



AI and the media: Ouest-France, CNRS and the University of Rennes, with the ANR funding, create a joint laboratory

- Ouest-France, CNRS and the University of Rennes, with the French National Research Agency funding, are launching the first joint laboratory (“LabCom”) to unite a press group with academic research.
- The LabCom’s mission: to interconnect artificial intelligence, the media, press content, journalists and readers.
- Dedicated to the exploration and development of innovations at the crossroads of computer science and the media, it will promote high-quality journalism that offers its readers ever-more pertinent and interactive content.

The archives of media outlets, totalling several million articles, photographs and videos, offer a wealth of content and potential. However these collections remain difficult to use, even with the most recent artificial intelligence tools. The Ouest-France press group has joined forces with CNRS and the University of Rennes, with the funding of the ANR (French National Research Agency), in an effort to overcome these technological barriers and retain sovereignty over its data while ensuring the rights of the people quoted, photographed or recorded in its vast archive. On January 14, 2025, at the international media festival [Médias en Seine](#), they announced the creation of a joint laboratory called Synapses.

The Ouest-France group’s editorial heritage comprises a unique collection of more than 105 million documents dating from 1899 to the present day (48 million articles, 38 million photos, 17 million pages, 116,000 videos, etc.). It is a rich and complex compilation of texts, images, videos and audio recordings, spanning multiple eras and thus representing a wide variety of semantic fields. Such a unique, unrivalled collection is difficult to draw upon and analyse without the use of algorithms.

In parallel, at the Institut de Recherche en Informatique et Systèmes Aléatoires (Institute for Research in Computer Science and Random Systems - CNRS/University of Rennes), the Linkmedia¹ research team, led by

CNRS senior researcher Laurent Amsaleg, seeks to offer methods, techniques and tools for exploring the substance of extremely large collections of multimedia documents. To this end, the team uses an array of digital tools: AI, machine learning, computer vision, natural language processing...

The Synapses LabCom, funded by the ANR in the amount of €363,000, is the culmination of 30 years of collaboration between the researchers and Ouest-France. For the press group, this partnership offers access to leading-edge technologies while maintaining the sovereignty of its data. For the scientists, it provides an opportunity to test their work "in the field" with access to unique data.

Synapses will focus on the application of artificial intelligence (AI) in the service of journalism, concentrating on three main aspects:

1. The analysis of photographic archives: based on Ouest-France's 40 million images, Synapses will use AI to search for and analyse photographs, thus facilitating the work of journalists and documentalists.
2. The processing of specific texts: the LabCom will draw upon more than 100 years of text archives to improve the understanding and processing of historical texts, overcoming the challenges posed by linguistic evolutions.
3. The visualisation of complex information: tools will be developed to visualise complex and interconnected data, making information more readily accessible to journalists.

"CNRS is delighted with the creation of the Synapses LabCom with Ouest-France and the University of Rennes, substantiating the relationship of trust that unites our teams. This unprecedented partnership will allow us to progress together in the field of data processing and the key role played by AI in this transition. CNRS has more than 280 joint laboratories to its credit, working with companies on a wide range of research topics. This form of collaboration makes a vital contribution to innovation and the transfer of scientific progress to society."

Jean-Luc Moullet, CNRS Chief Innovation Officer.

"The creation of this joint laboratory with CNRS and the University of Rennes is an exceptional opportunity for us to bolster our innovation capacity and offer our readers ever-more pertinent and interactive content. We are very happy to be working with a world-renowned research organisation to shape the future of the media."

Fabrice Bazard, Ouest-France Managing Director.

"The ANR's LabCom program aims to strengthen the creation of joint laboratories between companies (SMEs, VSEs, ETIs and start-ups) and academic research bodies, as part of the Agency's general approach to funding innovation. All of this is motivated by the need to support socio-economic players and companies to make them more competitive and better able to meet today's challenges. The creation of a LabCom between Ouest-France, CNRS and the University of Rennes is unique and a fine example of this. The ANR is proud to be able to support these teams in overcoming scientific barriers and further improving the quality of journalism, in particular through AI."

