

What About Google

While most of the ideas surrounding paying for content focus on charging consumers directly, there may also be an opportunity to rethink how news organizations charge advertisers as well. Specifically, newspapers could negotiate with search engines like Google about revising the current profit-sharing model for online ads. A strong argument can be made that news content enhances the value of the search and discovery business for Google, Microsoft, Yahoo and others. Negotiating for a greater share of the profits could help to support the online model. Presumably, the amount generated by greater profit-sharing would not be enough money to singlehandedly save the industry, but it would help in combination with other strategies, and its role would increase as the value of online advertising goes up. Others have urged Google to share revenue with content creators or to more directly support news operations, especially since Google commands vast resources and directly benefits from newspapers placing their content online. Google CEO Eric Schmidt's public comments about a desire to help save the news industry have given hope to wishful thinkers.

On the other hand, some print news organizations are blaming Google for their own failure to monetize the Internet and are setting up protective measures around their content. In April, the Associated Press announced that it was launching "an industry initiative to protect news content from misappropriation online." While this initiative is not aimed directly at Google — which has syndication and hosting agreements in place with the AP — it's clear that the media companies that own the AP are seeking to reshape the ways news is accessed online. The AP said it is planning to develop "a system to track content distributed online to determine if it is being legally used" and to ensure search pages "point users to the latest and most authoritative sources of breaking news."

The AP's move has met with significant skepticism. Saul Hansell of the *New York Times* suggested that the move was tantamount to the organization turning on its own members. "What is particularly ironic about The Associated Press' temper tantrum," he wrote, "is that its paying members include nearly all of the sites offering free news on the Web and that much of what they are giving away are, in fact, articles and photos created by the A.P. itself." Technology reporter Kara Swisher described the effort as an attempt to "stop the Internet from being the Internet." And there are still a lot of questions about how the AP will implement its plans and what the outcome will be. "Anyone who thinks he or she really understands what the Associated Press plans to do about controlling the use of news industry content is much better at mindreading and predicting the future than I am," wrote *Paid Content's* Staci Kramer after interviewing AP Chairman Dean Singleton, who is also the CEO of newspaper giant MediaNews.

READ MORE

- Peter Osnos, "Will Google Save the News?" *The Daily Beast*, Feb. 3, 2009. <http://www.thedailybeast.com/blogs-and-stories/2009-02-03/will-google-sa...>
Adam Lashinsky, "Google News CEO Eric Schmidt Wishes He Could Rescue Newspapers," *Fortune*, Jan. 7, 2009.
- "AP Board Announces Initiative to Protect Industry's Content," AP press release, April 6, 2009.
- Saul Hansell, "The A.P.'s Real Enemies Are Its Customers," *New York Times*, April 7, 2009.
- Kara Swisher, "It's Actually About Figuring Out How to Sell the Sizzle and Not the Steak, Dean," *AllThingsD*, April 7, 2009. <http://kara.allthingsd.com/20090407/its-actually-about-selling-the-sizzl...>

Staci D. Kramer. "Interview: Dean Singleton, AP Chairman: Setting 'The Rules Of Engagement,'" *Paid Content*, April 6, 2009. <http://www.paidcontent.org/entry/419-interview-dean-singleton-chairman-a...>