



Making the market for digital information:

A proposal to launch a shared-user network protocol for managing trust, identity, privacy and information payments

April 14, 2014 (v1.0)¹

Executive summary

This document proposes creation of an information-industry association, with a working title, “The Information Trust Association.” The effort is broken into:

- Phase 1: Confirm Mission/Support: \$10,000 go/no go
- Phase 2: Assemble Team / Define Entity \$30,000 go / no go
- Phase 3: Build/deploy \$270,000 go

The non-profit, public-benefit, member association will develop protocols, write business rules, foster technology and govern a shared user network for trust, identity, privacy and information payments.

Since U.S. newspapers began in the mid-1990s to market news on the World Wide Web, they have searched for new revenues to support the practice, initially focusing on advertising. By 2012 many papers began seeking online subscription revenues as well. A breakthrough occurred on March 18, 2014 when [The Washington Post announced](#) it would begin providing selected online news products as a free premium for subscribers to selected regional newspapers. The move marked experimentation by a key U.S. publisher with the shared-user network concept.

“This program is a way for us to work with newspapers and other print and digital partners around the country to both add value to their subscriptions and expose The Post to a wider audience than ever before,” Stephen Hills, president of the Post, said in a statement.

¹ -- The author, Bill Densmore, acknowledges the contributions of Henry K. (“Buzz”) Wurzer, Martin C. Langeveld and Bill Anderson to this proposal.

The ITA will foster a shared-user network for trust, identity, privacy and information commerce. It will foster a transparent, competitive marketplace for digital information, not subject to direct control by governments. The ITA will respect and support anti-monopoly and anti-trust law and avoid making policy or rules respecting pricing or service offerings to the public. The ITA will sanction but not directly operate the network elements. It will establish the marketplace but leave the conduct of it to competing private entities. Members might include foundations, universities, banks, telecoms, publishers, tech and entertain companies, and the public.

It is proposed the Reynolds Journalism Institute serve as initial convenor, manager and fiduciary for the association. It is proposed that RJI contract with CircLabs Inc. to (1) survey news- and information-industry leadership (2) recommend a 10-12-member steering committee (3) create a mission, bylaws and association rules (4) Raise initial member capital (5) incorporate the Information Trust Association, and (6) to serve as interim manager of the ITA.

Through the Information Valet Project, RJI has identified legal, technical, management and philanthropic advisors we think have the experience to create the ITA, establish its governance, and connect it with critical for-profit operating partners. All that's needed is founding-member capital, and a hosting institution to provide logistical support.

A first-year funding goal of \$310,000 is proposed, (go-no-go milestones at \$10,000 and \$40,000) with the intention that the ITA be self-sustaining thereafter through dues and licensing fees, assuming a governance (rather than development) role over the web's new trust, identity and information commerce infrastructure.

The opportunity and goal

Newspapers used to be the best-possible way to receive a daily diet of information that matters. Now, people on the go want to efficiently access the broadest range of multimedia content customized to their needs -- in a single, simple action. Achieving this simplicity will require the coordination of publishers, content licensors, aggregators and usage trackers, a range of stakeholders currently unfocused on this collective activity.

More broadly, the Internet needs a user-focused system for sharing trust and identity, arbitrating privacy, and for exchanging and settling value (including payments), for digital information. The system should allow multiple trust and identity brokers to compete for and serve users. To make a new market for digital information -- and attention -- calls for convening of a unique ownership and governance framework, assembling the required technology, and assessing the impact on law, regulation, advertising and privacy.

It is a goal of the Information Trust Association to create such a market.

The defining of an Information Trust Ecosystem (ITE) would achieve this coordination. Without encroaching on individual news franchises, ITE can be an information-industry collaborative connecting news enterprises and news consumers. It will define and govern a layer of network protocols for sharing user authentication, profile sharing, copyright payments and billing. Similar to the bank / credit-card system, the network may be overseen by a non-governmental authority on behalf of private -- and competing -- parties. The ITE makes rules for the competitive exchange of both content and users' identity information.

ITE can multiply the time spent with content from participating publishers, enabling revenue streams via data-driven, membership-oriented business models around news. [Going beyond news and print](#), these streams can provide products, entertainment and services, including affinity group “clubs,” special events, purchase discounts, special member access to services, contests, and referral fees for transactions.

