Content Curation as an ‘All-Included Tumblr with Layers’

The following paper is proposal for a content curation system that integrates different concepts and ideas as an attempt to improve Reddit’s content quality drastically. I genuinely believe offering ‘custom-made content’ is the simplest way to attract serious users outside of the Bitcoin community, and a lot of unsatisfied Reddit users.

I’ve tried to keep it very simple (core concepts), with optional elements (layers) that can be added later in the development process, with also a way to integrate payment. Feel welcome to suggest improvements, insights on feasibility and to skip the microeconomic bullshit.

Systems of Mistrust and Trust

Why do most consumers go to Starbucks rather than going to other coffee shops they’ve never been to? It’s simple: because they know exactly what to expect in a Starbucks: flavor, products, price, experience, smell, etc. This is the mystical *power of the brands*: it reduces uncertainty for the consumer.

This works similarly for content: if a Facebook friend shares an article from *UpWorthy* or *EliteDaily* or any dumb magazine, you most likely won’t read it, unless it expressly recommended to you by someone you trust.

The same applies on Reddit: when searching in various subreddits, you don’t click most links because you’re uncertain of what you gonna get, and when you do, it’s often disappointing. The up/downvoting system has a major flaw: can thousands of users with different backgrounds, age, subjectivity and interests pick something that you will necessary find interesting yourself? Most likely not. Furthermore, what does upvoting truly means, anyway? You like the content? You agree with an idea? You feel it’s worth be seen by other people? The truth is: you have no clues *who* voted or *why* they voted. On Reddit, just have *numbers* which, like the **price of wine in a restaurant**, are quite an unreliable information to make a smart choice. Reddit, and especially the Frontpage, ends up being a place with a lot of ‘mildly interesting’ content, and only a few good links or discussions on a 24hrs period. Furthermore, laziness being the rule, users aren’t inclined to go explore in subreddits to find the great content buried deep and stick to what shows up on the frontpage….

Branding Content

I believe we can fix this problem with a system of **content curators**: specialized users that handpick for you the best content published in different communities in the last 24 hours. A bit like on *Tumblr*, following a curator shapes the content you see on your frontpage. Consequently, you have interest in following curators that like the same stuff than you.

We’re introducing a new paradigm: it’s no longer *Broadcasting*/*Narrowcasting,* its **Customizable Content Curation** (CCC). If you want dumb-offensive-misogynistic content, you follow someone that picks dumb-offensive-misogynistic content; if you want smart content, you follow Neil deGrasse Tyson on DATT and everyone is happy.

CCC builds a system of trust by *branding the content* you see. The same way you know something could be interesting because it’s in *The New Yorker*, or in *The Atlantic* – because you’ve been reading these magazines for some time now, and you’re familiar with the kind of content they publish – you can build a similar relationship with curators: when a curator you know is recommending an article (like a close friend would do), you know it’s worth checking out.

If Reddit is the place where all the good content of the Web is aggregated, Reddit 2.0 should be where we aggregate content specifically **tailored for you**.

The Model

Challenges

This model attempts to integrate the following elements together:

* A frontpage customizable according to individual needs and content preferences
* A way to integrate and hierarchize content chosen by multiple curators on the frontpage
* A way for users to manage curators easily
* A way for curator to truly personalize their content and compete with other curators on many variables
* Be functional even if there are only hundreds of users/viewers on the platform at start.
* A simple payment system that (1) motivates curators to be dedicated and *generous* (time, energy, quality), (2) allows curators to fix a price for their services according to the market, (3) provides a maximum of content (4) while limiting the number of transactions for users.

Proposed Solution:

A) Core idea: crossing Tumblr and Reddit + content hierarchization/filter options

In this model, DATT users:

1. Can follow/unfollow curators like you follow someone on Twitter/Tumblr.
2. Choose which rules will **hierarchize** the content picked by curators: favorite curator, favorite community, favorite type of content, archived content (some curators could exclusively focus on finding the best content produced since the platform exists), etc.
3. Can fix what portion of their frontpage would be reserved for curated content and regular content. Curation can be deactivated at any time to see regular content.
4. The frontpage is constantly reorganized following 1) the distribution of content you want, 2) content picked by curators recently and 3) the content hierarchy rules you have chosen.
5. Users can clearly identify who has posted or recommended which content with a system of logo/badge/signature.

**(This is the big picture – simple and practical)**

B) Layer(s) are added over the curated content.

Everyone is familiar with Photoshop: a layer system allows you to see multiple components that aren’t organically linked. You can put some on top of others and rearrange easily the picture. You can also uncheck some layers to work on a single element or hide a single layer to see the rest. When you merge all the layers together, the whole thing comes *organically*. The model I’m proposing here is somehow similar.

In this model, our **curated frontpage** would be the **bottom layer**. Additionally to determine the content on your frontpage, following curators would ‘juxtapose’ on this bottom layer *exclusive content* that one or multiple curators have chosen to add to a link or a discussion (similar to *Comment* in *Microsoft Word*). **A system of priority** (among your list of curators) would make the whole thing coherent. Exclusive content would definitely add to the branding of a curator and attract more followers.

Curators could:

1. Add personal comments/impressions to a link
2. Tell their followers that a link or discussion is not worth clicking/reading and rather provide a small description (kind of a rollover text that would show up).
3. Add additional links to other articles that complete a discussion or be a better substitute.
4. Reorganize the top comments of a discussion or indicate those that are worth reading.
5. Use “drawing tools”: they can highlight, bold what they like in a post, or add humoristic elements and make fun or what someone wrote.

**(Naturally, all these elements are suggestions of what a layer system could be)**

C) Paying Curators

As Ryan has mentioned it on the dev blog (September 3rd), there are tons of ways we could integrate payment.

I feel the simplest way of integrating payment would a model similar to online newspapers with a **monthly or weekly subscription** for unlimited access (who doesn’t like all-included?) to content produced by a curator, with a free trial period or something. Curators are, in some ways, a ‘**micromedia**’ themselves, and they should be free to set a price that is proportional to the service they’re offering in an inherently competitive market and readjust their service offer as they want.

1. Unlimited access to content would motivate curators to be very generous and dedicated in the hope of attracting more followers and beating competition, by simply offering *more*.
2. Unlimited access would motivate curators to produce good content even if there is only a limited amount of users on the platform at start.
3. Plus, considering ‘layers’ might integrate various elements (comments, links, highlighted content, reorganization of comments, etc.) this might be very hard to distribute the payment among these different elements.
4. Considering how income can easily scale with enough followers, something as cheap as 5 or 10 cents/week, per curator, could get a popular curator a significant and steady income. This could even become the best job/hustle on Earth: being paid to review and pick Internet content.
5. Additionally, as mentioned on the blog, curators can also be paid by content creators or OP to promote their links and specific content.

D) How do Content Curators get more Followers and Income?

* By making quality posts or comments in an existing discussion. Curators would be identified by something (logo?) next to their name. This might the easiest way to attract to users when starting up.
* By being dedicated and awesome – so, competitive in the ’content curation market’.
* By branding themselves: trying to connect with a specific population of users by sharing a very precise type of content, by displaying a professional expertise or a clear ideological perspective.
* By adding exclusive content to discussions/links

That’s it. Feel free to give your insights.

Guillaume Dumas

dumaslap.guillaume@gmail.com