Dominique Dunon-Bluteau, ANR Scientific Operations Director.

"The Synapses joint laboratory between the Institut de recherche en informatique et systèmes aléatoires and Ouest-France once again reinforces the dynamism of the Rennes region in terms of public-private partnerships. The creation of SYNAPSES is the result of a long-standing relationship between the two companies, based on a shared scientific challenge: the application of artificial intelligence to journalism. Synapses thus reinforces the University of Rennes' commitment to the digital transition, with its very high potential for innovation and added value".

Xavier Castel, Vice-President for Enhancement, University of Rennes.

Note:

1. Specialising in the processing of very large collections of multimedia documents, the team includes personnel from CNRS, Inria, INSA Rennes and the University of Rennes (www.irisa.fr).

Regarding the CNRS:

A major player in basic research worldwide, the National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) is the only French organisation active in all scientific fields. Its unique position as a multi-specialist enables it to bring together all of the scientific disciplines in order to shed light on and understand the challenges of today's world, in connection with public and socio-economic stakeholders. Together, the different sciences contribute to sustainable progress that benefits society as a whole. (www.cnrs.fr)

Regarding Ouest-France:

Ouest-France is a member of the ASPDH (Association for the Support of the Principles of Humanist Democracy), a non-profit organisation dedicated to upholding the group's values and its mission: to educate, inform and unite citizens as a means of advancing the common good while respecting the dignity of all individuals. The world's leading French-language daily newspaper and one of the highest ranking online news sites, focused on the world and the diversity of its territories, Ouest-France draws more than 21 million readers each month with its print and digital publications. It mobilises an editorial team of more than 700 journalists each day, making it a major force for the human community, highlighting the initiatives of women and men who strive to build a more responsible, more humanitarian future, for a more equitable and egalitarian society.

Regarding the French National Research Agency:

The French National Research Agency (ANR) is the funding agency for project-based research in France. As a public institution under the authority of the French Ministry of Higher Education and Research, the ANR funds and promotes basic and applied research in all disciplines at the national, European, and international level. It also funds technological innovation, technology transfer, and partnerships between research teams from the public and private sectors, in addition to strengthening dialogue between science and society. The ANR also serves as the main operator of the France 2030 Investment Plan in higher education and research. France 2030 supports excellence and transformations in higher education, research, training, and innovation within priority sectors. The Agency selects, funds, and monitors projects in connection with these objectives. The ANR is ISO 9001 certified, and was awarded the "professional equality" label. (<https://anr.fr>)

Regarding the University of Rennes:

Created on 1 January 2023, the University of Rennes brings together six faculties and five research clusters, as well as the École des hautes études en santé publique (EHESP), Rennes Graduate School of Chemistry, the École Normale Supérieure de Rennes, Sciences Po Rennes, and INSA Rennes. With its broad spectrum of training and research, as well as the advantages and distinctive features of its affiliated Grandes Écoles, the University of Rennes is striving to meet the major societal challenges of a world in transition, in particular in the fields of the environment, global health and digital technology. It fosters pedagogical innovation, providing its 35,000 students with an fulfilling experience, in addition to successful professional integration by promoting their freedom and their collective as well as individual success. Its role as a leading actor in lifelong learning also places it in a position of responsibility toward society, making it a key driver for the socioeconomic and cultural development of the territory. (www.univ-rennes.fr)

Contacts:

CNRS Senior researcher | Laurent Amsaleg | laurent.amsaleg@cnrs.fr

Director of Applied Research & AI | Michel Le Nouy | michel.lenouy@ouest-france.fr

CNRS Press | Manon Landurant | T +33 1 44 96 51 37 | manon.landurant@cnrs.fr

Ouest-France Press | Caroline Tortellier | T +33 6 09 82 40 21 | caroline.tortellier@ouest-france.fr

University of Rennes Press | Julien Le Bonheur | T +33 2 23 23 53 38 | julien.le-bonheur@univ-rennes.fr

ANR Press | Katel Le Floc'h | T +33 6 81 61 12 97 | contactpresse@anr.fr