



Adobe Initial Report on the Australian Code of Practice on Disinformation and Misinformation

Executive summary

Adobe is pleased to add its name as a signatory to the Australian Code of Practice on Disinformation and Misinformation. We see our participation in the Code as an opportunity to use our technology to help mitigate the harm caused by the spread of misinformation and disinformation.

Because Adobe's heritage is built on trusted creative solutions and empowering creativity, we feel it is our responsibility to play a leading role in addressing content authenticity in this next era of digital content. That is why we are focused on developing an open-sourced, long-term solution which addresses the problem of disinformation and misinformation. This solution provides consumers with information and tools to help them decide who and what to trust online by providing transparency into how an image was altered. We think attribution is a critical part of the solution as it will offer creators the option to identify themselves and the modification level of their media.

In order to fulfil our commitment to reduce the risk of harm that may arise in Australia due to the spread of disinformation and misinformation, we are working in partnership with other companies across the ecosystem to help users detect authentic content online. We are in the process of developing technology to help educate the public about how to become more digitally literate and understand the importance of content attribution for online images so that they can make choices about what to trust. Over time, we think that this approach in Australia, and indeed everywhere, could help reduce the potential harm and impact of inauthentic online content.

To help accomplish this, we have convened a coalition called the [Content Authenticity Initiative](#) (CAI) and have pulled together a dedicated team of experts at Adobe to explore a high-level framework architecture based on our vision of attribution, and we are inviting input and feedback from industry partners to help shape the final solution. The goal of the Initiative is for each member to bring its deep technical and business knowledge to the solution. Success will mean building a growing ecosystem of members who are contributing to a long-term solution, adoption of the framework and supporting consumers to understand who and what to trust.

Adobe created the CAI in 2019 to build a broad community of stakeholders unified in pursuit of a standard, scalable approach to digital Content Provenance. In 2021, Adobe became a founding member of the [Coalition for Content Provenance and Authenticity](#) (C2PA) which

focuses specifically on technical standards for provenance. Through the combination of these efforts, we are establishing a worldwide standard and prototype implementations demonstrating the techniques embodied therein.

Adobe is adopting the CAI framework throughout our Creative Cloud products, beginning with a public release of Photoshop in 2021.

Background

Business and Content Context

In accordance with the Code’s guidance on signatories nominating to report on certain provisions in the Code, Adobe has reported on those measures that are “proportionate and relevant” to our business. We also have taken into consideration the guiding principles outlined in the Code and the context in which our products and services can potentially contribute to harm that is posed by instances of disinformation and misinformation that are present on online platforms.

Adobe is not a social media company. Rather, we have sophisticated content creation and editing tools that enable individuals, teams, and enterprises to create, publish, and promote their creative work and accelerate their productivity. While we do have features and services like Behance that enable users to share, showcase, and promote their creative work, we do not have social networks that facilitate global conversations about current events or that enable the dissemination of news content to global audiences. Instead, our products and services help artists and enterprises promote creative expression and we believe that digital creative work and any potential harms derived from such work is not the focus of this Code.

Although Adobe’s products and services may fall outside the scope of this Code, we recognize the harm that can come from maliciously motivated actors using our creative tools to promulgate inaccurate online content. Therefore, we have opted into the provisions of the Code that focus on technology that we are developing and promoting that will assist consumers in detecting authentic online content. Our focus in mitigating harms that can come from the spread of misinformation and disinformation is on providing digital platforms with tools that they can offer to their users so they can determine the provenance, or source, of the content. Adobe’s motivation in signing onto the Code is to decrease the potential harm and influence of inauthentic content online.

Adobe’s Approach to Disinformation and Misinformation

We are witnessing extraordinary challenges to trust in media. As social platforms amplify the reach and influence of certain content via ever more complex and opaque algorithms, mis-attributed and mis-contextualized content spreads quickly. Whether inadvertent **misinformation** or deliberate deception via **disinformation**, collectively **inauthentic content** is on the rise.

Currently, creators who wish to include metadata about their work (for example authorship) cannot do so in a secure, tamper-evident and standard way across platforms. Without this attribution information, publishers and consumers lack critical context for determining the

authenticity of media. This is especially true for users of creative tools that enable augmenting reality with AI or even authoring fully synthetic content who need to be empowered to use their tools responsibly.

Ultimately, the solution to the problem of inauthentic content and the erosion of trust it causes will rely on efforts in three distinct areas:

First is **detection** of deliberately deceptive media. Through a combination of algorithmic identification and human-centered verification of intentionally misleading content the amount of inauthentic content can be reduced. However, as techniques for creating misleading content become more sophisticated and accessible, we foresee an escalating arms race impeding progress on this front. As malicious purveyors of content become faster and better, detection techniques will struggle to keep pace.