The ITA should be initiated and supported by major technology, telecommunications, banking, publishing, advertising, consumer and philanthropic organizations. It will guide the creation of new standards and a platform for exchange of user authentication and transaction records which enables a competitive market for information, respecting and enabling consumer privacy and choice."

The result will be a shared-user network for privacy, trust, identity and information commerce.

Role for the Reynolds Journalism Institute

The Reynolds Journalism Institute has underwritten conferences, research and prototyping. It helped form and owns one third of a development-stage company. The enterprise, CircLabs Inc., experiments with news-customization and discovery services that are a necessary precursor to the shared-user network. In 2008, RJI named Bill Densmore to its first year of resident RJI fellows. Through research, convenings and experiments, Densmore's Information Valet Project pioneering the concept of industry collaboration around business protocols and technology. Densmore's research lead to commissioning of the August 2011 RJI report, *From Paper to Persona: Sustaining Journalism in the Attention Age*, which may be found at the link below, and which is summarized in the following paragraph:

<http://rjionline.org/news/paper-persona>

“As news and the economics of newspapers come unglued, what will sustain journalism? The paper explains the answer involves a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge is how to do a better job of helping the public find trustworthy information forming the knowledge they require -- amid a glut so huge that the most scarce commodity is now attention, not information.”

ONE APPROACH SUGGESTED

From Paper to Persona [called for formation of an industry collaborative](#) to define and foster a common technology and protocols – a privately maintained playing field that respects consumer privacy, and makes rules for the competitive exchange of both content and users' identity information. The paper's principal recommendation: “A non-profit collaboration to share technology, users and content could help news organizations find new revenues and become better at serving the public.”

READ THE NEWS RELEASE: <http://wp.me/phs3d-c2>

As a trusted steward, agent, curator, editor or “information valet” publishers can make money competing to offer subscriptions or per-item access to information shared across a large network of premium sources, personalized for individual readers. A ubiquitous, “wholesale-retail” information-payment network could make this possible.

READ THE FULL REPORT AND ANNOUNCEMENT:

<http://rjionline.org/blog/call-action-time-make-marketplace-privacy-trust-identity-and-information-commerce>

READ THE 2008 RESEARCH SCOPE:

<http://newshare.com/ivp/valet.pdf>

READ: “The case for the Information Trust Association and an ITA Protocol”

<http://newshare.com/ita/ita-protocol.pdf>

Technology

THE NEWS SERVICE SHARING ARCHITECTURE (NSSA)

We now propose the News Service Sharing Architecture (NSSA). It draws significantly upon writings of both Buzz Wurzer and Bill Anderson² in 2012 and 2013. In some ways, it is conceptually similar to Clickshare Authentication and Logging Service, described in two United States patents.³ It begins with a set of value propositions continues with function specifications, and ends with build-out steps.

The NSSA should facilitate:

- Technical protocols for sharing users, content and payments
- Control for users over their demographic, financial and personal data

For a narrative Q-and-A description of the value of the News Service Sharing Architecture (NSSA) to news providers, please see Appendix A.

A. THE NSSA ARCHITECTURE – BENEFITS

Buzz Wurzer’s bullet-point summary of features and benefits may be found here:

<http://newshare.com/wiki/index.php/Rji-pivot-project-new-network-approach>

The architecture involves four parties: The (1) End User, the (2) End User Service Provider (USP), the (3) Content Provider (CP) and the (4) network operators collectively operating authentication, logging, and settlement services.

1) Key benefits of the NSSA architecture:

- Scalability via a plurality of providers
- Choice of services, yet universal access for users

² -- Buzz Wurzer is a retired Hearst Corp. executive; Bill Anderson is a retired Seattle SeaFirst bank CTO.

³ -- <http://tinyurl.com/2wtlpu> / <http://tinyurl.com/2ukwj4> / <http://tinyurl.com/csc-patent> / <http://tinyurl.com/csc-patent-news>

- A free-market for value exchange
- A middleware connection between POS and legacy financial services and advertising networks.

