NewsDiffs: Version Controlling the News

Eric Price    Margaret Sullivan

MIT    The New York Times

2013-03-11

http://newsdiffs.org/

Comparing: Profile: Silvio Berlusconi, Italian ex-prime minister

http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-11981754

Published: Archived February 19, 2013 at 2:24pm EST
Published: Archived March 7, 2013 at 11:21pm EST

<= Previous revision

19 February 2013
Profile: Silvio Berlusconi, Italian ex-prime minister

Over two decades Silvio Berlusconi has proved himself the master of the political comeback, and is hoping to confound his critics once again in Italy's forthcoming. In February 2013, he showed he had not lost his touch when, at the age of 78, he closed a huge gap to come within 1% of winning a general election.

When he was forced from office in November 2011, after the markets had lost all confidence in his ability to run the country, even his most loyal supporters could see no way back.

Mr Berlusconi said he would not stand for office again. But here he is, leading his centro-right party into another election, making his opponents very nervous.
Online news is different from print.
Online news is different from print.
  ▶ Print: hard to change, daily deadlines.

Libraries archive print version, not what people actually read.
NewsDiffs tracks stories as they evolve.

Online news is different from print.

- Print: hard to change, daily deadlines.
- Online: easy to change, deadline now.
Online news is different from print.
  - Print: hard to change, daily deadlines.
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Online news articles have a lifecycle:

- Reporter writes a rushed story.
- Editor makes a pass or two.
- (Another) reporter rewrites the story.
- Editor makes another pass or two.

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Eric Price, Margaret Sullivan (MIT, NYT)
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NAIROBI, Kenya — Kenya’s election commission on Saturday declared Uhuru Kenyatta, the son of Kenya’s first president and a suspect for crimes against humanity, as Kenya’s next president amid growing allegations of vote fraud and a refusal by the other leading contender to concede.

Mr. Kenyatta received 50.07 percent of the vote, the election commission said.

[...]

But the announcement was not expected to allay worries of violence and chaos; the other top contender has indicated that he would not concede defeat.

The second-place candidate, Raila Odinga, Kenya’s prime minister and the second-place candidate, will reject the result, one of his top advisers said on Saturday morning. Many people fear such a development could lead to the type of confusion and violence that erupted in 2007, in Kenya’s last disputed election, when Mr. Odinga said he was cheated out of victory.

“Raila has no intention of conceding and will be challenging this in court,” said Salim Lone, the adviser to Mr. Odinga. “The level of the failures in the system makes it very difficult to believe it was a credible result, and if Uhuru is declared president, Raila will go to court.”
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# Changed Articles | All Sources

**Starting June 17, 2012 (with occasional downtime)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article</th>
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<th>Diff</th>
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<tr>
<td>Profile: Silvio Berlusconi, Italian ex-prime minister (BBC)</td>
<td>March 7, 2013, 11:21 p.m.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Feb. 19, 2013, 2:24 p.m.</td>
<td>(Compare)</td>
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<td>Dec. 9, 2012, 11:10 a.m.</td>
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<td>Dec. 9, 2012, 3:12 a.m.</td>
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<td>Dec. 9, 2012, 2:28 a.m.</td>
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<td>Nov. 23, 2012, 9:31 p.m.</td>
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<td>Oct. 19, 2012, 9:53 a.m.</td>
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<td>Oct. 19, 2012, 8:22 a.m.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Oct. 19, 2012, 5:14 a.m.</td>
<td>(Compare)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Repent, Dick Cheney (NYT)</td>
<td>March 7, 2013, 11:15 p.m.</td>
<td>(Compare)</td>
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<td>By MAUREEN DOWD</td>
<td>March 6, 2013, 5:14 p.m.</td>
<td>(Compare)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>March 5, 2013, 10:08 p.m.</td>
<td>(Compare)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Malaysia rejects clan leader's call for cease-fire in Sabah as death toll rises (CNN)</td>
<td>March 7, 2013, 11:14 p.m.</td>
<td>(Compare)</td>
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<td>Jethro Mullen, CNN</td>
<td>March 7, 2013, 6:10 a.m.</td>
<td>(Compare)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>March 7, 2013, 5:09 a.m.</td>
<td>(Compare)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>March 7, 2013, 4:08 a.m.</td>
<td>(Compare)</td>
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Comparing: Profile: Silvio Berlusconi, Italian ex-prime minister

http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-11981754

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Mr Berlusconi said he would not stand for office again. But here he is, leading his centre-right party into another election, making his opponents very nervous.
Outline of Talk

1. Motivation and Creation
2. Case Studies
3. Future
4. Q & A
Occupy Wall Street arrests

After allowing them onto the bridge, police cut off and arrested dozens of occupy wall street demonstrators.

