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AccuNet/AP Photo Archive

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Recommended Citation

AccuNet / AP Photo Archive

Reviewer Composite Score: ★★★★ 1/2

http://ap.acuweather.com

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Pricing

Yearly subscription fees run $995 for one computer workstation, $1,295 for five computer workstations, or $5,000/site license with unlimited workstations. Library district pricing is based upon a user pool formula. Although district pricing is variable, substantial price reductions can be obtained. A library district with 20 sites might expect to pay as little as $800/library with unrestricted access. IP filtering is used to control access. Institutions receive per student price reductions as FTE increases.

The **AccuNet/AP Photo Archive** is designed for schools, colleges and universities. As such, it is unavailable to individual subscribers unless they are willing to pay the regular price of $995. For additional pricing information, phone (888) 438-9847 or e-mail: sales@accuwx.com

Product Description

The Associated Press is a news co-operative which celebrated its 150th anniversary in 1998. It is the world's oldest and largest newsgathering organization, which serves 15,000 news organizations in 71 countries. It has amassed a collection of 50 million images in its print and negative library. When AP decided to make many of these images available for use by schools (K-12), public libraries, colleges and universities, it contacted *AccuWeather*, the largest corporate supplier of weather information and images.

During the past 30 years, *AccuWeather* has developed a widespread and rapid communication and distribution network, supplying weather information and images to over 1,000 internet sites, including AOL.com and MSNBC.com. On radio, TV, and in newspapers, five-day forecasts reach 180 million view-

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Reviewer Score

The maximum number of stars in each category is 5.

Composite: ★★★★1/2

Content: ★★★★1/2 — *The AccuNet/AP Photo Archive is the most extensive collection of its kind available online. Much of the Associated Press's historical collection is still unavailable, with retro-conversion expected to take several more years. All current photos (one year and less) are instantly available.*

Searchability: ★★★★★ — *The search engine is extremely effective because it allows many points of access into the collection. Searching options include natural language, Boolean, field (what, when and/or where), concept (poor, hot, comic), hue (red, black and white, pink), special category (sports), and selected category (astronomy, animals). Hits display as thumbnails or in index form depending on the option chosen by the searcher.*

Pricing: ★★★★ — *Reasonably priced annual subscriptions for institutional subscribers. There are no special pricing plans for individuals or low volume users.*

Contract Options: ★★★★1/2 — *Institutional (based on FTE), site, district (user pools based on the population of the service area). No special reduced cost contract options are available to individual subscribers. Although no consortia pricing formula is currently in place, consortia may negotiate with the vendor using district contracts as a model.*

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ers and listeners each week on such high-profile media outlets as *CNN, The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal.* Like AP, *AccuWeather* has developed a strong international presence. The **AccuNet/AP Photo Archive** is the result of the melding of the strengths of The Associated Press and *AccuWeather.* Previous to this joint venture, the AP photo archive was unavailable to educational institutions or to libraries.

The **AccuNet/AP Photo Archive** is divided into two parts. One contains all news photos (aproximately 800) that move across AP's spot picture system each day, including those photos that never make it into print or onto TV. After holding photos in the current collection for one year, 75% are removed. The remaining 25% are indexed and cataloged for retention in the historical collection. In addition to these, every day roughly 200 historical photos from AP's historical archive undergo retro-conversion and inclusion into the historical collection of the **AccuNet/AP Photo Archive**. These date back to the oldest available photo of Abraham Lincoln taken in 1844. Of the 50 million images in the AP archive, about 750,000 are now available online from **AccuNet/AP Photo Archive**.

This service was created for the public, students and educators, and is only available to schools, public and academic libraries. Images are easy to locate, and they may be downloaded, copied, or saved to a disk or harddrive. Although no specific InterLibrary Loan agreements are written into the subscription contracts, ILL is essentially permitted because images may be downloaded and then e-mailed as attachments to third parties. Students may copy photos into papers. Educators are permitted to print multiple copies for students. It is also permissible for students and instructors to copy images onto overhead transparencies, or to use them in PowerPoint presentations.

Critical Evaluation

For a generation that has come to expect immediate gratification, **AccuNet/ AP Photo Archive** boasts that every time Mark McGwire sets a new home run record, images of his swings are available to subscribers before he reaches home plate. For quality and

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quantity, this database is peerless. The archive offers breadth of coverage that makes it an excellent tool for educators, and a great resource for students. It is a tool that includes international historical events from the time of Lincoln, categories of interest including sports, business, entertainment, weather, politics, economics, religion, social affairs, industry, science, technology and art, even charts and graphs of stock market activity. Whether one is searching for images of microbes, the latest computing technology, marines raising the flag on Iwo Jima, a cave in Europe where Neanderthal bones have been found, modern slavery in Sudan, a newly discovered bird species, or Cochise, it is difficult to think of any significant subject or event of the last 150 years which would not be included in the archive.

The **AccuNet/AP Photo Archive** Website is very easy to use. Sample searches show users the techniques they may use to find the photos they want. Youngsters will have no difficulty entering a natural language search in the "What" field. And advanced search modes allow sophisticated searchers to formulate intricate queries. Search results may be sorted chronologically or by relevancy ranking. There are several pages of helpful instruction available to those who wish to learn advanced search strategies.

