Infotrust eXchange

POCANTICO WRAPUP:

New nonprofit holds founding meeting aimed at helping the public – and news media – come to terms over privacy, identity and information commerce on the web

TARRYTOWN, N.Y. – A new nonprofit group has starting seeking consensus on creating an open alternative to the way advertising and social networks are infringing on personal privacy, with a goal of supporting quality journalism on the web. One participant termed the effort the creation of a "data-protection trust" and another called it a "verified news network."

"We need principles about the data we can gather," one participant said. "Advertisers need principles, too."

About 30 news media strategists, technologists, entrepreneurs and researchers met April 19-20 in a two-day discussion convened by the Information Trust Exchange Governing Association (ITEGA*). (For more on framing of the meeting, see Addendum #1)*

At least three initiatives appear to have been sparked by the gathering.

ITEGA is seeking public and media support to define business and technical rules for the digital-information marketplace. ITEGA seeks a role as a public-benefit consortium committed to giving individuals greater control over how data about them is shared and used.

Organizers say this could be a precursor to enabling a system for support of journalism through advertising that consumers welcome, plus networked subscriptions, memberships and donations. One of the gathering's participants called for ITEGA to play a "catalyst and connector" role as it moves into a governance role.

The April 19-20 session was held at the Pocantico Conference Center of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. The foundation offers use of the center to public-policy nonprofits but does not endorse or support their policy efforts merely by granting use of the center, which is situated in a massive stone carriage barn once used by the Rockefeller family.

 The ITEGA participants met under the "Chatham House Rule" -- an agreement not to share comments or affiliations publicly to allow for candid discussion. "A congregation of self-

governing peers could be just the forward looking model for what we are doing," said one participant.

The initiative comes as the European Union prepares to implement and enforce on May 25 its General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which many U.S. publishers and technology companies such as Facebook and Google – are struggling to integrate into their user-data collection businesses. GDPR places significant restrictions on the collection of personal information without explicit user approvals. Because many U.S. websites have European users, the rule is difficult for them to ignore or skirt.

Three key themes emerged:

- PLATFORM POSITION – Because they gather data from hundreds of millions of users from whom them have email addresses and names, the tech platforms such as Google and Facebook have "first-party" data. This means they may be poised to benefit more than publishers and companies that have relied about serving ads using data from third parties.

- HOW-TO HELP -- All news organizations are hungry for more information about the new European privacy policies and their impact on advertising and data collection. For-profit companies need help crafting privacy-complaint data-use and storage policies. Public media wants to learn how to use and share its members' interests and preferences without centralizing its control. Smaller, independent media want to improve their member/user experience by sharing content.

- ITEGA ROLE -- Each of these stakeholders saw ITEGA as unique well positioned to meet their needs to provide information about privacy law, rules and technology, to research how to turn privacy issues into business opportunities that deepen user trust, to develop identity and privacy rules and protocols; and to encourage emergency of relevant technology.

ITEGA should have legal governance and contracts that anyone participating with abide by, said one participant.   "We don't have that in existing models."

OPENING THOUGHTS

Thursday's session opened with Jo Ellen Green Kaiser describing ITEGA's intentions:

- A common set of standards
- Enabling sharing of content, yet protecting user privacy
- A place to convene
- Helping to find sources of revenue
- We are not creating products or services, just opportunities for members
- Enabling competition and choice
- Premise: We are stronger figuring this out together

Greg Swanson, an ITEGA growth strategist, said we are all looking at different parts of the elephant, so the task is to work together to perceive the whole animal:

- Each of us has our own mission; can we surrender parts in order to collaborate?
- We're talking about identity and media sites, let's not deal with banking or medicine
- Let's work on the value proposition for media sites
- Consensus on everything isn't needed, evolve over time
- For now what are cool projects we can work on right now?

WEEDING OUT MISINFORMATION

At least two participants saw ITEGA as able to help to isolate purveyors of misinformation by creating what one of them called a "verified news network." One said ITEGA might, for example, standardize the sharing of one or more independent judgments of news or news-service quality. A second participant suggested working with makers of web browsers to recognize ratings and measurement systems driven by the public. It even could factor such "signals" into deciding when to admit or deny ITEGA membership.