- Lede rewritten to remove first bit.
- Lucky someone must have kept the old tab open!
- Reporter’s defense: body of article consistent.
- Hard to judge without access to old version.
N’kisi the telepathic parrot
Found via Language Log

N’kisi’s remarkable abilities, which are said to include telepathy, feature in the latest BBC Wildlife Magazine.

- 2004: BBC Science article appears
N’kisi the telepathic parrot

Found via Language Log

N’kisi’s remarkable abilities, which are said to include telepathy, feature in the latest BBC Wildlife Magazine.

- 2004: BBC Science article appears
- 2006: “Telepathy” removed; no correction
N’kisi the telepathic parrot

Found via Language Log

* N’kisi’s remarkable abilities, which are said to include telepathy, feature in the latest BBC Wildlife Magazine.

- 2004: BBC Science article appears
- 2006: “Telepathy” removed; no correction
- 2007 (May): Article completely replaced
N’kisi the telepathic parrot
Found via Language Log

N’kisi’s remarkable abilities, which are said to include telepathy, feature in the latest BBC Wildlife Magazine.

- 2004: BBC Science article appears
- 2006: “Telepathy” removed; no correction
- 2007 (May): Article completely replaced
- 2007 (August): “Correction” appears:

Note: This story about animal communication has replaced an earlier one on this page which contained factual inaccuracies we were unable to correct. As a result, the original story is no longer in our archive. It is still visible elsewhere, via [link to WayBack Machine].
The public editor, a year before NewsDiffs

Right now, tracking changes is not a priority at The Times. As [the new executive editor Jill Abramson] told me, it’s unrealistic to preserve an “immutable, permanent record of everything we have done.”
NewsDiffs team

Jennifer 8. Lee

Greg Price

Eric Price
NewsDiffs: Version Controlling the News
Knight-Mozilla Open News Hackathon

Eric Price, Margaret Sullivan (MIT, NYT) NewsDiffs: Version Controlling the News

2013-03-11 10 / 30
Knight-Mozilla Open News Hackathon

NewsDiffs: Version Controlling the News

Eric Price, Margaret Sullivan (MIT, NYT)
Knight-Mozilla Open News Hackathon

27 hours of furious coding
Knight-Mozilla Open News Hackathon

NewsDiffs: Version Controlling the News

Eric Price, Margaret Sullivan (MIT, NYT)

NEWSDIFFER
Keeping track of changes the New York Times makes to its articles after publication.

HTTP://MZL.LA/MbBSou
A permanent record is feasible

Recall The Times’s statement:

[I]t’s unrealistic to preserve an “immutable, permanent record of everything we have done.”

- Wikipedia does it.
- Version control is a solved problem.
- We did it in one* weekend, from the outside.
Technical overview

www.nytimes.com

Scraper
BeautifulSoup parser

MySQL Database of Article URLs
nytimes.com/2013/...ating.html
nytimes.com/2013/...-jail.html

Git repository
of text of all articles

Website
Django
Google diff-match-patch

You
*Not quite one weekend*

- Another day of work after each of 3, 10, 22 weeks.
- Scaling issues
  - Running on AFS, a networked file system
  - Moved version metadata from git to MySQL.
  - Optimized queries to both backends
- UI improvements.
NewsDiffs tracks changes to New York Times, CNN

by Craig Silverman
Published June 18, 2012 11:09 am
Updated July 11, 2012 7:21 am

It’s been said that the Internet never forgets, but that doesn’t necessarily mean it’s easy to recall something from minutes or even seconds before.

Web pages, articles, blog posts and other content are easily altered, changed, deleted. And it’s not always clear what’s new or has been removed. Cached versions of content exist, but it can be tough to locate them.
[A] more comprehensive archive that retains all significant versions of an article (and all corrections) would send readers a strong message that The Times is committed to full transparency and accountability. […] As NewsDiffs demonstrates, if you don’t make yourself accountable nowadays, someone else will do it for you.
NewsDiffs, un sitio que rastrea modificaciones en artículos web

Escrito por Cindy Villegas en Claves el 23/06/2012 | Comenta

Comparing: Mubarak Rushed To Military Care After a Stroke
http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/20/world/middleeast/mubarak-is-on-life-support-egypt-security-officials-say.html

Are these changes interesting?
Yes  No

Nota del NYT sobre la supuesta muerte de Hosni Mubarak
NewsDiffs: Änderungen in Artikeln transparent nachvollziehen

Von Andre Meister | Veröffentlicht am: 22.08.2012 um 12:49h | 6 Responses


So kann man beispielsweise nachvollziehen, wie die New York Times eine Story über den
Создан сайт для отслеживания изменений в онлайн-статьях

В США появился сайт NewsDiffs, который позволяет отслеживать все изменения, внесенные в новостные онлайн-статьи. Сайт, созданный во время семинара программистов Knight Mozilla MIT, открыт 17 июня.