2) Key benefit of NSSA middleware

- User-centric, privacy-enabling service
- Allows independent silos to connect when desired

3) Key benefit of association

- Establish protocols and rules for network
- Ensure price and service competition
- Avoid government control of network
- Avoid private-investor control of network

4) Unique selling proposition

- Make money sharing users, content, advertising
- Enable incremental growth of ASCAP model

5) Benefits to users

- One account, one-ID, one-bill
- Privacy-protected purchasing
- Control over “persona,” ability to seek offers
- Choice of service providers

6) Benefits to media companies

- Keep control of (but share) user bases
- Deeper relationship with users
- Ability to aggregate users, content

7) Benefits to advertisers

- Standardized “persona” management
- Ability to simply target users
- Ability to respond to “offers” from users
- Audience measurements by identified user

B. FUNCTIONAL SPECIFICATIONS

Technically, NSSA might consist of two general components:

- NSSA PROTOCOLS -- A set of technical protocols and business rules which govern the transfer of specific information across the public TCP/IP network (Internet) among and between (a) diverse point-of-service (POS) devices, such as laptops, smartphones and

tablets and (b) network members, including content providers (CP) and end-user service providers (USP).

- **NSSA NETWORK** -- A special-purpose network which securely transfers information among and between network members, including content providers, end-user service providers, network operators and network service providers.

Here are key requirements of the protocol and the network:

C. PROTOCOL REQUIREMENTS

The NSSA protocol must support:

- Standardized transfer of a unique, non-repudiable user identifier, assigned by a USP, in real time, when a user makes an HTTP request to a CP across a TCP/IP public network, for a unique resource.
- Standardized transfer of a set of end-user attributes, along with the above request, sufficient to permit decisions to authorize or deny access to resources based on a variety of parameters, such as a subscription, ability or willingness to pay, age, membership or the like.
- Ability to support a real-time query and reply to confirm desire of the end user to acquire the resource based upon its cost, value or other attributes.

The NSSA network should support:

- Real time authentication back to their USP of a user's credentials and rights upon making a resource request of a CP and prior to serving the request, whether the request is to the CP's servers or to the Network Content Repository (see below).
- Logging of services provided by unique user, resource provided, and any negotiated and confirmed value of the event. The event could involve serving news content, or sponsored content ("advertising") with the value exchange recorded in either direction.
- A provision (internal or outsourced) for storing and indexing news content uploaded by members in a Network Content Repository.
- The NSSA network services includes programs that store and index news content, distribute messages about the content to the members, control access to the content, allow for news search, account for each individual access, account for the due-from and due-to payments cycle and act as the intermediary to an all new internet payments system.

Bill Anderson proposes that the network infrastructure operate on the latest IBM zEnterprise System in a secure data center(s) accessed exclusively over a Virtual Private Network (VPN) which uses a non-internet protocol called System Network Architecture (SNA) for data transport

and a non-internet security system called Restricted Access Control Facility (RACF) for security. Access is only available to registered NSSA members and the secure data center does not have an address on the Internet, making it completely free of internet-type of security breaches.

Access identifiers, subscription numbers, financial transaction numbers, member addresses and identifiers are all new and have no equivalent in today's internet environment, rendering any sort of tracking by unauthorized spy programs impossible.

Information about end-user identities are known only to the end-user's service provider (USP). The network system only knows users by a standardized unique alphanumeric identifier. Financial information and content access are protected by impenetrable security measures accompanied by extra strong encryption, thus protecting them from external disclosure as well as internal disclosure.

In summary: The end user becomes a subscriber to an individual association member's news service and from then on the consumer can access any content in the association's repository or on the servers of other association content providers.

A news supplier can post a breaking story to the secure system repository; have the story picked up by any member of the association that has a prearranged agreement to do so. Or the member can post the story on their own web site; allow paying consumers to buy the story (by click or by subscription) before they read it by simply clicking on the story. The NSSA would provide specifications for real-time wholesale-retail pricing of content on publisher servers.

The NSSA infrastructure takes care of all the accounting needed to get the payment from the consumer to the original content owner (or the payment from the advertiser to the end-user's service provider) with all of the intermediaries along the way getting their pre-agreed-to cut.

Implementation steps

A. PROJECT PHASES

Phase 1 -- \$10,000 -- May-June

LANDSCAPE RESEARCH – Review literature and conduct interviews to assemble a picture of what's needed and what's possible given a coordinated, collaborative, public-benefit initiative.

Phase 2 -- \$30,000 – July-October

FOUNDING MEETING – Gather founding institutions for two-day summit.

BUSINESS PLAN – Complete business plan for adoption at founding meeting.

