



THE INFORMATION TRUST EXCHANGE
**Trust, identity, personalization,
content and user sharing for the news industry**

**TASK GROUP ON
USER DATA AND PRIVACY PREFERENCES EXCHANGE**

MEETING, Thurs., Oct. 8, 2015
[CoWorks](#), 115 East 23rd St., 3rd Floor

MEETING DISCUSSION SUMMARY

(notes, editing by Bill Densmore)

Meeting participants: Sean Bohan, Bill Densmore, Brendan Eich, Angie Epps, Jason Kint, Rick Lerner, Graf Mouen, Randy Picht, Brendan Riordan, Doc Searls, Mike Smith, John Taysom. (Members absent for this meeting: Ron Blevins, Peter Winter)

- PRE-MEETING BRIEFING MATERIALS: (<http://newshare.com/newyork>)
 1. [Mission](#) from Columbia:
<http://newshare.com/portland/ite-prototype-mission-objectives.pdf>
 2. [Preliminary Recommendations](#) from Cambridge:
<http://newshare.com/cambridge/ite-prototype-recommendations.pdf>
 3. Service Features/[Specification](#) (survey bullet points)
<http://newshare.com/portland/ite-service-design-specifications-v3-09-11-15.pdf>
 4. Ten questions and challenges
<http://newshare.com/newyork/questionnaire-nyc.pdf>

PRELIMINARY DRAFT DISCUSSION NOTES
(notes taken and edited by Bill Densmore)

IMPORTANT: This task-group meeting took place under the Chatham House Rule. As a result, this document should not be shared with anyone outside the participants in the meeting. If you cite or quote from this document, individual discussants and their affiliation should not be identified.

In pre-meeting conversation, we talked about the need to have authentic values if you want to appeal to Millennials; the three kinds of taxonomies relevant to the ITE project – users, content and advertising. And we noodled the idea of defining what attributes should be considered “personally identifiable information” (PII). The work of [Latanya Sweeney's](#) at Harvard University was cited.

MEETING OPENS

In opening remarks on participant posed this as our convening question:

How can content and advertising move around in such a way that it creates value for users and revenue for news organizations?

Bill Densmore provided his perspective on why The Reynolds Journalism Institutes is involved:

We're trying to come up with one or several prototypes, small things that we can launch to try some things out and get the industry to support the idea and the effort. We can't do this all by ourselves and then drop it out of the sky and say here it is. We need the industry to say you're on the right track we'll help you. Some validation is needed.. It may be resources and commitment, maybe money. We want to figure out where to start. We can't just build the whole field of dreams and have everybody come. We need to build a few pieces, get the industry to say we like this and start down the road. What's a prototype we can get started; what's going to resonate right now.

One participant identified a key challenge as defining what is meant by “personalized, protected data.”

Said another participant:

Everyone knows the crisis we face. I look at the time customers spend reading content, engaging with digital platforms and I am overwhelmed that we are not gaining more traction with users. I was absolutely delighted when I read this. I think this concept is spot on it is coming at a time when it is absolutely essential, the future of our business with our customers depends on finding a working model.

Another participant said ad blocking raises the prospect of an “arms race to the bottom” among advertisers, publishers, ad-blocking software companies and the hundreds of young companies involved in programmatic ad sales and data mining. “Let’s support a short from the user being a product being sold to being a participant.”

Another participant urged the use of open-source code, tools and sources. “Because publishers are the intermediary, they are the ones taking the fall for having *malware* delivered through advertising. They are bringing the audiences together and seeing those audiences retargeted everywhere else in the industry and having their CMPs dropping continuously.”

Said another participant: “I have a public-policy desire not to have a generation of kids surveilled so they can buy stuff. I think that democracy rests on some element of privacy. Without privacy you don’t have any autonomy. Eventually we legislate after a generation of kids have been harmed. I’m interested in the societal harm that this ecosystem is increasingly delivering.”

The ITE would be wrong to think about it just as about solving the blocking of ads. We are looking for a next step that is a handshake with the reading public, not prophylactic.”

Said another participant: “I think we have a teachable moment here, an opportunity, everything right now we can leverage in the ad-block boycott, a 200-million customer boycott. They are exercising their own agency now. I think what they have done needs to be respected. The ITE would be wrong to think about it just as about solving the blocking of ads. We are looking for a next step that is a handshake with the reading public, not prophylactic.”

Publishers could ignore Do Not Track – they can’t ignore ad blocking. This is a great opportunity to take advantage of that. There is a vast

amount of tech that is not being used. RSS changed publishing – it may it possibly for everybody to syndicate. Google came along with Atom. The include element made podcasting.

