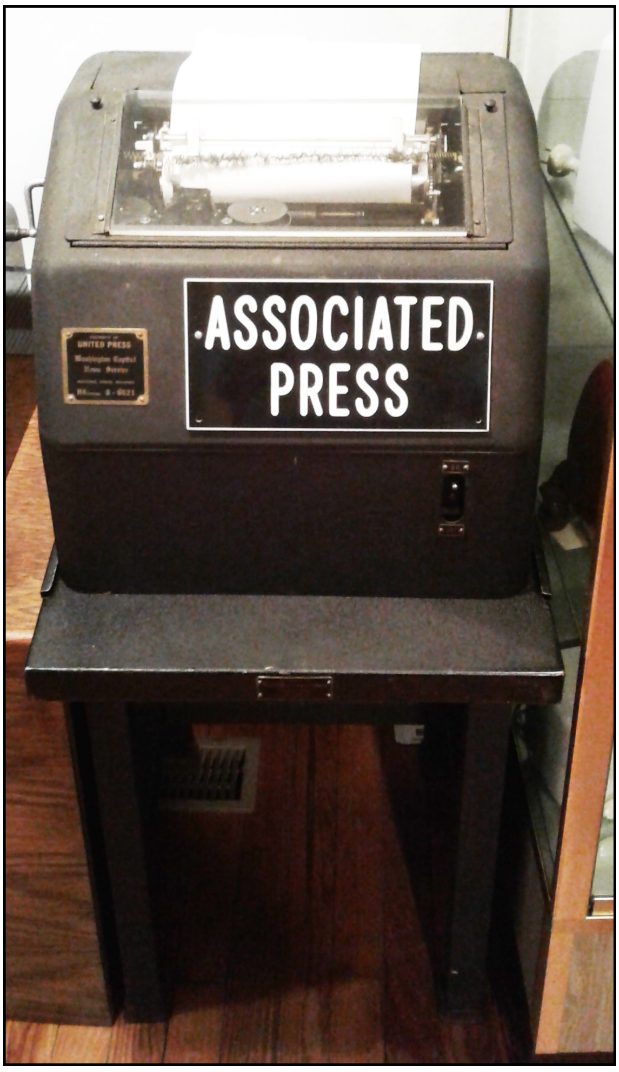
National Capital Radio & Television Museum

Artifact of the Week:

Model 15 Teletype Printer



In the mid-20th century, radio stations got their news bulletins over telephone lines, printed out on a machine like this one, from national and international news sources such as the dominant Associated Press. A small radio station likely had just one teletype printer. A large station might have several, each connected to a different news source.

The news staff would use this incoming material to prepare scripts for the station's regular newscasts. If the breaking news was particularly important, someone might rip the paper off the roller and rush it to the announcer on the air. We might hear, "Here is a bulletin from the Associated Press—hot off the wire!"

Because these machines were quite noisy, they would be kept in a room separate from the studio so their loud clickety-clack would not be heard over the air. However, a station might purchase a recording of clattering Teletype machines and fade that sound in and out at the beginning of a news broadcast to lend an atmosphere of timeliness, or even urgency.

This artifact is in our current 1950s radio studio exhibit.

Today the AP continues to supply news to radio stations all around the country. Former NCRTV Board Chair, Ken Mellgren, who donated this Teletype, was an AP broadcast executive prior to his retirement. He prided himself on making it possible for radio stations to offer up-to-the-minute news to their radio audiences.

We appreciate your support of the museum so that historical artifacts like this one, and the stories that go with them, can be preserved for future generations. THANKS!