FOUNDING MEMBERSHIP – Recruit founding membership and raise funds sufficient to achieve objectives. Accompanying this effort would be preparation of financial projections and pro formas, not only for the ITA but for the elements of the shared-user network for trust, identity and information commerce it would enable.

Phase 3 – November-February

- a) GOVERNANCE – Make governance decisions along the lines of <http://www.journalismtrust.org>. Set membership rights and dues and start signups.
 - b) DEVELOPMENT – Contract for building/licensing of core technologies that support ITA specifications and protocols for authentication, data sharing, logging and billing aggregation.
 - c) LEGAL – Put all corporate bylaws, rules and governance documents in place; including terms of membership and use, and guidelines for antitrust, anti-monopoly and competition.
1. LEADERSHIP – Recruit founding board members (board if new organization, advisory board if part of an existing organization), as well as an advisory board.

FOUNDING RESOURCES – \$310,000 (see Appendix A, budget)

The Appendix A one-page concept budget estimates first-year organizational costs of \$310,000, which could be covered by initial membership contributions, program-related investment by one or more foundations or grants. It is anticipated that no additional external funds would be required to support the ITA, as it would after formation seek additional contributions of member capital as well as member dues, and, when operational, the ITA network would provide operating fees to the ITA. The costs of development of technology and operating facilities for the shared-user network would be undertaken by operating contractors and licensees under long-term agreements that would predict an appropriate rate-of-return for their investment based upon network membership and transaction fees.

The commitment of the full \$310,000 is not required to launch the initiative; a tranche of \$40,000 (Phase 1 and 2) will cover a founding-member symposium and meeting, plus concept legal work on bylaws and governance structure -- with incorporation once a decision to go ahead is made by initial incorporators.

B. PROJECT SCHEDULE

A suggested development schedule, assuming a commitment by May 31 from RJI to move forward as ITA's logistical host and co-founding member:

July, 2014

- Phase 2 funding committed (\$30,000)
- Identify and tee-up founding individual board members in:
 - Diverse public stakeholders in future of journalism
 - Newspapers, magazine, public radio, book publishing
 - Niche/speciality/med-sci-tech publishing
 - International representatives
 - Universities/NGOs related to journalism
 - Technology and telecommunications companies
 - New-media entrepreneurs & public representatives

- Complete legal work on corporate form ([see: CONCRETE IDEAS](#))
- Create draft bylaws/articles (can be adjusted later)
- Outreach to promote the idea
- Establish alliances with any related initiatives, profit or non-profit
- Work on draft operating budget/goals/objectives

August, 2014

- First phone meeting of founding board candidates (not yet incorporated, just starting to work as shadow advisory team)
- Review and tweak bylaws
- Adopt draft operating budget / fund-raising goals
- Firm up goals/objectives with input from shadow board
- Board tasks out development process for establishing protocols
- Establish membership levels
- Announce September member convening
- Begin conceptual outreach to funders/members
 - Foundations
 - Tech/publishing companies
 - Individuals
 - Universities/NGOs
 - Others (see Page 41 of “Paper to Persona”)

September, 2014

- Commitment of additional \$30,000 to support founding-member convening
- Incorporation papers filed by RJI-designated individual(s)
- Face-to-face meetings with potential funders / initial members
- Ask for investments/money to meet first-year operations
- Near-final version of bylaws
- Prepare for operating pending minimum funding commitments
- Protocols / standards development groups begin discussions/meetings
- Prepare for first meeting of board and potential funders
- Identify key staff and administrative roles required
- Continue work on September convening (RJI, DC, Chicago or NYC)

October, 2014

- Secure commitments for Phase 3 initial grant/member funding (some \$\$\$ received)
- First meeting of founding board, potential funders, in Washington, D.C.
- More face-to-face meetings with funders/members
- Retain staff (executive director and admin person)
- Identify and approach appropriate contacts at tech leads
- Founding member convening, late October

November, 2014

- Announce formation of ITA
- Begin conceiving working task forces on standards for:
 - Identity – Managing, transferring user identity, authentication
 - Privacy – requirements/obligations of services
 - Trust – Rules for compliance with ITA service standards
 - Exchange – Protocols for exchanging dynamic pricing/service terms
 - Tagging – Tagging, managing content exchange
 - Logging/sorting – Methods for tracking, sorting, logging net-wide activity
 - Settlement – Gateways to banking networks for charge settlement
- Develop strategy for outreach/partnership to Silicon Valley (tech world)
- Seek/hold initial meetings with “tech leads” (possibly this needs to happen earlier)
- Scope operations, technologies required for digital-information marketplace
- Board designates executive committee for monthly meetings

