



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)

ABSTRACT, EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & CONTENTS



Version available from: <http://www.newshare.com/whitepaper-summary.pdf>

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<http://www.papertopersona.org>
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¹ -- In this context a set of attributes and interests a user wishes to present (See Page 16)

² -- Overview of author's RJI work: <http://tinyurl.com/densmore> ; <http://www.newshare.com/disclosure>; for Acknowledgements, see Page 41).

ABSTRACT

“From Paper to Persona: Managing Privacy and Information Overload; Sustaining Journalism in an Attention Age,” surveys a digital media landscape which is disrupting mass-market advertising, the traditional source of support for independent, fact-based U.S. journalism. It finds the defining challenge for 21st-century news organizations is no longer managing proprietary products -- but helping us manage our own attention to ubiquitous information.

Managing privacy and information overload are opportunities. Sustaining journalism requires that news organizations acquire technology and skills to perform as trusted managers of identity, and as curatorial information agents for their users. It suggests how publishers can cultivate customized, one-to-one relationships with users, provide them personalized information, and get paid for doing so. This will require that each publisher be able to make money referring their users to each other’s content -- hence the need for a microaccounting system.

The challenge of meshing privacy, trust, identity and information commerce in a common system with the potential to help sustain journalism requires competition within a new trust, identity and information commerce framework. To facilitate this, “From Paper to Persona” calls on journalism stakeholders to lead formation of a public-benefit entity, the [Information Trust Association](#). It would create protocols and business rules that enable appropriate network collaboration. It would foster a common playing field that respects consumer privacy, facilitates transparent business rules, allows content and users can be exchanged and shared, and the consumer can easily move among competing options. Examples of similar approaches are cited.

The ITA would -- within the limits of existing antitrust law -- convene publishers, technologists, foundations and the public to create a system for exchanging small bits of content -- a sort of microaccounting system -- among multiple independent publishers. Public users would be able to choose from a plurality of information “curation agents” from which to open a one-ID, one-bill account that would work to purchase information broadly. The Obama administration is seeking such efforts.

The Information Trust Association would make and enforce protocols governing users' "persona" -- personal information -- and allowing consumers to barter that information for value across the same microaccounting, or “value exchange,” system. The ITA will guide -- not run -- this trust, identity and information commerce environment -- sanctioning and enabling multiple competitive businesses. The banking industry might play a role in the back shop processing.

The trust, identity and information commerce network is necessary as news organizations switch from producing products -- newspapers and broadcasts -- to a service -- helping users -- in any venue -- to find the information they need to be informed, engaged citizens.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As the news and paper come unglued, what will sustain journalism?

Mass-market advertising is no longer sufficient. An emerging Attention Age – characterized by an economy which treats human attention as a scarce and valuable asset -- is transforming the information business. It's also raising public concern about an escalation of intrusive, privacy-challenging marketing.

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. As a result, the defining challenge for news organizations in the 21st century is no longer managing proprietary stories, but helping the public knowledgeably manage our attention to and sharing of ubiquitous, disaggregated information. Sustaining journalism therefore requires:

- News organizations to acquire technology and skills to perform as trusted managers of identity, and as curatorial information agents for their users. This paper tentatively coins the word [“infovalet”](#) to describe this broker/agent function.
- Creation of a shared-user network for trust, identity and information commerce fostered and governed by a public-benefit entity the paper calls the [“Information Trust Association.”](#)

FOUR TRENDS

Four trends enabled by worldwide open networks are transforming the future for journalism, participatory democracy and communities.

- Mass-market advertising is changing. It is no longer sufficient to sustain journalism in print or on air. The two have come almost unglued.
- Abundant, accessible information 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 assert that value with the concept of “privacy.”

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 and agents, or “[information valets](#),”³ for their users. Trust, identity and information value are core issues, affecting access, convenience, privacy and personalization.

The basic Internet lacks common protocols enabling the convenient sharing of trust, identity and information commerce. The [Information Trust Association](#) can help create them, stewarding a marketplace that is open and [multi-party](#). It will allow the sharing of users and value among news, advertising, publishing, entertainment, technology, public and philanthropic services. As “curation agents,” publishers can 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, “siloes” 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.
- 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.