Пока NewsDiffs отслеживает только изменения в статьях, появившихся на сайтах The New York Times и CNN с ночи 17 июня. Как только статья публикуется, ресурс сохраняет ее первую версию, а затем, если материал редактируется, NewsDiffs проводит анализ статьи и публикует новый вариант вместе с оригинальным, выделяя появившиеся изменения.
Easy to extend

- We’re tracking the New York Times, CNN, BBC, Politico.
- To track another site, need to write code to extract plain text from webpage.
- 30-40 lines of code; takes maybe one hour.
  - But resource constraints: running on free MIT servers out of my account.
NewsDiffs is Free Software

- Forks:

http://redactado.com.ar/

Redactado | Monitoreando cambios en medios online

Redactado te permite ver los cambios de artículos de noticias de medios online después de su publicación inicial, comenzando por La Nación.

El control de versiones de Redactado comenzó el 2 de julio de 2012

El sitio es una adaptación de NewsDiffs, un proyecto que controla las versiones de los artículos de The New York Times, CNN y Politico.

Podes revisar la lista de artículos modificados.

Dirija sus críticas/comentarios/sugerencias a @redactado

Desarrollado y mejorado por @i.e.d de UnaHormiga
NewsDiffs is Free Software

- Forks:

  http://redactado.com.ar/

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Artículos modificados
De lanacion.com.ar, desde el 02 de Julio de 2012

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<th>Artículo</th>
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<td>08/Mar/13 04:04</td>
<td>Comparar</td>
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<td>08/Mar/13 00:50</td>
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<td>08/Mar/13 00:38</td>
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<td></td>
<td>08/Mar/13 00:01</td>
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<td>Dilma y Raúl Castro, en Caracas para dar el último adiós a Hugo Chávez (La Nación)</td>
<td>08/Mar/13 04:02</td>
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<td>08/Mar/13 00:50</td>
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<td>08/Mar/13 00:07</td>
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<td>08/Mar/13 01:24</td>
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<td>El debate presidencial de EE.UU. llega a Los Simpsons: Homero vota a Mitt Romney (La Nación)</td>
<td>08/Mar/13 00:13</td>
<td>Comparar</td>
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<td>08/Mar/13 00:03</td>
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<td>03/Oct/12 20:00</td>
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<td>Cristina llegó de Venezuela (La Nación)</td>
<td>07/Mar/13 23:35</td>
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<td>07/Mar/13 23:23</td>
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NewsDiffs is Free Software

- Forks: http://newsdiffs.es/

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<th>Artículo</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corea del Norte amenaza con un ataque nuclear a Estados Unidos (ElPais)</td>
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<td>(Comparer)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Antonio Caño</td>
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<tr>
<td>Naciones Unidas denuncia las matanzas de albinos en Tanzania (ABC)</td>
<td>mar. 8, 2013, 7:03 a.m.</td>
<td>(Comparer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUARDO S. MOLANO, CORRESPONSALE NAIROBI</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nicolás Maduro asumirá el viernes la presidencia provisional de Venezuela (ElPais)</td>
<td>mar. 8, 2013, 7:03 a.m.</td>
<td>(Comparer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francisco Paregil</td>
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<td>Maduro jurará como presidente de Venezuela tras las exequias de Hugo Chávez (ABC)</td>
<td>mar. 8, 2013, 4:41 a.m.</td>
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<td>abc.es madrid</td>
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<td>Otras grandes renuncias de mandatarios mundiales (ABC)</td>
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<td>Pyongyang amenaza con anular los acuerdos de no agresión con Seúl (ElMundo)</td>
<td>mar. 8, 2013, 4:44 a.m.</td>
<td>(Comparer)</td>
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<td>Efe</td>
<td>Seúl</td>
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</table>
NewsDiffs is Free Software

- Forks:
  - http://newsdiffs.es/

- Patches:
  - Received (and merged) patch to parse tagesschau.de.
Tracking 28000 NYT articles (62000 over all sources).
- 44% of articles changed at least once.
  - 20-30% in opinion, books, fashion sections
  - 55-60% in sports, NY region, world sections
- 15% of articles changed at least three times.
- 9% have official corrections.
- 4% have byline changes.
  - 11% in world section.
Outline of Talk

1 Motivation and Creation

2 Case Studies

3 Future

4 Q & A
Comparing: U.S. Officials Say Iran Has Agreed To Nuclear Talks


October 20, 2012
U.S. Officials Say Iran Has Agreed To Nuclear Talks
By HELENE COOPER and MARK LANDLER

WASHINGTON — The United States and Iran have agreed in principle for the first time to one-on-one negotiations over Iran’s nuclear program, according to Obama administration officials, setting the stage for what could be a last-ditch diplomatic effort to avert a military strike on Iran.