December, 2014

- First meeting of executive committee, RJI or other agreed venue
- Name initial members of seven working task forces
- First phone meetings of working task forces
- Continue F2F meetings with funders/members
- Inventory potential roles, rights of “tech leads.”
- Develop strategy for involving each “tech lead.”
- Outreach to major publishers not represented on board

January, 2015

- Close on memberships for major publishers
- Bring into membership first of “tech leads.”
- Develop/review/revise three-year-budget / identify funding sources
- Confirm member levels, rights, obligations
- Review founding bylaws, consider/adopt any amendments/revisions

**EXAMPLES OF
TARGET FOUNDING
MEMBERS/
COLLABORATORS**

Akamai Inc.
Amazon / Bezos
(Washington Post)
American Advertising
Federation
Apple
AT&T
Baldwin Hackett &
Meeks Inc.
Bank of America
(and/or other banks)
Comcast Inc.
Consumer Federation of
America
Craig’s List (or
Foundation)
Electronic Frontier
Foundation
Facebook
Fleishman-Hillard
Google Inc. (or
Foundation)
Hearst Corp.
IBM
Intuit
John & James Knight
Foundation
MacArthur Foundation
Robt. R. McCormick
Foundation
Microsoft
Mozilla Foundation
Newspaper Assn. of
America / API
New York Times Co.
Omidyar Network
Open ID Foundation
RJI/Univ. of Missouri
PayPal/eBay
Sprint
Time Warner Cable
Verizon
World Wide Web
Foundation
Yahoo.

- Quarterly meeting of ITA board at RJI or other venue
- Board begins to consider roles for “tech leads” in ITA-sanctioned operations
- Negotiate management relationship with RJI
- Working task forces hold their first meetings

February, 2015

- Close on additional major publisher and tech-lead memberships
- Task forces convene together at RJI for status reports and additional individual meetings and to confirm alignment on roles in making the market for digital info. “Tech leads” all invited to participate.
- Management relationship with RJI confirmed
- Month-end: ITA assumes all costs of ITA management, contracted with RJI (Suggestion: Two-year contract renewal for two years at the end of each year so there’s always at least a year’s notice of termination)

COMMERCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

During Phase 3, ITA would begin to seek to license for-profit affiliate members who will provide these services at a Tier 1 level of authentication, to seed the network in the publishing space:

- Enable web users to access, share, sell or buy paid content from multiple sources by means of a secure account with a single ID, password, account and bill.
- Provide web users with absolute control over a digital identity with respect to accessing, sharing and purchasing news and information content, and other uses.
- Find, spotlight, aggregate and share content.
- Create a news social network that operates through news and information content web sites at all levels from local to international.
- Create a means to deliver contextually-relevant content recommendations to network members
- Provide easy, low-cost, copyright-respecting access to “Deep Web” and other content stored behind pay, registration, membership and once-proprietary barriers.
- Enable the delivery of precisely-targeted advertising and other commercial content relevant to a reader’s expressly shared demographic profile, social networking connections, ad content preferences and browsing history.
- Enable a system allowing site users to earn cash or rewards for engaging in a variety of potential interactions with commercial entities.

Higher tiers of authentication would involve collaborations within the health-care industry, banking industry and government, among others.

**INFORMATION TRUST ASSOCIATION
FIRST-YEAR BUDGET**

Item	Cost	Phase	Notes
EXPENSE			(concept only)
Project Management	\$10,000	1	Circlabs Inc. (Bill Densmore)
Project Management	\$15,000	2	Circlabs Inc. (Bill Densmore)
Project Management	\$55,000	3	Circlabs Inc. (Bill Densmore)
Travel	\$20,000	3	
Support staff	\$30,000	3	(part-time possibly RJI-supplied)
Technical consultants	\$40,000	3	One in identity one in payments
Consultant travel	\$10,000	3	
Founding convening			An evening and a full day
Facility	\$2,000	2	RJI or Loyola of Chicago or GWU, Columbia
Food / lodging per	\$10,100	2	Assume 20 invited "conveners"
			Approx another 20 paying guests
Facilitators	\$5,000	2	(per Fancher suggestion; possibly Fancher)
Working groups	\$32,000	3	Covers four groups meeting twice
Governance	\$15,000	3	Manager, Governance
Development	\$25,000	3	Manager, technology, protocols
Legal	\$40,000	3	Incorporation, advice on antitrust, drafting of association rules
TOTAL EXPENSE: \$309,100			