How this paper is organized – Observation and argument

PART ONE of “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 persona⁵ – a unique combination of age, sex, race, income and education, their values, attitudes, interests, lifestyles and their physical location on earth. “From Paper to Persona” points to evidence that:

- Information has come unbundled, and no copyright laws will change that
- Journalism is expensive, and *mass-market* web advertising alone will not sustain it.
- Sustaining journalism requires rethinking mass-market advertising, and news as a service rather than a product.
- Advertising is giving way to targeted, permission-based, direct marketing
- Publishers in the old gatekeeper role won’t control the marketing loop
- Consumers are aware of privacy and the value of their attention
- Trust and identity are building blocks of the new information ecosystem
- If general consumers pay, it will be for trusted curation and community

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

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

⁵ -- Persona – In this context the set of interests and attributes the user wishes to present. (See Page 16).

PART TWO of “From Paper to Persona,” is an argument for a solution -- establishment of a public-benefit initiative to neutrally specify and referee a new marketplace for privacy, trust, identity and information commerce. The world-focused [Information Trust Association](#) (ITA) initiative would be guided by publishers, broadcasters, technology companies, account managers, trade groups and the public. It would present a common playing field where consumer privacy is respected, business rules are transparent and the consumer can easily move among competing options. Whether as a new entity or the initiative of an existing public-benefit organization, the ITA’s non-equity governance structure would recognize the interests of at least [four parties](#):⁶

- (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.

The initiative could:

- Vest greater choice, control and economic value of their privacy and personal information in the hands of individual citizens through voluntary standards.
- 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 information suppliers.
- Guarantee one-account, one-ID, one-bill implicitly from any of multiple participating trust/identity/commerce providers (“InfoValets”).
- 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.
- 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.



RECOMMENDATION

Journalism stakeholders should take the lead in establishing 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. □

⁶ -- “Four-party model” — Choice, control for consumers; opportunity for publishers?” -- pages 46-49).

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

(working title only)

- **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 (“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**
 - Careful avoidance of antitrust problems
 - 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)

CONTENTS OF FULL PAPER

The full-length version of “From Paper to Persona,” may be downloaded as a PDF file from:

<http://www.newshare.com/whitepaper.pdf>

It includes subheads and enlarged, boxed excerpts on many pages to permit abbreviated access to concepts and recommendations. Opportunities for discussion, and links to updates or new references may be accessed from a wiki-format website maintained by the author:

<http://www.papertopersona.org>

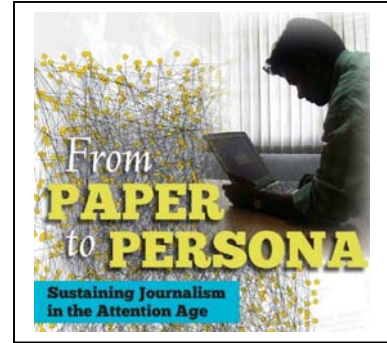


Illustration: Jeff Potter

1. Assessing the Opportunity

- The end of mass markets

The overview

- Brokering attention, sharing persona
- The end of walled gardens
- Losing control of the network
- From product to service
- Display online: \$100B in a several years?
- Atomized content and the iPad – opportunity or threat
- What won't support news – mass-market advertising
- Blurring of advertising and marketing
- Shift to audiences, not “sites”
- From atomization to clearing house
- Business model collapse: Scarcity to sense making
- The hourglass and the cylinder
- From social good to enlightened personal tastes
- When publishers no longer own the pipes
- In whom do we trust – “persona”
- Public trust through engagement
- Public responsibility – Not passive reception

What might work?

- The Next Newsroom and Chris Peck
- Citizens as journalists – new opportunity
- Reaching out – some examples
- The experiments – clues to the next newsroom
- Privacy – Necessary component of personalization?

- U.S. government spurs privacy efforts
- U.S. v. Facebook Connect – the de facto identity card?

Summing up and recommendations

- About “advisor-tising”

2. Making the Marketplace

- Trust, identity and commerce
- Paying for news – stories or convenience?
- A new overlay – the shared user network
- Possible answer: The member association?
- Considering antitrust
- Why news organizations need this
- Privacy as a service
- Entrepreneurial opportunities

Conclusion: Next steps for news

Final recommendations

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- Author's note / acknowledgements
- Bullet points: A case for an Information Trust Association
- ADDENDUM: Nine trust associations that established beneficial networks
- ADDENDUM: Four-party model
- **Why this matters: Bob Rosenthal (Page 51)**
- Document links