Said another participant:

When you give somebody a window to all the companies they never heard and pop the LUMA chart -- it is like getting cold water in the face. It is a real learning, experience moment.. Consumers are generally unaware and slowly are becoming more aware. Ad Choices has failed and the European scheme hasn't had success in protecting privacy. Something is necessary to anonymize us on the web.

HOW IS USER DATA BEING USED?

We discussed how user data is being used now by publishers. The answer – not much. News industry customers are concerned about how their data is being collected and used, one participant said. But in fact, news publishers are not yet using the data in a meaningful way.

One participant said:

I think in the underbelly of the [ad] ecosystem, the transmission needs to be replaced. We do business directly or indirectly with many [Lumascape](#) companies, and our platform permits those companies to mark our consumers and those consumers are largely unaware of that machinery and how that is all pervasively happening to them wherever they go on the web . . . Things have been developed that are the framework of the transmission – but it needs to be swapped out.

Participants discussed options for de-escalation of the ad-blocking wars. What if a browser such as Firefox installed with a default that the user could not be “tracked” by the use of cookies or other mechanisms? Answer: The ad-tech industry would argue that automatic opt-in was not a choice by the consumer and therefore invalid. The problem, said one participant, is that right now most consumers don't feel they are getting any personal value from being tracked by marketers.

UNDERWRITERS LABS AS AN EXAMPLE?

The group discussed Underwriters Laboratories as an example of a non-profit standards organization that tests and certifies the safety of plug-in electrical appliances. Also potentially collaborators: Web Science Trust or the British Standards Foundation. Something must be done “because the ad infrastructure has become dysfunctional. I think there can be one supercookie or one district and it can be to some protected environment. I like to call that a DMZ because it appeals to my sense of humor. The DMZ would be distributed -- massively distributed – in a formal technological sense.” A possible collaborator might be DigiTrust, a nonprofit formed as a consortium by one of the largest ad-tech firms, Rubicon. However, some folks in the room felt a system advanced by an ad-tech consortium would not be trusted.

EUROPEAN UNION ENDS 'SAFE HARBOR' AGREEMENT WITH U.S.

It was observed that on Oct. 6, 2015, [decision by a European Union court](#), on privacy grounds, to end a temporary agreement that allowed data-sharing with U.S.-based tech giants “has done us a favor.”

Participant John Taysom mentioned his [“Three's a Crowd”](#) ideas a possibly helpful solution to privacy challenges that might work with an ITE framework.

There was discussion about how the ITE might govern advertising and content-sharing rules, likely using a “co-operative” model, according to one participant. A possible collaborator might be DigiTrust, a nonprofit formed as a consortium by one of the largest ad-tech firms, Rubicon.

There was discussion about the possibility that one large, multi-product publisher might be able to test an ITE system and encourage other publishers to use it, too.

DISCUSSION ABOUT TAGGING ADVERTISEMENTS, AND USERS

It was observed that there is a need for publishers to understand what ads are coming in a structured way and for advertising to understand where it is ending up on and there is need for a fairly consistent way of describing that these are soccer moms that have the names for the 140,000 different segments that exist for describing all the different users. There are taxonomies that must exist in each of those areas and there are a variety of solutions in play. The area with the most dialects is in describing users at this point because there are a lot of ways to describe who somebody is.

It was observed there is no universal taxonomy for describing users.

PROTOTYPE MISSION/OBJECTIVES

We discuss the [mission/objectives document](#) from the Columbia meeting. A consensus: Put “deepen user relationships” at the top instead of No. 3.

Asked one participant:

Is the news organization trying to improve the product for me or just acting as an agent for the advertiser? Is it just new poison in an old bottle? Does the whole of the ecosystem we are describing do any good for anyone other than the ones making advertising in it? Is it just a runaway train that is making money for itself and self justified and has accreted journalism with it so journalism is a commercial conversation and no longer about the motivation of the journalists in it?

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The participant continued:

I'm thinking about the rolling catastrophe of journalism imploding and this new industry being created for personalization. Personalization has sucked from the beginning. We are not buying something, most of the time we are not buying stuff we are doing other stuff most of the time. It can't be about targeting advertising. It has to be about journalism -- that is totally messed up -- and this is about trying to fix it. Not all about clicks. I see here the language of ad tech fully infecting a thing that is not about that. It may totally turn people off.

IS THIS ABOUT FEDERATED AUTHENTICATION OR JUST USER AUTHORIZATION?

It was observed that it might be best to avoid using the word “authentication” to describe the ITE’s requirement to identify and authorize users to receive certain services or content. Authentication implies a high-level of security and encryption technology, where in the context of looking at or buying a piece of content you just need to be able to merely identify and charge or record access by a unique individual.