Iranian officials have insisted that the talks wait until after the presidential election, a senior administration official said, telling their American counterparts that they want to know with whom they would be negotiating.

[...]

It is also far from clear that Mr. Obama’s opponent, Mitt Romney, would go through with the negotiation should he win election. Mr. Romney has repeatedly criticized the president as showing weakness on Iran and failing to stand firmly with Israel against the Iranian nuclear threat.

The White House publicly denied the report on Saturday evening. “It’s not true that the United States and Iran have agreed to one-on-one talks or any meeting after the American elections,” said Tommy Vietor, a White House spokesman. He added that the administration has “said from the outset that we would be prepared to meet bilaterally.”

Reports of the agreement have circulated among a small group of diplomats involved with Iran.
### Examples: Sandy Hook Shooting

**Gunman Massacres 20 Children at School in Connecticut; 28 Dead, Including Killer (NYT), Change Log**


By JAMES BARRON | First archived on Dec. 14, 2012, 12:09 p.m.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Date/Time EST Archived</th>
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<tr>
<td>Gunman Massacres 20 Children at School in Connecticut; 28 Dead, Including Killer</td>
<td>Dec. 17, 2012, 10:12 p.m.</td>
<td>(Compare with previous)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gunman Massacres 20 Children at School in Connecticut; 28 Dead, Including Killer</td>
<td>Dec. 17, 2012, 4:11 p.m.</td>
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<td>Gunman Massacres 20 Children at School in Connecticut; 28 Dead, Including Killer</td>
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<td>Gunman Massacres 20 Children at School in Connecticut; 28 Dead, Including Killer</td>
<td>Dec. 15, 2012, 10:10 a.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gunman Massacres 20 Children at School in Connecticut; 28 Dead, Including Killer</td>
<td>Dec. 15, 2012, 9:10 a.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gunman Massacres 20 Children at School in Connecticut; 28 Dead, Including Killer</td>
<td>Dec. 15, 2012, 2:11 a.m.</td>
<td>(Compare with previous)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gunman Kills 20 Children at School in Connecticut; 28 Dead in All</td>
<td>Dec. 15, 2012, 1:11 a.m.</td>
<td>(Compare with previous)</td>
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<td>Gunman Kills 20 Children at School in Connecticut; 28 Dead in All</td>
<td>Dec. 15, 2012, 12:10 a.m.</td>
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<td>(Compare with previous)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gunman Kills 20 Children at School in Connecticut; 28 Dead in All</td>
<td>Dec. 14, 2012, 9:10 p.m.</td>
<td>(Compare with previous)</td>
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<tr>
<td>School Gunman Kills 20 Children in Connecticut</td>
<td>Dec. 14, 2012, 8:12 p.m.</td>
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<td>School Gunman Kills 20 Children in Connecticut</td>
<td>Dec. 14, 2012, 7:10 p.m.</td>
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<td>18 Children Killed in Grade School Shooting in Connecticut</td>
<td>Dec. 14, 2012, 6:10 p.m.</td>
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<td>18 Children Killed in Grade School Shooting in Connecticut</td>
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<td>18 Children Killed in Grade School Shooting in Connecticut</td>
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<td>18 Children Killed in Grade School Shooting in Connecticut</td>
<td>Dec. 14, 2012, 3:10 p.m.</td>
<td>(Compare with previous)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multiple Fatalities Reported in Shooting at Connecticut Elementary School</td>
<td>Dec. 14, 2012, 2:10 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multiple Fatalities Reported in Shooting at Connecticut Elementary School</td>
<td>Dec. 14, 2012, 1:10 p.m.</td>
<td>(Compare with previous)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shooting Reported at Connecticut Elementary School</td>
<td>Dec. 14, 2012, 12:09 p.m.</td>
<td>(Compare with previous)</td>
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Examples: Edward Koch Obituary

Comparing: A 3-Term Mayor as Brash, Shrewd And Colorful as the City He Led


- Pink: Archived February 01, 2013 at 12:11pm EDT
- Green: Archived February 01, 2013 at 2:12pm EDT

<= Previous revision | Later revision =>

February 1, 2013
Colorful, Candid New Yorker Who Led City Through Crises
By ROBERT D. McFADDEN

[...]

