

Stake of Non-Profits on Issues of Advanced API Data Usage and Privacy

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My role is strategist and advisor to over [300 of the world's arts and cultural institutions](#) on internet policy, best practices and technical API usage for their e-commerce and e-philanthropy goals. My team's work is in three parts: first, we work with web developers directly to advise them on technical implementation and use of our API. Second, we provide advice and best practices to our clients on issues of technical and strategic web best practices. Third, we have created our own hosted internet ticketing/fundraising transactional path and license it as a monthly service. I have led technical e-commerce implementation and design meetings for organizations large and small: Carnegie Hall (US), Sydney Opera House (AU), Royal Opera House (UK), New York City Ballet (US), Pitlochry Festival Theatre (UK), Steppenwolf Theatre (US), Baltimore Symphony (US), and many others. My company, Tessitura Network is a non-profit itself; a software company that provides the platform that runs the ticketing, fundraising and customer service operations for these arts and cultural organizations worldwide.

Is there any difference between the nonprofit and for-profit business when it comes to issues of data protection and privacy? On the surface, no. Both for-profit and nonprofit companies share the same tenants of transactional lifecycle: draw customers, convert them to buyers, provide a compelling experience and product so they come back again. My company's APIs handle the same information that any e-commerce site would handle—credit card data, demographic information, marketing preferences, rich transactional and behavioral history for each customer. Both for-profit and nonprofit organizations are responsible for appropriate use and safe-keeping of customer data and are equally on the hook if something goes wrong. But my work with nonprofits highlights a key difference between the two sectors in terms of technology approach. Nonprofit organizations do not generally think of themselves as technological leaders whereas in the for-profit world, it's all about leading, technologically and otherwise. The web is on the front lines of this disparity.

Mobile web has taken hold and I believe it is fast influencing human communication patterns on an anthropologic scale, second only to the introduction of the web itself. It has already unleashed unprecedented privacy questions and dilemmas which will take lots of smarts and diverse representation to address. Mobile and geolocational data is just one facet of this advanced API and privacy question. As the web evolves and as good customer service is more and more defined by omniscient and predictive web experiences; as our private and professional personas merge in our own search engine indexes, that line between privacy/convenience/customer service gets more and more blurred. And we're handing that information over unconsciously in many cases. I don't worry what the US government has on-file for me. I worry what Google must know about me.

To the nonprofit, the web is the great equalizer in many ways—enabling even smaller-budget symphonies and theatre companies to provide 24x7 customer service with things like real-time seat selection, print at home ticketing and leveraging the power of cloud scalability for absorbing and throttling traffic on peak traffic days. But too frequently, nonprofits are following several years behind

the big technological innovators—letting expectations of the web customer (which are shaped predominantly by experiences with large e-commerce sites) define online policy and strategy rather than making well-informed privacy and security policy decisions and pushing their own boundaries technologically. It's time to get out in front. There is not room for the 'follow the leader' mentality as we head into this next era of privacy challenges—too much is at stake to follow along blindly.

There is much that needs to be represented from the nonprofit sector as we define policies that lead us into this blurred and unprecedented intersection of private data and public web. As the primary advisor on these topics to my community of 300+ nonprofit organizations, I represent the small business and nonprofit stakeholder. I hope to participate in the W3C discussion on this topic in July.

[Tessitura Network](#) was conceived by early adopters of Tessitura Software to support, maintain and enhance the custom software platform developed in 1999 by the Metropolitan Opera in New York. This software has been subsequently licensed to other not-for-profit organizations in Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States. We are a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation.