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## Repost.U.s takes on copyright concerns with its syndication solution

By Emma Heald

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[Repost.U.s](#) is the latest service that hopes to solve news organisations' copyright problems. It offers a relatively simple way for people to repost content from the sites of others, while giving credit, and financial benefits if demanded by the original publisher.

**John Pettitt**, CEO of [Free Range Content](#), which created the service, told the *Editors Weblog* that he sees [Repost.U.s](#) as a way to get good content read more widely, and this could happen on any site, he believes. "The site-centric view is a hangover from when content came as a unit," he said, "that's not the way the web works: traffic doesn't necessarily come in through the front page any more."

### How it works

News organisations can place a 'Repost' button on each article that they want to syndicate. If a reader wants to republish this on their own site or blog, they click the Repost button and they receive an embed code for the article.



Publishers can either offer their content for free, if their main concern is widening their reach, or they can charge for it via a fee, shared ad revenue or they can place their own ads. If there is a fee, the reposter will be asked to pay that immediately, using an Amazon account or credit card. Repost will handle the distribution of any ad revenue generated.

When the 'reposter' has posted the article and someone goes to read it, the browser will see the embed code, take the article from the original sites, strip it of its branding and make it available to read on the new site.

The article will continue to be hosted on the original site, however, and the embed code will be seen by Google as a link back to the original article, Pettitt explained. Therefore, if someone is searching on Google, they will always be directed to the original site.

There will always be credit given at the bottom of the article and a link back to the original article, as well as the opportunity to further repost.

Publishers can also add their own licensing agreement, and can ban particular sites from syndicating their content, or specify geographic limitations. They can also use their own analytics tracker, so that hits via Repost can be tracked as normal.

[WorldCrunch](#), a site [that provides news from around the world translated into English](#), is testing

Repost.Us to see how this kind of distribution would work, co-founder **Jeff Israely** told the EW. "It's actually pretty simple," he said, "it allows us to distribute our stuff on an article-by-article basis, which means we can really showcase the value of the individual pieces of content we are producing."

WorldCrunch is not yet selling the content, and doesn't know when it will, but Israely said that "in the long run, we do see some real potential for generating steady digital revenue for both ourselves and the foreign-language partners whose stories we select and translate."

Crowd-funding pioneer [Spot.us](http://Spot.us) will also be using Repost.Us, the company said.

The idea is that sites will hopefully come to see each other as allies rather than competition. Many loyal readers of more specialist publications have a blog themselves, Pettitt said, but their audiences will have only a small overlap with those of the original site.



The seven-person company is based in San Francisco and though it maybe be somewhat US-focused for now, it is already reaching out to Europe through WorldCrunch. Pettitt said that it full intends to be global.

### Could Repost.Us revamp syndication?

New media guru **Clay Shirky** believes that syndication is up for "widespread disruption" as he explained in a [2011 prediction for the future of news on Nieman Lab](http://www.niemanlab.org/2011/03/21/prediction-for-the-future-of-news-on-nieman-lab/). Syndication has been "a key part of the economic structure of the news business since the founding of Havas in the early 19th century," Shirky noted, but that model is undergoing changes in the digital era. Online practices such as linking, traffic driving and attempting to [give credit where credit is due](http://www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/) are not really compatible with the traditional model of syndication, Shirky said, and essentially, "syndication makes little sense in a world with URLs."

According to Shirky, the concept of giving credit where credit is due, which Google is trying to implement in its search algorithm, will clearly reward original work but will mean that many news outlets suffer because much of their content is reproduced from wire copy. Online, it doesn't make sense to have multiple outlets hosting the same, or almost identical, story, that readers could easily read on the original source.

Going by this logic, what Repost.Us is offering does in fact make sense, especially if the original publisher doesn't charge for the re-use of their content, as what Repost-ing an article effectively does in this case is offers a link back to original content. If one or both parties can make money from advertising, then all the better.

Will Repost.Us become widely used?

[http://www.editorsweblog.org/analysis/2011/03/repostus\\_takes\\_on\\_copyright\\_concerns\\_wit.php](http://www.editorsweblog.org/analysis/2011/03/repostus_takes_on_copyright_concerns_wit.php)