

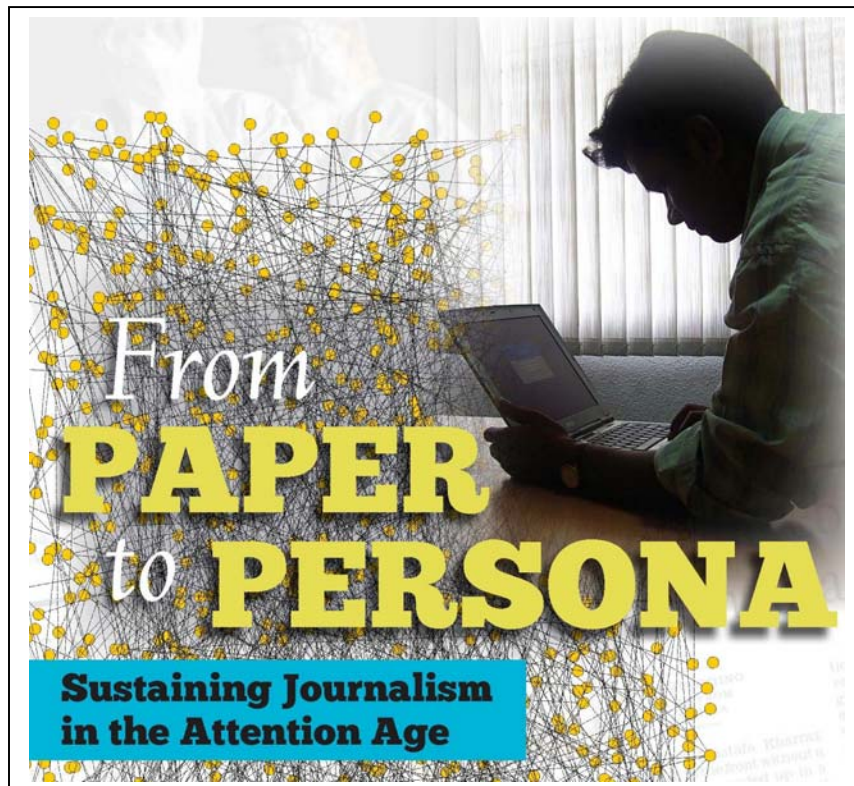


From Paper to Persona:¹

*Managing Privacy and Information Overload;
Sustaining Journalism in the Attention Age*

A White Paper for the Donald W. Reynolds Journalism Institute (RJI)
Full paper available at: <http://www.papertopersona.org>

ABSTRACT / EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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¹ -- In this context a set of attributes and interests a user wishes to present (See pages 4 and 17-18)

² -- Overview of author's RJI work: <http://tinyurl.com/densmore> ; <http://www.newshare.com/disclosure>; for Acknowledgements, see Page 47).

ABSTRACT

“From Paper to Persona: Managing Privacy and Information Overload; Sustaining Journalism in an Attention Age,” explains how a new public-benefit collaboration could help slow the shrinking of American journalism.

Because of Internet technology, mass-market advertising and the news have come unglued. For the public, information is accessible, but not always trustworthy. Because it is abundant, its value varies, because it takes more of our time and attention to make sense of it. In an Attention Age, intrusive marketing technologies can compromise privacy.

News organizations need new revenues to improve journalism’s service to participatory democracy. They might provide a new service to the public besides selling ads and stories. Managing the privacy and information preferences of individuals is one such opportunity.

Using identity technology could allow publishers to become trusted stewards and curators of a reader’s attributes, information preferences and privacy. Other technology could account for payment and access to information at multiple, independent web-wide sources. As a result, publishers could make money offering subscription or per-item access to information shared across a large network of premium sources, personalized for individual readers.

Several media and technology organizations have built proprietary or closed systems to distribute and get compensated for content they control. However successful these closed, siloed systems, outside them lies a larger universe of consumers seeking and using additional news and digital information. Connecting the silos, sharing users and content, could expand consumer choice and the digital information marketplace – an “easy pass” for information.

A public-benefit Information Trust Association could create and administer technical protocols and business rules for a shared user network that exchanges trust, identity and information commerce. (See, “Four-party model – Choice, control for consumers; opportunity for publishers,” Page 47; or <http://wp.me/phs1Y-Z>)

It would not itself produce content or have consumers as customers. It would foster technology that allows private networks to join, do business and compete. It would make and enforce marketplace rules respecting consumer privacy and choice.

An advantage of a neutral referee for such a standardized “playing field” is that users could choose among competitive trusted curators and stewards. These service providers could exchange users without having to lose connection with them. They could sell news and other content to each others’ users. Besides stewards or curators, these service providers might be called information brokers, agents or “information valets.”