ACTIONS SPARKED

Among initiatives sparked by or discussed at the gathering:

- A proposal to proceed with structured meetings involving multiple stakeholders such as publishers, public radio and TV interests, advertisers, browser and tech makers, civil-society and privacy advocates. The meetings would seek consensus on business and technology rules and protocols for user-data sharing that are enforceable by ITEGA -- rather than dependent upon government regulation.

- A decision by one major news-media group to embrace the idea of ITEGA as a non-profit consortium for creating and enforcing such business and tech rules.

- A decision by the Sovrin Trust Foundation -- which is working with Deutsche Telekom and IBM on a user-controlled digital trust network for credit unions -- to embrace ITEGA and journalism as its second industry network. "It's all about the network effect," said one participant of this alliance. "You're already there. You are seriously already there."

- News that on May 25, the same day GDPR takes effect, a third nonprofit, [Customer Commons,](#) will launch a service that permits individuals to pick one of several data-privacy contracts and require a website to agree to it. That reverses the current practice, in which users click to accept length privacy terms offered without negotiation by websites.

- The start of a collaboration among technologists to integrate news personalization, network subscriptions, anonymized ad serving, identity management and blockchain-fashioned distributed ledger services in a coordinated demonstration of the ITEGA ecosystem.

SEEK ADVERTISER INVOLVEMENT

Although at least one representative was invited, there was no "brand" or advertising agency participant at Pocantico, a noted absence. "Ask advertisers to help solve this problem, too," one participant concluded after saying: "You will find some interesting thinking coming from the commercial side, now that it's pretty clear that ad tech not only doesn't work to support publishing, it doesn't work as a way for advertisers to reach customers, either."

Elements of the U.S. advertising industry have worked over the last few years to try and measure the amount of "clicks" on websites which appear to be automatically generated by computers without any person looking the screen – wasted views that advertisers nonetheless often end up paying for. Estimates are that this "bot traffic" comprises billions of dollars annually in the United States alone.

This reality promoted one Pocantico participant to declare in a length observation:

> *People matter more than devices, we need scaled people-based marketing, A recent survey of ad marketers predicts almost two thirds of current ad buyers will be out of the third-party cookie-matching business within two years. A goal should be around acquiring new relationships with people and "pairing them" in anonymous interest-cohorts like public media does, and getting permissions to acquire "rich, first-party data" from individual users. And in some ways doing so as Facebook does, but responding to the end-user's right to control over what is done with their personal data. The goal is to drive greater value by delivering ad messages to people, not machines, in an acceptable and desired (e.g. opt-in) fashion. The strategy: (1) Assemble the cult of the willing (2) create a plan and (3) go. Is there a lingering challenge? Yes. Figuring out the best way to obtain data-consent from users.*

Among other dominant themes raised:

- How to collaborate to help manage consumer privacy, identity and information purchasing across the Internet and mobile services in a way that allows robust choice and competition.

- The varying arenas of "trust." Is a journalistic work or writer trustworthy? Is a system for transferring user information secure and trustworthy? Is a specific website or news service trustworthy? "the word trust is completely central," said one participant. A consensus emerged that ITEGA was most focused on building system trust that in turn can convey helpful signals to the public about journalism or news-brand trust.

- Tradeoffs are involved in giving the public choice about identity and privacy control and also offering relevant, personalized advertising, news or entertain. Solutions advanced by some technology entrepreneurs at the meeting would protect privacy by putting web user data in pools representing like-minded interests, where individual identity information has been removed.

- No firm consensus could be declared on whether privacy protection is a motivator for public engagement with the news media. One participant said the "user experience" of a web service – its content, speed, appearance – is most important. Another, however, said news sites with "bad UI" – slow to load, mess, pop-up ads and the like, are displaying artifacts of the data-privacy problem.