REVENUE (concept only, listed in order of receipt)

Phase 1

Research grant \$10,000 \$10,000 RJI

Phase 2

Foundation #1 \$30,000 \$32,100 Seed funding as grant to RJI

Phase 3

Tech Member #1	\$30,000		Member capital to ITA after formed
Tech Member #2	\$30,000		Member capital to ITA after formed
Tech Member #3	\$30,000		Member capital to ITA after formed
Foundation #2	\$50,000		Program-related investment or grant
Foundation #3	\$50,000		Program-related investment or grant
PubMbr #1	\$20,000		
PubMbr #2	\$20,000		
PubMbr #3	\$10,000		
PubMbr #4	\$10,000		
Other memberships	\$20,000	\$267,000	

TOTAL REVS/EXP: \$310,000 \$309,100

THE NEWS PROVIDER VALUE PROPOSITION – Q-and-A

Q. “What is transformational about what it is you are offering? I am doing fine with my existing proprietary network, so what need do you fulfill that I am not experiencing?”

Your existing closed subscription system is self-limiting and keeps your users inside a walled garden. It’s fine as far as it goes, but unless you can make money helping your users find, access and purchase digital and physical goods outside your network, your business will grow small and smaller and smaller in comparison to the larger web of commerce.

Q. How does this service blend in with what I am currently doing in my digital and print efforts?

The NSSA takes your existing relationships with your print and digital subscribers and allows you to share those relationships out to a larger network. As your users develop relationships, and complete transactions beyond your own web, mobile and tablet services, you can learn about and share in those transactions. You can help your users to compile an intelligent knowledge-base of their activities, interests and needs, and then help them fulfill those needs.

Q. How does this service complement vs. compete with my current sales efforts?

NSSA opens dynamic new selling opportunities. It allows you to present new opportunities and new information to your advertisers. You can help them to develop affinity-marketing programs -- managed by you. You have new opportunities for consultative sales. New ways of participating in transactions and commerce.

Q. What incremental costs come with this service?

You should make a commitment to training sales staff. Costs are scaled to your size, level of participation and new revenues achieved. Membership in the NSSA service involves an annual fee based upon enabled-users served, and fees when transactions occur. A setup fee is negotiated.

Q. How is this service integrated with my front end and back end software systems?

NSSA’s web-based protocols are written to allow vendors to integrate with the most common circulation and subscription management systems and content-management systems.

Q. How do I integrate my current database information with this system?

An NSSA vendor will work with you to either create a real-time interface with your current databases, or migrate your data to a cloud-based service.

Q. How does this system integrate with current paywall or registration systems I have in place?

Major vendors of web user authentication and content access-control systems will participate in the NSSA specification-develop process with a goal of interoperability.

Q. What kind of content is in this service and who provides it?

Initial content is expected to come from participating news organizations as well as a select group of specialized content providers. While prototyping has generally involved news content, we intend that the NSSA protocols work well with multimedia entertainment, medical, science, technology and educational resources.

Q. How do I integrate my current sales efforts, local and network into this new service?

Join an NSSA working group and attend one or more of our face-to-face or webinar trainings.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND ON
THE INFORMATION TRUST ASSOCIATION

BACKGROUND

In approximately October, 2010 the Reynolds Journalism Institute asked Bill Densmore to prepare a “white paper” which would assess the journalism landscape in light of two years of research by the Information Valet Project, and make one or more recommendations about how to sustain the values, principles and purposes of journalism.