“From Paper to Persona” calls for a summit of the news industry to form a consortium of technology, telecommunications, entertainment, philanthropy and public-interest entities. The Information Trust Association consortium would then invoke needed, existing technology and open the digital-content marketplace.

Because the ITA would have no investors and no profit motive, the ITA should be able then to referee the marketplace, and encourage competitors to participate. □

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As news and the economics of newspapers come unglued, what will sustain journalism? The answer involves a challenge, and an opportunity.

Five trends enabled by worldwide open networks characterize an Attention Age -- an economy which treats human attention as a scarce and valuable asset. They are transforming information businesses, the future of journalism, participatory democracy and communities:

- Mass-market advertising is giving way to targeted, permission-based, direct marketing. It is no longer sufficient to sustain journalism in print or on air. The two have come almost unglued.
- Abundant, accessible, unbundled information disrupts copyright and makes human attention a scarce resource. Curation is therefore valuable.
- The success of social networks shows there is business and civic value in network collaboration and sharing rather than hoarding or silos.
- We now consider our 'personas' -- use-specific demographic profiles and interests --- to be valuable. We, and some regulators, assert that value with the concept of "privacy."
- Publishers are moving from gatekeepers to information valets -- curators, stewards, agents and brokers -- offering personalized, customized access to knowledge.

In less than a decade, we have moved from a world of relative information scarcity -- access restricted by a variety of technical choke points, such as presses -- to a world of such information abundance that the average user's challenge is not how to access information, or even how find it, but how to personalize, trust and make sense of it. The Internet has shifted control of this raw information largely from publishers to consumers.

"From Paper to Persona," observes and assesses the challenge to publishers and journalism posed by the Attention Age. It suggests the next newsroom will originate news, aggregate news from others and deliver this to individuals based on their "persona." What's a persona? It's a profile -- a set of interests and attributes presented by the user in a particular context such as health care. In a different context or role -- say news reading or purchasing -- the user might present a different persona, or mix of elements, attributes and interests -- all drawn from the same verified dataset of age, sex, race, income and education, interests, lifestyle choices, groups and physical location on earth. The user maintains the core dataset with the help of their curator, agent, broker, steward or "infovalet."

As a result, the defining **challenge** for news organizations in the 21st century is no longer just selling ads and charging for proprietary stories, but learning to help the public knowledgeably manage our attention to and sharing of ubiquitous, disaggregated information. The value of news has become the service, not a physical product, or single story.

For publishers, connecting individuals with journalism and information they need to be informed, engaged citizens means asking about their interests, friends and groups -- understanding who they are. The Internet lacks common protocols enabling convenient, trustworthy sharing of identity -- a user's 'persona,' on the user's terms. Establishing a trust, identity, privacy and information commerce exchange is an **opportunity** for publishers.

So the challenge and opportunity of sustaining journalism requires that news organizations:

- Acquire technology and skills to perform as trusted managers of identity and privacy, and as curatorial information advisors, agents, stewards, or “infovalets” for their users.
- Collaborate on a shared-user network for trust, identity, privacy and information commerce fostered and governed by a public-benefit entity to support competing agents.

With these two essential steps, publishers can cultivate customized, one-to-one relationships with users, provide them personalized information, and get paid for doing so. Each publisher might make money referring their users to each other’s content -- via a microaccounting exchange system.

The Attention Age represents for journalism institutions slow death, or a chance to [experiment](#) and thrive beyond mass-market advertising. They must become better curators, stewards, agents, or “[information valets](#),”³ for their users. Trust, identity and information value are core issues, affecting access, convenience, privacy and personalization.

To create the agent network and the shared-user network, journalism stakeholders should lead formation of a public-benefit initiative. It would neutrally specify and referee a new marketplace for exchanging trust, identity and information commerce. The [Information Trust Association](#) (ITA) would create protocols and business rules that enable appropriate network collaboration and exchange – a level playing field. The ITA would be guided by publishers, broadcasters, telecom and technology companies, account managers, trade groups and the public.



It would foster a common playing field that respects consumer privacy, and facilitates transparent business rules, so content and users can be exchanged and shared, and the consumer can easily move outside of proprietary “silos” among competing options.

The Information Trust Association would make and enforce protocols governing users' "persona" - personal information -- and allow consumers to barter that information for value across the same microaccounting, or “value exchange,” system. The ITA would guide -- not run -- this trust, identity and information commerce environment – sanctioning and enabling multiple competitive businesses, using common protocols.