WORRIES ABOUT SURVEILLANCE

One participant explained that small, independent media organizations are at the mercy of Facebook and Google to attract readers and users. They are also challenged to have the resources to cover things that matter to underserved and disadvantaged populations. And groups that feel unfairly targeted by authorities worry that a network for sharing user data could be appropriated by authorities for surveillance purposes. Can governments access ad-tracking data, this participant asked? "In saving journalism we don't want to create human-rights or civil-liberties abuses or exclude people from the conversation."

Selling or offering a product – news -- based on trust has "potentially profound implications" said one participant. "We have to stop trafficking in identity in the ad space. There's not much future in that. It's giant rickety bubble."

Web privacy tools can help make web advertising spam and fraud uneconomic, by making it impossible for fraudulent operators to get or use personal data, said another participant.

Other specific ideas broached during the meeting:

- There is what one participant termed a "incredible opportunity" for publishers, public and other news media to create a competing "first-party data network" as an alternative to Facebook or Google. EU regulation and the revenue-crisis for much of media drives interest. There will be high demand for data about users that has been openly obtained with permission rather than scraped and assembled opaquely.

- There's a strong need for collaboration to develop technical protocols for privacy-protecting sharing of user data where an individual approves it. Similarly, the idea of a smart-phone application which stores a user's subscription or membership credentials and information interests drew interest and some support.

- In pre-meeting discussions, one participating large publisher expressed support for a system which could credit the publisher when one of their subscribers sees advertising on other publishers' websites – a network for value exchange. "How do we share the value of our content?" the same person said during the gathering. "Right now, the desire to get revenue from data -- and providing a great user experience -- are at odds with each other. How do we reconcile?"

- Participants from for-profit media organizations exchanged concerns with those coming from nonprofit elements of the U.S. public TV and radio system over whether the two could agree on minimum identity and privacy standards compatible with their businesses. Technology could be crafted to serve both simultaneously, it was felt. No conclusions were reached other than to continue dialogue. Both agreed that maintain and building the trust of their audiences was crucial.

There were also these comments made:

- "Is there a larger scale that is possible beyond public media?" asked one participant during discussions.

- "How do we work together around data?" asked another participant. "So much of what we do in public media relies upon trust."

- "Should be we be using this data and should we have self-limiting agreements?" asked a third participant.

- "How do we hold ourselves accountable?" asked a fourth.

Asked after the gathering to suggest "takeaways" to guide ITEGA's next steps, these are among suggestions from participants:

- Create a multistakeholder governance group that is consultative but decisive, a small group focused on speed and a clear mission.

- Focus ITEGA on developing "trust protocols" and then evangelize them through writings, webinars, conferences and gatherings that, like Poncantico, bring together leading thinkers from across interest silos – particularly advertisers and their representatives.

- Explore the concept of an "infomediary" or "information fiduciary" as a new class of business that helps individuals to control and manage how their personal information is created, safeguarded and optionally shared.

- Work to reduce the fraud and security risk of "honeypots" of personal information by distributed personal data where it can be controlled by the individual yet still be aggregated in an "anonymized" fashion.

BENEFITS TO INDIVIDUAL USERS?

Participants sought to understand what benefits ITEGA might provide to individual public users of services operated within its member ecosystem and rules. No consensus was reached during the meeting, although in post-session comments, a participant suggest three things:

1. Support personalized content using standardized shared taxonomy of interests, while protecting each user's interest profile.

2. Establishing interoperability standards to support dynamic content pricing and payment to bundle costs. A single monthly user charge.

3. Create ITEGA user privacy certification as a credential a publisher can offer a user at various levels.

"Make privacy a differentiator," one participant said during the gathering. "In ITEGA you have the vehicle -- open up a process to create the differentiator you are looking for."

SUSTAINING ITEGA -- ICANN AND INTERCHANGE

What will sustain ITEGA's critical standards development, governance process, monitoring and enforcement role? Like ICANN, organizers suggest that ITEGA can charge stakeholders annual membership dues, interchange fees (similar to networks like Visa and MasterCard) and possibly transaction fees should payment services be initiated across ITEGA sites and members. Because ITEGA is a non-profit public charity, any surplus could be used to fund research to sustain the open web, or to support civic or public journalism.