The 51-page paper, “From Print to Persona: Managing Privacy and Information Overload; Sustaining Journalism in the Attention Age,” fulfills that request and is being reviewed in ‘circulating draft form.’ (See *APPENDIX C for selected comments*). An executive summary is being edited for proposed distribution to news, technology and information-industry leaders via direct and social-networking channels. Key points of the paper:

- Mass-market advertising won’t sustain traditional journalism
- New revenue streams are needed
- A promising opportunity is for news organizations to become stewards and curators of individual user’s ‘persona’ and information needs; earning subscription and transaction fees by doing so.
- A network is needed to maximize the value to consumers and revenue to the news industry. The network needs to be trusted by competitors.
- The best way to assure such a neutral network is for it to be created by a non-stock, public-benefit organization.

In the report, Densmore called for the creation of a public-benefit entity (with a working title, “Information Trust Association.” It would help create and govern – but not own or operate – a shared-user network for trust, identity and information commerce layered atop and supporting the existing World Wide Web.

The network, or exchange, would:

- Develop technical and information-service protocols and business rules
- Allow end users to own, protect – and optionally benefit by sharing – their demographic and usage data, with the help of their competitively chosen information broker or agent (“information valet”) – such as their local newspaper.
- Provide a platform for customizing and personalizing the end-user web experience – a “news social network.”

- Update the role, effectiveness of, and compensation for online advertising and marketing services beyond the mass market, while putting greater control of user privacy in the hands of users.
- Allow digital users to easily share, sell and buy content through multiple websites with one ID, password, account and bill.

WHY THE NEED?

The white-paper concludes that news organizations must join together to create and steward a common network that manages trust, user identity and digital-information commerce. Otherwise they will lose significant control over the presentation and pricing of their services, and the relationship with users. This will marginalize independent, fact-based journalism, creating a crisis for participatory democracy.

At the same time, and working largely apart from the news industry, an information coalition of interest groups including banks, technology companies, the health-care industry and governments, have reached the conclusion that the Internet needs a common protocol for managing user trust and identity which is not controlled by either governments or any single, private, investor-owned enterprise.

LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

The Information Valet Project fellowship laid groundwork for the ITA concept through three events and ongoing conversations with dozens of thought leaders within the news and technology industries:

- “Blueprinting the InfoValet Economy,” Dec. 3-5, 2008:
[PROGRAM LINK](#) / [PARTICIPANT LINK](#)
- “From Gatekeeper to InfoValet,” May 27, 2009:
[PROGRAM LINK](#) / [PARTICIPANT LINK](#)
- “From Blueprint to Building,” June 23-25, 2010:
[PROGRAM LINK](#) / [PARTICIPANT LINK](#)
- In December, 2009, Densmore provided testimony about the ITA idea at a Federal Trade Commission public symposium. The testimony posted on the IVP wiki pages, has been accessed more than 33,000 times since it was posted:
<http://www.newshare.com/wiki/index.php/Jta>
- On April 27, 2011, Densmore presented a summary of “From Paper to Persona,” draft and invited a Q&A discussion at the Fred W. Smith Forum at the Donald W. Reynolds Journalism Institute.
<http://tinyurl.com/rji-briefing>

Key points raised in the Q&A:

- RJI Fellow Mike Fancher, retired executive editor of *The Seattle Times* and frequent consultant to the Aspen Institute, suggested a next step should be a face-to-face convening of founding members of an Information Trust Association, lead by a skilled conflict-resolution facilitator, designed to assure ITA's vision and supporting goals are not skewed to the interests of a particular group. In addition, the convening could be preceded by survey of precedents of cross-industry collaboration supplementing the examples in "From Paper to Persona."
- Miriam Pepper, *Kansas City Star* editorial-page editor, said she thought the idea of a single, secure identity and privacy protection for the consumer had great appeal and she said the key question is how to get major web companies to participate.

Selected comments about “From Paper to Persona”

(see: <http://www.newshare.com/wiki/index.php/Category:Persona-comments>)

“ . . . [Y]ou've made terrific progress since we first discussed this. Please keep me posted, and thanks for letting me see the draft. We are certainly thinking about the same issues.”
--- *Andrew Heyward, ex-president, CBS News*

“ I think this model has a lot o appeal in its logic. I think it pulls all the right elements together. I do wonder if the industry incumbents and current business models will be open to a total re think of the way the world works on the net -- Apple, publishers, etc. worry this could be somewhat utopian.”

