



## **TRUST, IDENTITY AND INFORMATION COMMERCE; DESCRIBING A SHARED-USER INFRASTRUCTURE FOR WEB/MOBILE**

This overview highlights the urgent challenge and opportunity for journalists to find a way beyond mass-market advertising to underwrite – and profit from -- the free flow of civic information. It suggests an important part of the solution is establishing a [trust, identity and commerce infrastructure for the web -- an Information Trust Association](#). It would enable convenience, privacy, personalization, payments and user-centric advertising. Some of the issues have been addressed in other venues by the credit card and telecom industries. Our intention is to seek the best knowledge about analogous historical practices, and then convene and foster the right solutions for the future. While we come from the perspective of journalism's vital role in sustaining participatory democracy, the challenges and opportunities affect the news, publishing and entertainment industries broadly.

### **SITUATION ANALYSIS**

1. The entire spectrum of journalism enterprises, not just newspapers, faces critical challenges going forward because the traditional mechanics of paying for journalism are undergoing an unprecedented transformation, the outcome of which is still unclear. It is very clear that new models for financing journalism need to be created and nurtured.
2. Mass-market advertising alone does not appear capable of supporting independent, civic journalism in the web environment. Marketers increasingly seek a one-to-one relationship with consumers. There's a need for a shared-user network for the web that addresses issues of trust, identity, personalization, privacy and commerce. What's needed is an open market for the sale and sharing of digital information, useful to publishing, entertainment and enterprise.

### **WHAT'S HAPPENING**

3. CircLabs Inc., a company 35% owned by the University of Missouri and formed as a result of research at the Donald W. Reynolds Journalism Institute (RJI), has taken a first step. CircLabs has developed a service that will allow newspapers and other content publishers to provide a convenient way for consumers to find the trustworthy information they need and seek – a next-generation discovery service that goes beyond search. It addresses personalization, privacy and declared-interests advertising. Our first application is the Circulate Bar™, which entered invitation-only beta trials on May 8.

### **WHAT'S NEXT**

4. In the last year, news organizations have concluded they must deliver new services that people will be willing to pay for. But there is not consensus on the mechanics of how to authorize, account for and charge for bits of information accessed from multiple, independent websites. CircLabs is considering several approaches to support the Circulate Bar™. One might be a service where, like the mobile phone, you have a unique identity, which authorizes use of resources across multiple providers and includes a means of micro accounting. That doesn't exist on the web today. It is an enormous opportunity and need.
5. Google Checkout or PayPal handle commerce, but not identity. Facebook is moving to handle identity, but is not likely to be trusted for commerce, and faces looming regulatory scrutiny. And none of these players have a connection to civic information or journalism. Have Google, PayPal or Facebook in the control position for identity and commerce on the web, is a little analogous to Verizon handling all accounting and customer support for Sprint, AT&T and Qwest.

## **WHAT'S NEEDED**

6. What's needed is a special entity to transparently make policy, foster and in some cases manage platforms and protocols for the trusted sharing of users, content and commerce -- perhaps modeled after the non-stock Visa International Services Association.
7. Elements of the publishing and information industries are converging and evolving such that no existing trade organization, by itself, has the credibility to make broad policy that sticks. What's needed is a non-profit association that handles trust from the perspective of the needs and privacy of users, journalism, publishing, entertainment, finance – and perhaps even health.
8. Very generally, this R&D and standard-setting collaborative will need to address issues of content ownership, copyright protection, personalization, privacy, advertising and content payments in a networked media environment. Solutions that are broadly applicable across journalistic, publishing and entertainment enterprises will require the existence of a neutral organization that can avoid antitrust issues. Think of it as akin to establishing the gauge of the railroad, or the grid frequency of alternating current, but not the size of boxcars, the schedule or price of freight, or electricity.
9. Mizzou-RJI is uniquely positioned to propose and nurture the formation of this kind of organization. We began with the [Information Valet Project](#). We've taken a first step by reaching out to the Multistate Digital Task Force (Iowa based) to propose hosting an industry summit in June. We'd describe the need for the R&D collaborative, tentatively called the [Information \(or Journalism\) Trust Association](#).

## **THE OPPORTUNITIES**

10. For commercial ventures such as CircLabs Inc., the opportunity is to profit as core (but not exclusive) application and commerce providers operating within the Information Trust Association-specified protocols and rules.
11. Reynolds Journalism Institute has the opportunity to serve as host and administrator of the Information Trust Association for a neutral position in mid-America, and affiliated with the oldest and second-largest journalism school in the nation by most measures.

## **ACTION STEPS**

12. Launch a broad collaboration among universities, foundations, business and NGO stakeholders (such as [Project VRM](#) and the [Higgins Project](#)) to define appropriate ownership, structure and governance for a user-centric Information Trust Association.
13. Consider seeding and establishing of a for-profit, perhaps controlled by the ITA, to handle the exchange, logging, sorting and settlement of billing and access events across the web and mobile devices that ties elegantly into existing global banking networks.

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