But critics said the old reformer had become too close to Democratic bosses in pursuit of his own ambitions, and accusations of complacency and cronyism dogged him for the rest of his tenure.

Mr. Koch was also harshly criticized for what was called his slow, inadequate response to the AIDS crisis in the 1980s. Hundreds of New Yorkers were desperately ill and dying in a baffling public health emergency, and critics, especially in the gay community, accused him of being a closeted homosexual reluctant to confront the crisis for fear of being exposed.

For years, Mr. Koch was upset and defensive about the criticism. In a 1994 interview with Adam Nagourney, a New York Times correspondent and co-author, with Dudley Clendinen, of “Out for Good: The Struggle to Build a Gay Rights Movement in America” (1999), Mr. Koch insisted that New York had done more for AIDS victims than San Francisco.

“But that never got through to the gay community,” Mr. Koch said. “They were brainwashed that they were getting short-changed in New York City and in San Francisco they were getting everything. And it wasn’t true, but you could never convince them.”

The scandals and the scourges of crack cocaine, homelessness and AIDS were compounded by a widening rift between Mr. Koch and black...
Examples: Romney and Benghazi

Comparing: A Challenger’s Criticism Is Furiously Returned

- Pink: Archived September 12, 2012 at 7:33pm EDT
- Green: Archived September 12, 2012 at 9:33pm EDT

<= Previous revision | All changes | Later revision =>

September 12, 2012

Behind Romney’s Decision to Attack Obama on Libya
By DAVID E. SANGER and ASHLEY PARKER

WASHINGTON — To Mitt Romney, it seemed like an opportunity to draw a stark contrast: Protests were erupting in Cairo and Benghazi, Libya, apparently over an anti-Islamic video, the White House was in a nasty spat with the Israelis, and administration officials in Cairo had put out a statement urging religious tolerance. From the perspective of the Republican’s campaign, the time was ripe to cast President Obama again as someone apologizing for America who abandoned longtime allies and failed to defend American interests.

So on Tuesday evening, Mr. Romney, according to his staff, signed off on a blunt attack on a statement issued early in the day before the first protests had happened by the American Embassy in Cairo. The Romney comment characterized the embassy statement as a weak White House response to violence at American diplomatic facilities in Egypt and Libya that ended up claiming the life of the ambassador to Libya and three others.

The statement that seemed to backfire on Mr. Romney was a team effort, his aides said, written by a group of aides who focus on policy, another that focuses on politics.

A Challenger’s Criticism Is Furiously Returned
By PETER BAKER and ASHLEY PARKER

WASHINGTON — The deadly attack on an American diplomatic post in Libya propelled foreign policy into the forefront of an otherwise inward-looking presidential campaign on Wednesday and presented an unexpected test not only to the incumbent who must manage an international crisis, but also to the challenger whose response quickly came under fire.
Examples: Romney and Benghazi

In first version:

For a country looking to understand how Mr. Romney, a Republican candidate with no foreign policy experience, would respond to a major crisis, this was a first glimpse.

And as an adviser to the campaign who worked in the George W. Bush administration said on Wednesday, Mr. Romney’s accusation [...] looked like “he had forgotten the first rule in a crisis: don’t start talking before you understand what’s happening.”
Outline of Talk

1. Motivation and Creation
2. Case Studies
3. Future
4. Q & A
Goals

- **Goals for NewsDiffs**
  1. Reference for known interesting changes.
  2. Unearth interesting changes.
  3. Study the process of journalistic editing.

- Currently only satisfying (1) well.
- To satisfy the others, need
  - Automated tools to sift through the changes for interesting ones.
  - Someone to use our data for research
Simple example of study

That vs. Who

- The council could choose a pope *that* all factions would recognize.
- The council could choose a pope *whom* all factions would recognize.
Simple example of study

That vs. Who

- The council could choose a pope that all factions would recognize.
- The council could choose a pope whom all factions would recognize.

Rule: “who” refers to people, “that” to non-people.

When do reporters make mistakes that editors catch?

Mitik, the baby walrus who was orphaned

The giant panda cub who died

The subatomic analogue of cats who are alive and dead at the same time
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Conclusions

- News websites should keep a public record of what they publish.
- In the meantime, NewsDiffs fills the role.
- We have lots of data, ready to be mined for useful information.
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