Second, **education** is essential. Well-intentioned creators and consumers will need to understand the danger of disinformation and the use of techniques to eradicate it. They must also understand ways to use sophisticated creative tools responsibly. These are skills that must be learned and passed on through media literacy campaigns and formal education. We must all understand why and when to trust what we see, hear and read. And we must be equipped with the tools and knowledge to do so.

Finally, we must consider **content provenance**, which is the focus of Adobe's launch of an attribution tool in Adobe Creative Cloud for Photoshop and Behance as part of its leadership of the Content Authenticity Initiative.

Content Provenance empowers content creators and editors, regardless of their geographic location or degree of access to technology, to optionally disclose information about who created or changed an asset, what was changed and how it was changed. While detection can help address the problem of trust in media reactively by identifying content suspected to be deceptive, attribution proactively adds a layer of transparency so consumers can be informed in their decisions. Content with provenance exposes indicators of authenticity so that consumers can have awareness of who has altered content and what exactly has been changed. This ability to provide content attribution for creators, publishers and consumers is essential to engendering trust online.

At the same time, it is critically important that those same content creators be able to protect their privacy when necessary. Any solution attempting to restore trust must be globally viable across technology contexts and minimize opportunities to cause unintended harms or risks. It must also have freedom of creative expression in media production at its core.

We seek to address the issue of content authenticity at scale. To accomplish this, we propose an open, extensible approach for content attribution and have begun working toward establishing standards with broad, cross-industry collaboration.

The tool is built using an early version of the open standard that will provide a secure layer of tamper-evident provenance data to photos, including the author's name, location and edit history. This will help consumers better understand the content they view online and give them greater confidence in evaluating its authenticity.

We believe provenance will create a virtuous cycle. The more creators distribute content with proper attribution, the more consumers will expect and use that information to make judgement calls, thus minimizing the influence of bad actors and deceptive content.

Ultimately, a holistic solution that includes provenance, detection and education to provide a common and shared understanding of objective facts is essential to help us make more thoughtful decisions when consuming media.

Adobe's Approach to Monitoring Performance

Adobe is partnering with a wide range of technology and media stakeholders in both the CAI and C2PA. However, the CAI and C2PA efforts are in the very early stages of development. The ultimate goal for Adobe is to have broad adoption of open-source technical standards for certifying the source and history (or provenance) of media content.

Future Initiatives

Adobe's goal is to expand the membership and stakeholders that support the CAI and that they adopt C2PA standards. We are working to encourage a wide media ecosystem, including device manufacturers, software makers, publishers, and social media platforms to implement content provenance into their solutions so that consumer exposure to these tools becomes commonplace.

We are also working to educate governments and policy makers globally about the benefit of educating consumers on the importance of detecting authentic content online. Our goal is to create a secure digital chain of information, embedded with CAI technology, for every digital image, so that consumers can know with confidence where the image was taken and how it was altered.

Adobe Code Commitments

Empower Consumers to Make Better Informed Choices

With the increasing velocity of digital content and the democratization of powerful creation and editing techniques, robust content provenance is critical to ensure transparency, understanding, and ultimately, trust.

Adobe has developed a team of experts focused specifically on our content authenticity initiative work and development of technology so that the CAI partnership can expand its global footprint. We have recently hired [Santiago Lyon](#), a former Reuters wartime photojournalist as Adobe's Head of Education and Advocacy, to lead our efforts in recruiting new partners for the CAI such as journalists and media organizations. Adobe is also committed to raising awareness of the CAI in photojournalism schools as well as secondary and primary schools so that we can raise the level of digital literacy with respect to online safety.

Through the joint development of standards in collaboration with industry, academia, government and NGOs, Adobe will publish and implement standards for Content Provenance to include universal user experience, iconography and terminology. Taken in its entirety, the CAI will bring to market ubiquity, technology and common experiences covering creation and consumption of imagery, video, audio and text.

Provision of Technology to Assist Digital Platforms

Adobe has pioneered the CAI based on enabling content provenance through its software to empower content creators and editors, regardless of their geographic location or degree of access to technology, to disclose information about who created or changed an asset, what was changed and how it was changed. Content with attribution exposes indicators of authenticity so that consumers can see the meta data and therefore have awareness of who has altered content and what exactly has been changed. This ability to provide content attribution for creators, publishers and consumers is essential to engender trust online.

Promotion of Digital Literacy

Adobe is leading the promotion of the Content Authenticity Initiative in addition to driving the functional changes to our products and platform. We are working to promote the use of CAI as well as the underlying principles to educate users at all ends of the spectrum, from content creators, content curators and consumers and media users. We have hosted events in the US and Europe and have begun briefings and events in Australia to promote the consideration of content authenticity and increase the understanding and consideration of the attribution of digital content.

As mentioned, we also have a full-time headcount based in the US solely dedicated to educating consumers, including students starting in primary school, on the importance of using technology to discern authentic content from misinformation and disinformation online.