



ANNOUNCEMENT

RJI report: News orgs must help users with identity, privacy; propose non-profit collaboration to share tech, users, content

BRANSON, Mo., Aug. 4, 2011 -- A non-profit collaboration to share technology, users and content could help news organizations find new revenues and become better at serving the public, according to a report from the Donald W. Reynolds Journalism Institute at the University of Missouri.

The report, "From Paper to Persona: Managing Privacy and Information Overload; Sustaining Journalism in the Attention Age," was published on Thursday and presented to the annual meeting of the Newspaper Association Managers. It's the result of more than two years of study by a Reynolds fellow and consultant, [Bill Densmore](#), a career journalist, publisher and entrepreneur.

"As news and the economics of newspapers come unglued, what will sustain journalism?" Densmore asks. "The answer involves a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge is how to do a better job of helping the public find knowledge they need, amid a glut so huge that the scarce human commodity is now attention, not information. The Internet provides the opportunity to do so."

The report advocates forming an industry collaborative, tentatively called the "Information Trust Association" by Densmore. It would define and foster a common technology playing field that respects consumer privacy, and makes rules for the exchange of both content and users' identity information.

"Such a system might allow news originators of any size – possibly including bloggers – to exchange payments among each other and with public users for news information and sponsored material," says Densmore.

Two thirds of the 55-page paper chronicles what Densmore says is the end of mass markets as a viable strategy for selling the advertising that has largely supported American journalism. Instead, he says, the Internet is increasingly able to deliver commercial messages targeted to specific users' interests and profiles – or personas.

As a result, the paper says, publishers and broadcasters have to learn how to use technology to become expert at personalizing information services. And that, says Densmore, requires them to help consumers with their privacy and personal information. They might help users to earn rewards, or pay for specialized information.

The last third of the paper argues that the Information Trust Association is the best way to help with this change. The idea is potentially controversial because the U.S. news industry has not typically cooperated on technology standards, instead being buffeted and shrunk by services originated elsewhere such as Craig's List, eBay, Facebook or Google.

"The point of the Information Trust Association would be to foster collaboration that increases convenience and choice for consumers, allowing multiple service providers to compete on a common playing field," says Densmore. The paper offers nine examples of industries where this has occurred, including railroads, cable TV, the electric grid, electrical equipment, banking and stock exchange, and the Internet itself.

The genesis of the paper was Densmore's 2008-2009 "Information Valet Project" fellowship at Reynolds.

"Our challenge is no longer how to access information, but how to manage our time and attention amid the glut. News organizations have the opportunity to move from being paid to deliver one-format products (broadcasts, print stories, to providing trusted multimedia, personalized services with unique insight, knowledge, curation, and aggregation. They can help users manage their privacy and identity -- their persona," says Densmore.

The white paper is now available to view and download online. Rich with more than 230 live links to additional resources and reading, "From Paper to Persona" can be found here: <http://rjionline.org/news/paper-persona>

To comment, join a discussion or learn more about next steps for the Information Trust Association idea, read Densmore's blog post at: <http://tinyurl.com/persona-blog>

To learn more about the Reynolds Fellowship program, click [here](#) or contact [Kelly Peery](#).

About the Donald W. Reynolds Journalism Institute

The [Donald W. Reynolds Journalism Institute](#) works with citizens, journalists and researchers to strengthen democracy through better journalism. RJI seeks out the most exciting new **ideas**, tests them with real-world **experiments**, uses social science **research** to assess their effectiveness and delivers **solutions** that citizens and journalists can put to use in their own communities.

About The Donald W. Reynolds Foundation

The [Donald W. Reynolds Foundation](#) is a national philanthropic organization founded in 1954 by the late media entrepreneur for whom it is named. Headquartered in Las Vegas, Nevada, it has committed more than \$110 million to its National Journalism Initiative in the United States.