Bruxelles Environnement. La teneur de l'air en particules fines de type PM10 est de 11 µg/m³. Elle se trouve endessous de la recommandation de l'Organisation mondiale de la santé (OMS), ainsi que sous la norme européenne. Le taux moyen de particules fines de type PM2.5 est de 10 µg/m³. Il est en-dessous de la norme recommandée par l'OMS. Le taux moyen

de black carbon (carbone suie) est de 1,4 μ g/m³. La concentration d'ozone dans l'air est de 19 μ g/m³. Le taux moyen de dioxyde d'azote est de 50 μ g/m³. Ce taux dépasse de 10 μ g/m³ la norme européenne et celle recommandée par l'OMS (moyenne annuelle). Le ciel est partiellement nuageux, pour une température de 4,5 degrés.

Ce texte a été généré de manière automatique à partir de données publiques extraites en temps réel.



F Partager 25

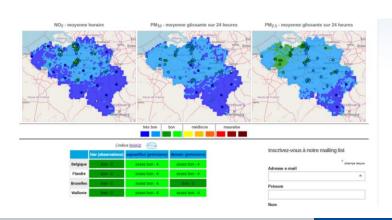
Tool for journalists?

www.bxlairaibot.be (Alter Echos)

- Retrieve and store data about air quality in Brussels
- Real time open data (HTML) collected from different sources
- Provide first data analysis: text, charts, maps
- Monitoring (1 year), raw material for investigative work (causes & consequences)



| centious 1.4 days Particulate Matter (PH10) : Dely mean concentrations (00100 till 24:00 GMT), last 14 days | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|----------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|------|------|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | code | city |
| 41B011 | Sint-Agatha-Berchem | 40 | 50 | 59 | 22 | 18 | 23 | 23 | 15 | 15 | 11 | 10 | 6 | 12 | NA |
| 41MEU1 | Neder-Over-Heembeek | 43 | 49 | 62 | 17 | 15 | | 17 | 12 | 16 | 11 | 10 | 8 | 9 | NA |
| 41N043 | Voorhaven (Haren) | 49 | 51 | NA | NA | NA | 35 | 23 | 17 | 29 | 17 | 13 | 18 | 15 | NA |
| 41R001 | Sint-Jans-Molenbeek | 49 | 47 | 56 | 17 | NA | 21 | 15 | 13 | 17 | 11 | 11 | 8 | 10 | NA |
| 41R012 | Ukkel | 31 | 42 | 51 | 14 | NA | NA | 13 | 10 | 13 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 8 | NA |
| 41WOL1 | Sint-Lambrechts-Woluwe | 33 | 45 | 58 | 17 | 13 | 19 | 16 | 12 | 12 | 10 | 8 | 6 | 9 | NA |
| 40AL01 | Antwerpen-Linkeroever | 74 | 70 | 81 | 27 | 19 | 23 | 22 | | 20 | 14 | 14 | 10 | 12 | NA |
| 40AL02 | Doel (Engelsesteenweg) | 51 | 65 | 88 | 30 | 23 | 29 | 25 | 22 | 22 | 26 | 18 | 12 | 12 | NA |
| 40AL03 | Verrebroek | 57 | 72 | 94 | 32 | 20 | 27 | 25 | 15 | 20 | 16 | 17 | 10 | 13 | NA |
| 40AL04 | Kallo (Liefkenshoektunnel) | 63 | 63 | 79 | 27 | 19 | 27 | 25 | 17 | 22 | 15 | 15 | 12 | 13 | NA |
| 40AL05 | Kallo (sluis Kallo) | 51 | 66 | 83 | 28 | 18 | 23 | 23 | 15 | 19 | 15 | 15 | 10 | 13 | NA |
| 40GK06 | Diepenbeek (Zinniastraat) | 52 | 60 | 65 | 22 | 16 | 25 | | | 15 | 11 | 11 | 8 | 10 | NA |
| 40HB23 | Hoboken | 43 | 56 | 70 | 24 | 17 | 21 | 20 | 15 | 19 | 13 | 13 | 11 | 11 | NA |
| 40MN01 | Menen | 45 | 55 | 64 | 19 | 20 | 31 | 21 | 18 | 24 | 18 | 16 | 13 | 16 | NA |
| 40OB01 | Oostrozebeke | 53 | 62 | 74 | 24 | 22 | 29 | 27 | 26 | 27 | 17 | 14 | 17 | 19 | NA |
| 40OB02 | Wielsbeke | 52 | 62 | 77 | 25 | 23 | 28 | 22 | 17 | 23 | 21 | 15 | 12 | 19 | NA |
| 40RL01 | Roeselare (Brugsesteenweg) | 53 | 61 | 73 | 22 | 23 | 25 | | 14 | 22 | 18 | 16 | 11 | 14 | NA |
| 40SA04 | Hoevenen | 49 | 61 | 82 | 29 | 19 | 23 | 23 | 16 | 21 | 16 | 16 | 10 | 12 | NA |
| 40SZ01 | Steenokkerzeel | 47 | 61 | 76 | 23 | 16 | 19 | 18 | 12 | 16 | 12 | 12 | 7 | 12 | NA |
| 40SZ02 | Steenokkerzeel | 41 | 52 | 63 | 19 | 14 | 19 | 16 | 12 | 15 | 11 | 11 | 7 | 10 | NA |
| 42M802 | Antwerpen (Luchtbal) | 56 | 64 | 80 | 29 | 21 | 30 | 28 | 16 | 24 | 18 | 15 | 12 | 13 | NA |







Tool for journalists?

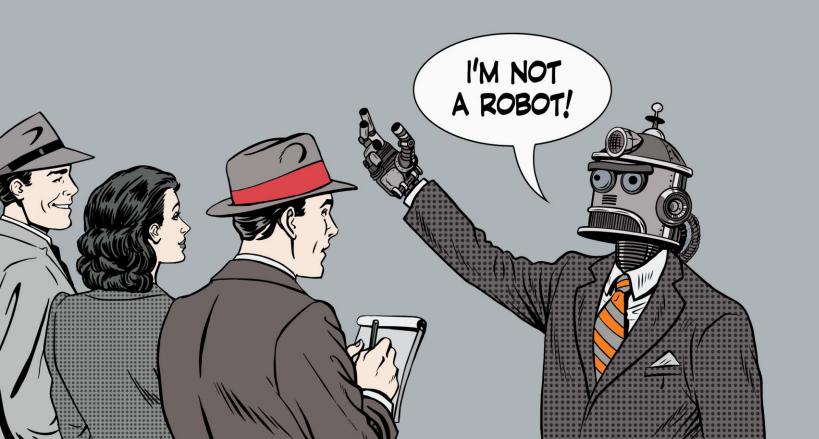
Assets for the journalists

- Work by its own to make a long time job (gain of time)
- Accuracy (supposed a human control), objectivate by numbers (exceeding of EU norms)
- No need to get particular skills (at the opposite of datajournalism)
- Used by journalists only if they can make sense of it





Thank you!



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