GOVERNANCE BREAKOUT

The challenge of establishing ITEGA as a trusted brand requires first engaging with existing companies to support their brand, and giving them an incentive for bringing their users into the ITEGA ecosystem, said a participant in one breakout session. First work on governance and technology, the participant said. "Interoperability is part two," he says. "First, you have to come to a self realization that sharing is better."

The breakout group proposed that ITEGA be able to separately support for-profit and not-for-profit member or operating tiers. Thus an ITEGA challenge becomes setting the right parameters around one or more trust sub-nets.

WRAPPING UP – NEXT STEPS

Besides the four items sparked, a wrap-up session at Pocantico saw participants making the following suggestions about ITEGA next steps:

- Organizing what a participant called "ITEGA Standards Bootcamps," a series of online webinars or face-to-face meetings. ITEGA should see itself as a convenor of ideas around trust. There are a number of "trust projects" supported by night and other foundations, so ITEGA's role might be that of bring together the leaders of *those* groups.

- Defining a technology vision around the permissioned sharing of user data and content. There are risks/benefits in this approach, including determining how hard to push privacy as central.

- Add focus to "the task of articulating the values you want to provide to consumers."

- Draw together people who care about privacy with those who care about the bottom-line and about finding non-creepy business models that satisfy both. This is necessary because the traditional ad model is going away.   One idea this participant suggested: "A token economy and micropayments" and moving "from a transactional world to an interaction-al one."

-- END OF DRAFT REPORT (addenda follow) --

ADDENDUM #1

Framing the meeting

Going into the Pocantico gathering, ITEGA's executive director Bill Densmore, board chair Jo Ellen Green Kaiser and growth-strategy consultant Greg Swanson defined a problem and solution set:

THE INVITATION

Pocantico participants were encouraged to attend with this claim and suggestion:

> *What will sustain journalism in the service of democracy?*
>
> *The hard truth is that no one news company, no matter how large, is going to be able to match the scale at which Facebook, Google and Amazon work. Working together, however, the news ecosystem can build a common marketplace that will present a formidable challenge to the digital giants while bringing in significant revenue for each participant and providing privacy protection their customers. The tool to build that marketplace is ITEGA:*
>
> - *A neutral forum for Internet stakeholders to implement business rules and shared technology protocols – standards to protect privacy, manage identity, foster trust and facilitate the exchange of value on the web.*
>
> - *Collaborative governance to ensure that ITEGA members – publishers, content providers, information-technology vendors and others – are truthful and identified, and can be trusted with* our *identity.*

The posted agenda included these topics:

- Clarifying the problem(s) and most-strategic longterm solutions
- How a "fast pass" for networked news subscriptions can work
- Creating an anonymous user data exchange for advertising and personalization
- The potential role of "blockchain" technologies in managing a "unique identifier"
- Compatibility with the EU's General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

Other founding and outreach documents ITEGA has circulated provided this problem-solution –benefits matrix:

PROBLEMS

- An epidemic of mistrust in online content and some content providers
- Online publishers can't easily distinguish human users from mechanical "bots"
- The public lacks standards for judging the trustworthiness of websites or sources
- Users have inadequate control over their privacy and identity
- Some elements of the media have diminished ability to earn revenue via advertising
- Identity is de-facto control by Facebook and Google
- Advertising and ad growth is concentrated in those two platforms

SOLUTION

- Non-government, non-profit, public-benefit governance of user data
- A shared-user network for trust, identity, privacy and information commerce
- An independent consortium of stakeholders
- Allowing for transparent management and sharing of privacy and payment rules
- Business and technical rules and protocols created and enforced by consortium
- Standards permitting individuals to control -- and optionally share -- data about them
- Competition on services, prices, applications among ITEGA business members