Images may be searched by specifying any of 10 colors or hues such as white, black, blue, and/or by 71 concepts including concentration, destruction, dry, excitement and isolation. It is also possible to narrow searches by specifying the type of photograph, such as portrait, landscape, interior, exterior, formal, action, aerial, et.al. Such flexibility is of great value to art students, historians and those interested in the social sciences.

Users may choose to have hits displayed in one of three ways. When the

4 thumbnails per screen option is selected, a full caption, written much like an abstract, appears next to each image. When the 12 thumbnails per screen option is selected, no caption appears. However, a hotlink below each thumbnail allows for instant display of the caption. When the index option is used, a listing of 36 photos is displayed. Although no thumbnails or captions appear, clicking on an appropriate hotlink next to each title causes a thumbnail or caption to pop-up, or a photo to load.

With each thumbnail is the "light box" hotlink which allows photos to be saved in a folder for perusal and downloading at a later time. Information about each photo is instantly available, including where it was shot, its creation date, submission date, photographer, caption writer, and title. The size of the photo, download options, and the expected download time are given in the download section. The fastest broad band communication lines are used, so download speeds are limited only at the user end. Images may be downloaded as uncompressed files or as JPEGS. Text is imbedded in each download and may be retrieved via any text editor. Photos and captions may be printed out on any standard black-and-white or color printer.

This service claims an "Up Time" of 99%, and is available 24/7/365. Once, during a hurricane, it managed to remain online by switching to a T3 connection. Basic user system requirements are Netscape Communicator 4.04 or better (running on Windows 95 or NT for PCs), or Microsoft Internet Explorer 4.0 or better (PCs only).

At the present, approximately 2% of AP's total image library is available. The extent of the AP image database is apparent when comparing it with other products. For example, I pulled a *Britannica* volume off my shelf and

noticed that it contained about 1,000 pages. With approximately 750,000 images currently available on **AccuNet/ AP Photo Archive**, it would take about 750 volumes the size of *Britannica* to put all of these images into print form. Every librarian will appreciate what it means to have such an extensive collection available without the need for maintaining hardcopy picture files. The content is as diverse as our user populations. And all of this is available at a reasonable price.

AccuNet/AP Photo Archive does have competition from other sites. There is a very nice alternative site for obtaining photos and other types of images that are free, and that is the index at http://www.ed.gov/free. This site contains links to about 1,000 government agencies such as the Library of Congress, NASA, NIH and the National Museum of Art. When it comes to providing access to special collections, many of these sites are unmatched. But there are drawbacks to these sites. Primarily, they tend to have low resolution images, searching is cumbersome, thumbnails are rare, formatting is inconsistent, coverage is spotty, and extensive time is often required to search for a photo on a particular subject. **AccuNet/AP Photo Archive** has none of these drawbacks. Rather, it is one of the least cluttered and easy-to-use sites that I have come across.

Although 75% of AP's current news archive is dropped from online access after one year, most librarians will see

this as a plus. What is eliminated is the dross and duplicate images. After all, how many pictures does one need of a politician at a particular event? The archive may not have images of every painting of Van Gogh, for example, but it does provide high-resolution images of every one of those paintings that has made the headlines. And given the fact that experts are carefully choosing and cataloging about 200 additional historical photos for inclusion in the database each day, I feel that **AccuNet/ AP Photo Archive** gets a very high score for content.

Individuals or institutions that wish to use images for profit, in a book, or as part of an official publication or internet site, should not contact **AccuNet/AP Photo Archive**, but rather obtain permission directly from AP. Such commercial requests should be addressed to The Associated Press at (212) 621-1930.

Authentication
The primary form of authentication is IP filtering. Libraries that provide patrons with remote online access to databases may authenticate patrons who possess valid library cards by username and password. Libraries will be contacted if an unusually high volume of hits is generated during the course of the contract period.

Selected References
None, other than several very short reviews of very limited scope.

Selected Users
The vendor will not release a list of its subscribers, but I have personally seen links to the site at Penn State and the University of Arizona.

Reader Opinion
Web edition only.
http://www.charlestonco.com

Contact Information
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Fax: (818) 235-8609
http://ap.accuweather.com

Advisor Additional References
"Accuweather launches the Accunet/AP Photo Archive on the Internet" *Information intelligence, online libraries, and microcomputers* vol.15, no. 12, December, 1997.

"John Glenn repeats history on Accuweather's Online AP Photo Archive" *PR Newswire*, October 29, 1998.

"AP Photo Archive available exclusively through Accuweather" *PR Newswire*, April 8, 1999.

Pricing Models

Cons: Small or consortially unaffiliated libraries are forced to pay top dollar for a product even though they often have the least ability to pay.

State-Wide or Group Discounts - Consortia and state-wide purchasing are becoming a major trend in the purchase of electronic resources.

Pros: Smaller libraries are able to acquire access to many more resources than they would ever be able to af-

ford on their own. Huge volume deals based on overall dollars, concurrent users, FTEs or other measures often bring the unit cost for access to the lowest possible level. Vendors can make a single sale to a large group and minimize their marketing and training costs.

Cons: Libraries that are unaffiliated with active consortia or that are in regions where group deals are not

done cannot benefit. It is often politically difficult to coordinate large-scale deals. One organization must often take the fiduciary responsibility for the deal and there may sometimes be risk in getting reimbursed from the partners.