Trust in the Age of Data: Big and Small

by Kristene Unsworth

EDITOR'S SUMMARY

The Special Interest Groups/Information Policy (SIG/IFP) and International Information Issues (SIG/III) joined forces at the 2014 ASIS&T Annual Meeting for an interdisciplinary workshop exploring trust in the context of data collection and mining. Among the topics addressed during the workshop were ethical stewardship of information, trust in the validity and authenticity of digital repository holdings, trust in extra-academic environments and trust as a critical requirement for interdisciplinary collaboration. The discussion of trust extended to justice in global regions in conflict, use of body cameras in law enforcement and broad scale population surveillance. The success of the workshop, particularly with its lively audience participation, will drive efforts to reinvigorate Special Interest Group/Information Policy as a unified forum on public policy and ethics related to information.

KEYWORDS

trust
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data collection
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2014 Annual Meeting Coverage

Trust in the Age of Data: Big and Small, the first joint SIG/IFP-SIG/III pre-conference workshop, debuted at the 77th ASIS&T Annual Meeting. The workshop was aimed at providing a space for collaborative, interdisciplinary inquiry into ways that information policies can affect how people enact and experience trust in relationship to data collection and data mining. As many of you are aware a number of long-term ASIS&T members and a few individuals who are new members (or soon to be members) have been working for some time to rejuvenate Special Interest Group/Information Policy. The success of this workshop was a terrific indicator that we are moving in the right direction. The idea for a workshop was a few years in coming and has been in the minds of a number of information policy and ethics scholars. At the 76th ASIS&T meeting in Montreal, Kris Unsworth, Nadia Caidi, Philip Doty and Christian Leuprecht made up a panel and each presented on information policy post-9/11. Issues related to information policy have had an ongoing presence at annual meetings and have taken a leading position in public discourse over the past years.

Frequently, ASIS&T pre-conference workshops are driven by current political and social concerns. Information policy and ethics are embedded in many of the tracks held over the years at our annual meetings and are the primary areas of research for a number of us. Data mining and the use of algorithms have taken increasing roles in popular discourse; yet for many of us they seem like old news since the endeavor to identify, organize and retrieve information from large sets of data is a foundational concern of information scientists and has strong roots in library science. As a profession we have struggled with the ethical and policy issues related to these endeavors.
The first joint workshop began with a panel presentation by Adam Moore and Batya Friedman, both of the University of Washington Information School. They were joined by Lisa Nathan, from the University of British Columbia. Lisa was also a workshop organizer.

Following this panel, presenters covered diverse topics related to trust and data. The concept of trust is crucial across a range of systems and is embedded in interaction. It also requires conscientious stewardship.

- **Lisa Nathan** started the day’s presentations with an overview of the challenges that are faced in efforts to “ethically steward collections of trauma in a conflict-ridden world.” She focused on work being conducted with the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission as they attempt to document Canada’s legacy of colonizing initiatives.

- **Devan Donaldson** focused on the necessity of trust in holdings of digital repositories. While these types of archival resources have been available for some time, the increased diversity of user groups as well as resources held require ongoing analysis of ways to insure trustworthiness. In this sense trust can be construed as a feature of data validity and authenticity in situations where resource management is shared, as in a commons.

- **Nicholas Weber**’s paper offers an examination of the way trust has been maintained and sustained in institutions that are outside traditional marketplace or academic environments. He asserts that transplanting these observations to a digital environment may shed new light on solving similar types of problems in public policy situations and information infrastructures. Trust is also an integral feature of collaboration and interdisciplinary teams.

- **Dorte Madsen**’s presentation of a theoretical model to support multidisciplinary teams illuminates how common ground is established among interdisciplinary groups. Trust in the data as well as among team members is integral to success.

- **Ian King** presented an information system developed to support trust and transitional justice, specifically in relation to the Voices from the Rwanda Tribunal and the Violations Database from the Syrian Justice and Accountability Centre. In addition to trust, access and safety are important values that must be considered. Trust can also be questioned and requires verification.

- **Bryce Newell** looked at how body-worn cameras are increasingly being used by police departments to monitor not only suspects, but law enforcement officers as well. This use is a clear example of the balancing act that is necessary when considering aspects of trust and security.

- Extensive data collection can also lead to preventative measures. **Nadia Caidi** and her co-workers presented work on how the technologies used to monitor the over three million pilgrims who converge on Mecca each year to perform the Hajj are critical tools to help insure their safety. The data that is being collected throughout our daily lives is also a resource for wide spread dataveillance. These practices are far from transparent, and while there are many examples of the positive confluence of data, use and trust, questions about the legality of such use remain to be answered.

- **Alan Rubel** provided the final presentation of the day and left the group with important questions about our roles as information professionals in relation to trust and data.

While we were unable to come to an agreement about whether we can call this the “age of data,” we most certainly could agree that regardless of the different faces of trust, goodwill and open dialogue are critical, whether we are working together as teams or with the data.

This report would not be complete without mention of all in attendance. The audience participation greatly enhanced the event. We were especially honored that Toni Carbo was able to join us. Without her tireless work, neither of the sponsoring special interest groups would be where they are today. Outgoing Board director-at-large and chair of the 2014 Annual Meeting, Jens-Erik Mai, also provided the speakers with provocative questions throughout the day. All present helped make the workshop a memorable event.
### Authors and Paper Titles

Nicholas Weber, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Center for Informatics Research in Science and Scholarship (CIRSS). *Scallops, Lobsters and Public Goods: Two Conceptual Approaches to Trust in the Digital Commons*

Dorte Madsen, Copenhagen Business School, Denmark, Department of Intercultural Communication and Management. *Introducing a Meta-Disciplinary Model to Support Processes of Theorizing and Conceptualizing*

Devan Donaldson, University of Michigan, iSchool. *Development and Validation of a Scale for Measuring Digital Archival Document Trustworthiness Perception*

Bryce Newell, Batya Friedman, Ian King, Tadayoshi Kohno, University of Washington, iSchool. *Information Systems in Support of Transitional Justice: Trust, Access and Safety as Design Values*

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- Lisa Nathan, Elizabeth Schaffer, University of British Columbia, SLiS. *Collections of Trauma: Identifying Generative Frictions*
- Alan Rubel, University of Wisconsin, Madison. *Against Trust: Bulk Metadata Collection, Statutory Interpretation and the Liberalism of Fear*
- Bryce Newell, University of Washington, iSchool. *Policing with Body-Worn Cameras: Trust and Law Enforcement After Ferguson*

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