BENEFITS

- Identity and privacy protection distributed among competitive agents
- Choice for the consumers
- Enable news media and other content providers to offer individualized service to those who opt into personal data sharing
- Enable content providers to form and share markets around opted-in users
- Option to support small-payment aggregation services for one account/one bill.

http://www.itega.org

ADDENDUM #2

Reflections on "trust"

Given the organization's title, the 30 participants returned several times to discuss the context for the word "trust." Here are some observations offered, in paraphrased form:

Define what trust means to this community. Stewards don't define trust. It's about confidence in the reliability of the network working together. The trustworthiness of the stewards – the existing agents (such as newspapers) is an issue on the "onboarding" process – getting people to sign up in the first place. It's good to give users a choice of agents. In thinking about trust, are we talking about trust in the news story or trust with my information?

Individuals will make their own decisions about the infomediary they wish to trust. Our task is to think about creating trustworthiness at the code and protocol level. For example, the Customer Commons is a place where a user can express enforceable terms of use around their personal information. You can have solutions that start with code.

The word trust never came up in GDPR negotiations. The key word was accountability. In Europe the right to enjoy one's life in private is a higher-order concern than worrying about protecting data. "You wouldn't have a contract for trust." A key concern: How do we architect and enforce a trust ecosystem?

An ITEGA goal should be to architect the flows of data so that users can trust that they have control over who uses it, how and when. Defining the problem and solutions is a challenge for which there is presently no governing organization to provide the independent assurances that business players cannot. Thus some are looking for a third party to create a trust framework.

As an exercise, we should define trust from the point of view of each of the stakeholders.

Data and content are both on the table when it comes to thinking about trust.

Standing for trust between publishers and readers is too amorphous. Who does this trust brand ITEGA benefit?

Trust networks are always at least two sided. ITEGA is the right name. Credit-card networks benefit both the bank and the consumer – banks can make revolving loans very efficiently, merchants can get paid with confidence and without credit risk, and consumers can make purchases anywhere without having to worry about the safety of carrying around large amounts of cash or writing checks that could bounce.

The beauty of the proposed ITEGA marketplace – you have a choice of who to trust. In an ITEGA ecosystem, the publisher can share users with other publishers without having to reveal details that would make the other publisher a competitor; the individual user can access information anywhere without having to repeatedly enter personal information or register; the end user also can express interests and control use of their data; the advertiser can deliver a message tailored to a individual knowing that it is responsive to their present and expressed interests, but without the risk of dealing with personal identifying information.

Transparency goes hand in hand with trust. "To establish and keep trust with those who interact with you they have to understand how you work."
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Data trust is a subset of the overall challenge of building trust in journalism. That's what distinguishes us from other users of a trust framework involving data, privacy and security.

We are creating standards for behavior on the part of ITEGA members.

Participant One's comment:

What rights do people have to participate in the system? We consider it a privilege to have the information about the people who read our newspaper and we are here to serve the people of [our city] and do everything we can to maintain their trust because that is one of the key reasons for our existence – to be the information source they trust.

Participant Two's response [during the event and in post-event elaboration]:

What [Participant One] said and the way they said it gained my trust. So find the tech that he needs in order to make that statement and be confident that he can back it up. You are defining your paper as a trustworthy source first and foremost. As a user I don't have know how the technology protects my privacy, I just need to hear that from my publisher. I don't think we should try to protect users from publishers. Do we protect them from banks, from transportation systems, from the government.? It is the reverse of that. The newspaper can say "We are ITEGA compliant by choice and here's why: This is the best technology we know of for protecting your privacy." End of story. You don't have to have a chart about why you are doing, the name of the newspaper brand is enough. Of course it is not that yet, but it could be that.

ADDENDUM #3

ITEGA's mission, goals and core values

Here are excerpts of the mission, goals and core values of the Information Trust Exchange Governing Association as draw from its corporate founding bylaws.

