

Collective Bargaining in the Information Economy

Can Address AI-Driven Power Concentration

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Why Now?

AI accelerates value extraction while information producers lose leverage.

Core Idea

Intermediaries negotiate collective terms for data, adding healthy friction.

Goal

Keep incentives to create trustworthy information and distribute power.

What Is CBI?

Data Creators

Researchers, writers, artists, and communities contribute the raw material.

- Collective negotiation keeps creators from being picked off individually.
- Structured agreements cover compensation, limits, and transparency.
- Information ecosystems stay sustainable for both creators and AI.

Data Intermediary

Coordinates membership, tracks provenance, and negotiates enforceable terms.

AI Builders

Labs, model developers, and deployers commit to transparent, compensated use.

The Problem

Information Markets Fail

- Information is cheap to copy, hard to exclude, and pricing collapses toward zero.
- Producers struggle to capture value, encouraging secrecy, IP fights, and monopolies.
- Centuries of workarounds left structural incentives unresolved.

AI Makes It Worse

- More capable models extract value faster from unprotected data.
- Traditional protections erode, accelerating uncompensated use.
- **Risk:** extreme power concentration, a potential "capital singularity."

The Stakes

Political and Moral

- Democratic instability from labor disruption.
- Narrowed creative and cultural diversity.
- Homogenized moral and social norms.
- Feedback loops that accelerate concentration.

Technical

- Fragile information ecosystems.
- Less reliable, lower-quality models.
- Unpredictable harms from opaque systems.
- Loss of diverse, provenance-rich data sources.

The Solution

CBI Creates Friction To:

- Prevent unchecked value extraction by powerful actors.
- Maintain incentives to produce high-quality information.
- Distribute bargaining power more evenly across ecosystems.

Benefits

- Higher quality data yields better, safer AI models.
- Protects journalism, Wikipedia, and other data commons.
- Improves provenance, transparency, and accountability.

Immediate Actions

- **Information creators:** form or join intermediaries to manage data flows.
- **Technical community:** ship attribution, valuation, and control tooling.
- **Regulators:** create antitrust safe harbors for collective bargaining.
- **AI safety & policy:** treat CBI as core power-balancing infrastructure.
- **Tech companies:** participate in good-faith CBI to improve trust and quality.

Technical Foundations

Data Valuation & Attribution

- Influence functions and data Shapley.
- Robust data attribution methods.
- Scaling studies for counterfactual value.

Data Control & Robustness

- Federated learning and consent infrastructure.
- Provenance tracking and traceability.
- Poisoning and adversarial research that clarifies safeguard costs.

Together, these methods ground bargaining in credible counterfactual evidence.

CBI Is Already Emerging

- Data licensing deals (e.g., Reddit, news publishers with OpenAI).
- Labor negotiations centered on AI (SAG-AFTRA, WGA, and others).
- Artist coalitions and opt-out movements.

Coordinated coalitions can turn scattered deals into systemic change.

Takeaway & Contact

A healthy information economy incentivizes creation and distributes power more evenly.

Collective bargaining for information is one step toward that goal—reach out if you want to help build it.

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