# Perhaps we need the US Postal Service to restore trust in digital communication

**BY JOHN M. DEMAGGIO, OPINION CONTRIBUTOR — 05/25/19 02:00 PM EDT**[**26**](https://thehill.com/opinion/technology/445449-perhaps-we-need-the-us-postal-service-to-restore-trust-in-digital#bottom-story-socials)

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Should the United States Postal Service embrace their founding principles and provide a secure infrastructure in this modern era of digital technology to preserve the integrity and sanctity of communications?

The U.S. Postal Service can find its roots in colonial America as an alternative to the British postal system. John Adelman in [“A Constitutional Conveyance of Intelligence, Public and Private’: The Post Office, the Business of Printing, and the American Revolution”](https://josephadelman.files.wordpress.com/2011/05/adelman-post-office-es-dec-2010.pdf) provides a linage to the origins of the British postal system from pre-colonial era to the Revolutionary War. Colonists who were dissenting with the British Crown were communicating with each other throughout the colonies and it was common for newspapers to be distributed via the postal system. However, these colonists were also aware of a 1710 Act which “…granted officials the power to intercept and open mail, creating the potential for imperial officials to censor political opposition and making the post an insecure means of transmitting letters for political dissenters.”

Adelman tells us that in mid-April 1774, a subcommittee of the Boston committee of correspondence developed a plan for establishing an American post-office “to ensure transparency and security, the plan carefully noted that mail would be kept ‘under Lock and Key, and liable to the Inspection of no Person but the respective Post-Masters… It also included significant protections for political correspondence and for newspapers.” This laid the foundation for the current integrity and trust in the security of communications within the U.S. Postal Service.

The U.S. Postal Service publication [“Because the Mail Matters”](https://about.usps.com/publications/pub162.pdf) reflects that the Postal Inspection Service “ensures the safety, security and integrity of the U.S. Mail [with a] mission to safeguard the sanctity of the U.S. Mail…”

Sue Brennan reinforces this integrity of private communications, writing in [“Nine things you should know about the Postal Service”](https://uspsblog.com/nine-things-you-should-know-about-the-postal-service/) that the U.S. Mail “is reliable, trusted and secure — more than 200 federal laws protect the sanctity of the U.S. Mail.”

Daily we can read about our individual privacy and the privacy of our communications under assault and compromised as society transitions from the sanctity of the U.S. Postal Service to the world of digital communications controlled by private businesses.

As early as 2014 Sharon Jayson warned us in [“Social media research raises privacy and ethics issues”](https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2014/03/08/data-online-behavior-research/5781447/) that “…information collected by private companies — including Google, Microsoft, Facebook and Twitter — are giving new insight into all aspects of [our] everyday life.”

Tom Risen followed the next year in [“The Illusion of Online Privacy”](https://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2015/08/25/the-illusion-of-online-privacy)quoting Bruce Schneier, a fellow at Harvard University’s Berkman Center for Internet and Society: “There is not much you can do to protect it because you are not holding your data. We are relying on other people who hold that data.”

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Within the last year [Eli Blumenthal](https://www.usatoday.com/story/tech/2018/12/19/facebooks-latest-privacy-scandal-what-we-know-now/2361257002/) writing for USA Today reports: “According to [The New York Times](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/18/technology/facebook-privacy.html), Facebook gave technology companies like Microsoft, Netflix and Spotify special access to user's data without anyone else knowing.” [Jennifer Wills](https://www.investopedia.com/articles/insights/090716/7-ways-amazon-uses-big-data-stalk-you-amzn.asp) writing for  Investopedia    reports: “Amazon.com, Inc. is a leader in collecting, storing, processing and analyzing personal information from you … retailers can use Amazon to stalk you…” — and [Dylan Curran](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/mar/28/all-the-data-facebook-google-has-on-you-privacy) reports in the Guardian: “The data Google has on you can fill millions of word documents.”

Is there an opportunity for the U.S. Postal Service to offer its guaranteed privacy and security that so many have argued are slipping away in the digital era? Should the U.S. Postal Service embrace the digital revolution and provide a public service by establishing a digital social media network devoid of privacy and security concerns — to ensure the safety, security and integrity of our digital communications?

Was not the Colonial Postal Service, and subsequently the U.S. Postal Service, created to provide a secure communications network?

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