

Short Web address sites form link archiving group

August 17 2009, By RACHEL METZ , AP Technology Writer

(AP) -- The growing popularity of Web-address shortening services like bit.ly creates the potential for a bevy of broken links should one of the providers suddenly cease operations.

Those providers are now teaming up with data aggregation and syndication services company Gnip Inc. to form a system for archiving link data. That way, the links would keep working, even if the shortening service itself doesn't.

The development comes less than a week after link sniper tr.im decided to cease operations - though it later reversed course.

These services convert super-long Web addresses into a handful of characters. That helps prevent those addresses from breaking into multiple lines when used in e-mails, news stories and other places. It also helps users stay within the 140-character limit on [Twitter](#).

Called 301works - 301 is the server code for a redirect - the service is expected to launch in several weeks, Gnip said. Members will periodically submit lists of the original Web addresses that users shorten through their sites, along with the corresponding shrunken links they create, so the information can be stored.

Boulder, Colo.-based Gnip is footing the bill for now, and it will run and manage it. Participants are going to pick a nonprofit organization to manage the directory in the long term, Gnip said.

Shane Pearson, Gnip's vice president of products, said some participants will make their data publicly available, while others will just use 301works to archive their data. Group members are still discussing what should happen if a participant's site closes, he said.

Bit.ly, Twitter's default link shortener, is participating, along with Cligs, URLizer, urlShort and several others. Tr.im has not yet decided if it will join, Woodward said.

When it closed, tr.im cited the high costs required to keep it running, and said links trimmed through it would still work until the end of the year. It returned after receiving what Eric Woodward, co-founder of tr.im operator The Nambu Network, called "countless public and private appeals."

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