MISSION

The mission of the Information Trust Exchange Governing Association (ITEGA) is to pursue the charitable and public purposes of lessening the burdens of government and promoting the global public interest in the operational stability of the Internet, and advancing the values, principles and purposes of journalism supporting democracies and open societies.
 In particular the ITEGA:

1. Researches, develops, tests, adopts and promotes technology, protocols, business standards and rules for governing the exchange of information about Internet users, their activities and purchases;

2. Owns, manages, performs, licenses, certifies, assigns or oversees functions related to the coordination and value of user-data exchange;

3. Helps members of the public to safely manage their privacy, identity and information payments on the Internet;

4. Helps to teach, research, promote and sustain the values, principles and purposes of independent, fact-based journalism particularly in the service of democracies and

open societies;

5. Facilitates open and public access to digital information; and,

6. Engages in other related lawful activity in furtherance of items 1-5, above.

GOALS

ITEGA aims to preserve and strengthen the open web and open sharing of information and value. It creates the opportunity for users to manage their privacy and identity in an environment controlled not by government or by private investors, but by a public-benefit consortium that enables competition and choice. It's goals:

- Helping users regain control of their privacy and identity

- Enable more effective and welcomed advertising and content services through interest-based customization.

- Enabling subscription and donor networks and per-item accounting and sale of valuable information to the right person at the right time.

A reference implementation would allow a plurality of information-service providers to exchange users, content and services in an "everybody wins" scenario where the core architecture and service is governed by ITEGA or other non-stock collaborative. A consumer's most-trusted "information agent" – an entity or technology (such as a digital wallet) or both – will work with the user to store and manage identity, demographic and personalization information, which the consumer can allow to be shared across sanctioned networks on a event-by-event, purpose-by-purpose basis.

CORE VALUES

In performing its mission, the following core values guide the decisions and actions of ITEGA:

1. Preserving and enhancing the operational stability, reliability, security, and global interoperability of the Internet.

2. Respecting the creativity, innovation, and flow of information made possible by the Internet by limiting ITEGA 's activities to those matters within ITEGA's mission requiring or significantly benefiting from global coordination.

3. To the extent feasible and appropriate, delegating coordination functions to or recognizing the policy role of other responsible entities that reflect the interests of affected parties.

4. At all levels of policy development and decision-making, seeking and supporting broad, informed participation reflecting the functional, geographic, and cultural diversity of the Internet.

5. Where feasible and appropriate, depending on market mechanisms to promote and sustain a competitive environment.

6. Introducing and promoting competition in the exchange and management of public user data and value exchange where practicable and beneficial in the public interest.

7. Employing open and transparent policy development mechanisms that (i) promote well-informed decisions based on expert advice, and (ii) ensure that those entities most affected can assist in the policy development process.

8. Making decisions by applying documented policies neutrally and objectively, with integrity and fairness.

9. Acting with a speed that is responsive to the needs of the Internet while, as part of the decision-making process, obtaining informed input from those entities most affected.

10. Remaining accountable to the Internet community through mechanisms that enhance ITEGA 's effectiveness.

11. While remaining rooted in the private sector, recognizing that governments and public authorities are responsible for public policy and duly taking into account governments' or public authorities' recommendations.

ORGANIZATION

ITEGA is a nonprofit public benefit corporation and is not organized for the private gain of any person. It is organized under the California Nonprofit Public Benefit Corporation Law for charitable and public purposes.   It has been granted 501(c)3 tax status by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service. It operates for the benefit of the Internet community as a whole.

ITEGA pursues the charitable and public purposes of lessening the burdens of government and promoting the global public interest in the operational stability of the Internet through open and transparent processes that enable competition and open entry in Internet-related markets.

The substantial property and activities of ITEGA are irrevocably dedicated to charitable or public purposes. No part of the net earnings of ITEGA shall inure to the benefit of or be distributable to its members, directors, trustees, officers, or other private persons. If ever dissolved, ITEGA's net assets shall be distributed to another 501(c)3 with purposes a similar to ITEGA as possible.

KEY SOURCES:
http://newshare.com/ite-key/itega-bylaws-ADOPTED-04-27-17.pdf
http://infotrust.org/mission