The [Information Trust Association](#) would steward a marketplace that is open and [multi-party](#) . It would allow the sharing of users and value among news, advertising, publishing, entertainment, technology, public and philanthropic services. As “curation agents,” or stewards, publishers might cultivate customized, one-to-one relationships with users, helping maintain their privacy, providing them personalized information -- and getting paid for doing so. ITA can:

- Flexibly support continued operation of closed, proprietary, “siloesd” systems by publishers and other enterprises with direct consumer account relationships.
- Enable convenient, trustworthy, personalized services for individuals to find, share and transact for information. Value can be given or received, depending whether the individual needs the information or a marketer needs to reach the individual.

³ -- Agents handling privacy, trust, access and payments for individuals. More at: <http://wp.me/phs3d-bb>

- Foster and transparently govern a new, open, [four-party](#)⁴ system for consumers to go outside their chosen “silo,” connecting and exchanging value with other content and services -- with identity and privacy under consumer control.

The ITA’s non-equity governance would recognize interests of at least [four parties](#):⁵

- (1) End users,
- (2) Rights-holders and publishers (including authors, artists, information providers and aggregators),
- (3) Neutral authenticators, loggers and aggregators of transactions (the ITA or its contractors) and
- (4) Information agents, curators or “infovalets” -- account managers (banks, telecommunications companies, publishers, billers etc.) whose primary allegiance is to the user.

Within the limits of existing antitrust law, the ITA would convene publishers, technologists, foundations, banks and public in a system for exchanging small bits of content – a microaccounting system -- among multiple independent publishers. Public users would be able to choose from a plurality of information “agents” from which to open a one-ID, one-bill account that links to content from almost anywhere.

The initiative could:

- Contract or license with one or more for-profit entities, funded by investors, to operate elements of a shared-user network for privacy, trust, identity and information commerce.
- Guarantee one-account, one-ID, one-bill simplicity from any of multiple participating trust/identity/commerce providers (“InfoValets”).
- Assure the trustworthiness, and neutrality of enabling technologies.
- Operate transparently within existing antitrust law to provide a platform for competition, which benefits the public.
- Research, test, sanction or commission key technologies.
- Sanction protocols for sharing users and content.
- Use, support and enable existing Internet protocols.
- Through voluntary standards, vest greater choice, control and economic value of their privacy and personal information in the hands of individual citizens.
- Foster and govern multisite user authentication and microaccounting services.
- Support web wide tracking and billing for “atomized” content.
- Simplify the open, competitive exchange of value among users and info suppliers.

RECOMMENDATION

Journalism stakeholders should take the lead in collaborating with other stakeholders to establish a public-benefit Information Trust Association. It will seed a market for digital information by helping individuals manage their private identity data, purchase information conveniently from a single account, and be rewarded for looking at sponsored information. □

⁴ -- For an explanation of the “four-party model” see: <http://wp.me/phs1Y-Z>

⁵ -- “Four-party model” — Choice, control for consumers; opportunity for publishers?” -- pages 46-49).

BULLET-POINT SUMMARY

Making the new digital market: A case for an Information Trust Association

- **OPPORTUNITY– How to sustain role of journalism**
 - Mass-market advertising no longer sufficient
 - Information overload puts a premium on attention
 - New privacy, identity challenges for open web
 - Need to provide service to users one-to-one
 - This creates opportunity to manage information for users
- **WHAT’S NEEDED – Trust, identity and info-commerce**
 - Need agents/brokers to help individuals with ‘personas’
 - Could be news organizations / banks / universities
 - Curate and refer information from anywhere
 - Provide a mechanism to exchange value (\$\$\$)
 - But that requires one-account, one ID
 - Also requires ability to aggregate charges among multiple sites
 - Google, Facebook, Amazon, Apple could “make rules”
 - But their leadership would be opposed by others
- **SOLUTION – Info agents working in exchange framework**
 - New information brokers/agents/curators/stewards (“infovalets”)
 - Individuals have choice to affiliate
 - But need someone to make /create the market protocols
 - Like Visa, ICANN, 60-cycle power, railroad gauge, FAA, N.Y. Stock Exchange, CableLabs
 - Non-stock, membership, possibly [program-related investments](#)
 - Can start, invest in or contract with for-profits
 - Self-sustaining through transaction fees
- **TASKS – A safe haven for collaboration / standard-setting**
 - Studious avoidance of antitrust issues
 - Enable dynamic pricing competition, mixing “atomized” content
 - Extend OpenID to include transfer of “persona,” commerce
 - Specify transfer protocols; “box car”
 - Specify base terms of service for public users
 - Establish info exchange rules (like stock exchange)
 - Certify compliance (like Underwriters Laboratories)

- **Managing cross-licensing (like BlueTooth Association)**