A participant responded:

That's true if you thinking of those as separate from the place where the customer is logging into. If you leave the customer thinking that their provider is the place they are

logging into -- bank or newspaper or whatever -- but having done so there, when they go to some other site within the network they can be recognized at least as an entity if not a specific individual – that can work.

A participant expressed concern that the original part logging in the individual “can abuse your credentials.”

Bill Densmore added:

But in the case cited, the originally party – the user agent – is someone you know and trust by an ongoing relationship, they are required to follow ITE business rules about transparency and use of data, and – most important – if you don't like them you can take your identity to one of – at scale – thousands and thousands of other identity-managing agents. The Visa / MC systems are an example of this. You can choose among hundreds of cards issued by thousands of banks, each with different consumer value propositions. But they all work at every merchant who takes the card brand. WE want to replicate that experience with information commerce. The user's agent is answerable to the ITE rules if there is abuse of user credentials.

It was suggested that a British company, Performance Horizon Group, manages affiliate networks and might be in a position to help get the ITE going.

THE OUTLINES OF A COLLABORATION BEGIN TO FORM

A participant described the user value proposition contemplated in an ITE pilot:

It's an aggregation facility in which publishers of all kinds would make their content available in terms of a link and synopsis. It would have the personalization you need to use that effectively. There has to be good personalization. That's part of the prototype is to valuate if personalization works. This comes about as a defensive maneuver to aggregation by Facebook, Google, etc. So publishers can say to their users, “You don't have to go to those sites to get all this content. Whatever you're looking for, we have a one-stop shop for all your content needs.

It was suggested that publishers are unified in wanting to end the use of third-party cookies on their web services. As a result, an ITE prototype solution that creates the promise of a new method for customizing ad delivery – with an added benefit of opt-in user personalization – would likely be appealing.

Another participant appealed for the creation of “crisp” requirements for any prototype so they can be acted on “in a stepwise fashion.” ITE could be the standard setter.

GETTING SPECIFIC: IDENTITY NOT AUTHENTICATION

Said one participant:

I see nothing there that could not be implemented. The two bits missing from my perspective, are the small publisher and the blogger, especially in the news environment. They'd like to be part of something too. If I was in your seat I would go as quick as I can to having ITE established with some pretty minimum level of funding and sing up a lot of people with a minimum membership fee to get a little resources but also get buying. There are a lot of newspapers that have subscribers now. You go to those memberships and have members signing up en-block.

The other thing I would add in is that the very largest publishers this is a slam dunk. That way of discovering news through what you are searching for is still under-

implemented. You can use exactly the same technique that ITE is working toward to be able to infuse content with news in the same way we infuse content with ads. Then you start to experience the news in a completely different way. You don't go to a single site anymore, at least I don't. The news comes to you and comes to you by declaration.

Another participant:

We need a bold gesture in the market from a leading publisher that says we want to move forward in a way that is friendly to our users, and publishers - and to advertisers to. It's a middle ground that we are scaffolding together. We need some experimenting and prototyping.

THE IDEA: DROPPING THE THIRD-PARTY COOKIE; A FACEBOOK ALTERNATIVE?

The idea gradually forming in the room is a user identity system that does not require third-party cookies to be “dropped” on a publisher’s website. Through some other mechanism, all participants in the advertising and news ecosystem would share a single method for conforming the identity and interests of users. An added feature might be implementation of John Taysom’s “Three’s a Crowd” technology for individuals being masked and hidden within interest cohorts.

Advantages: An alternative to Facebook’s management of “state” on the market-driven web. And a method for increasing the anonymity of the user.

Several participants say designing the service with a non-profit as its governing entity is important. As opposed to DigiTrust, which was seen as a “front” for an ad technology company.

Another participant said advertising generated through the use of third-party tracking is immaterial to the survival of quality publishers. ITE should be focused on solving user problems of “performance, security and privacy.” If third-party cookies fall out of favor as a result and certain kinds of advertising go with them, that’s OK, this participant felt.

Another participant warned that the system should focus on creating opportunities for direct user revenue, as opposed to advertising.

SOME DISCUSSION ABOUT GOVERNANCE

The discussion turns to whether or how the Information Trust Exchange project should become an “entity” or a governing authority for ITE-sanctioned services. One participant noted that Mozilla, creator of the Firefox browser, was not its own company for years as it bounced between Netscape, AOL and then on its own. Another participant expressed skepticism about the focus of nonprofits, especially to govern something big. But they thought a membership organization could work.

CLOSING: WHAT ARE WE WILLING TO DO?

Here are some of the commitments made by participants at day’s end. They offered to:

- Show up at meetings to help
- Bring the ITE ideas forward to senior management
- Provide technical capabilities to help with prototyping
- Help create a prototype trial
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- Work on standards writing and development
- Provide possible access to capital and academic support