– *David Hiller, chairman, McCormick Foundation, ex CEO, Tribune Co.*

“I have read the white paper, some parts twice, and I deeply resonate with the message. We are building a trust framework for the STM publishing industry and making significant progress. Our narrow focus allows us to take advantage of the peculiar aspects of the economy of science which is both enabling and disabling. I believe that online trust is the magic mojo sauce that will enable the emergence of improvements we have yet to imagine. If you see ways we can plug into your larger framework for the publishing industry we would be most interested in doing so”.

– *Hal Warren, advisor, Open Identity Exchange and publishing innovation director, American Psychological Association*

“Will try to react to the white paper. API might not be ready to take on a role right now but that could change. With that said, I really appreciate your update. I personally remain intrigued.”

--- *Tom Silvestri, 2010-11 chairman, American Press Institute; publisher, Richmond [Va.] Times Dispatch*

“I don't know if this helps, but I am a huge fan of simplicity. I have waded around in the same swamp as you but come up with an idea that is not a b-to-b thing, which is cool, but something that would help consumers directly. My idea is a fairly focused -- that people should by law have access to their market profiles the same way they now have access to their credit score information, and also the ability to modify those. What's a credit score? It's information collected by business based on things you do that is used by business to make decisions about people, including offering or not offering goods and services. What's a market profile? It's a larger amount of information collected by business based on things you do, and used by businesses to offer you goods and services, etc. If you can have access to one, why can't you have access to the other. The thresholds would need to be figured out -- how "big" does your profile need to be, how would you get at it, etc., and I'm sure the experts think can't be done -- but I think giving people control over their cyber profiles is a big deal.”

■ *Eric Newton, senior advisor, the Knight Foundation*

“Looked at your paper and all that maybe couldn't give it all the attention it deserves, I intuit it has a lot to do with automated information curation, maybe doing that on a somewhat automated basis and finding ways to automatically curate and present information from multiple sources . . . I think it's related to curation what you're doing and that's a big deal and I'm looking to hear more.”

■ *Craig Newmark, founder, CraigsList*

“I'm really fascinated by what I'm understanding. The idea of the ITA is fascinating. Using descriptive terminology from computer security, it would be a "trusted 3rd party", but here for information rather than cryptographic keys. It's an idea worth trying. I think [the "aha" moment was] when you make the comparison with Underwriters Lab, the stock market, etc. Then I "got it". Or got something, anyway . . . Whether it can succeed or not, I don't know. But it relies on a model that has worked in other contexts, for sharing of other things. I'm thinking we should have you up sometime in the fall to give a talk. This has links to economics, privacy, information trust, complex systems.”

■ *David Nicol, director, Information Trust Institute, Univ. of Illinois*

“In my mind, trust has always been the essential ingredient of publishing, and as your brilliant white paper makes clear, that is the ingredient that must be rebuilt, defended, isolated, protected and replicated in the new digital age in order for media companies to thrive. Thanks for the time, the effort and the insight it has taken for you to piece together "From Paper to Persona". I'm sure your white paper can be a beacon to help us sustain journalism.”

■ *Peter Vandevanter, founder, Personalize Media Conference*

“I agree with you that the key to making the information valet process successful is the gatekeeper role played by the neutral, non-profit standard-setting organization. The key is how to get the major players to understand how it is in their interests to establish and fund the standard setting entity. Bluetooth did it with a gang of nine Founding Members who controlled and funded 95% of the process in exchange for getting their engineers, programmers, product people, etc. on all of the planning and development committees, while also having other categories open to the general technology community and even the public at little or no cost with varying levels of participation. Are there 5 - 10 big players who would do the same for the information economy?”

■ *Todd Eskelsen, attorney, organized BlueTooth SIG*

“Bill Densmore has recognized that the only way for the news industry to survive is to join together and form an association of competitors (the ITA) and develop your own network. I don't mean that you have to buy a lot of expensive equipment and spend hundreds of millions of dollars developing software. Much of what you'll need is already available and relatively easily adaptable for your use. Micro accounting systems used by cell phone companies are very mature and easily adaptable. Clearing and settling systems are well established in the banking system. Inter-operability between web sites is well established. The challenge facing the news industry is not a technical challenge, nor is it a challenge of a lack of customers. The challenge is facing the fact that no one is going to solve your problem for you. The time for debate is over. Unless you ACT now you will lose the opportunity to determine your destiny. Bill Densmore has painstakingly and eloquently laid out a pathway for you.”

■ *Bill Anderson, retired banking CIO, Seattle, Wash.*