

New iPad app mines Web links for 'social magazine' (Update)

21 July 2010, By MICHAEL LIEDTKE , AP Technology Writer



Customers are seen trying out Apple's iPad in a shop in Barcelona. A startup backed by co-founders of Twitter and Facebook has launched an iPad application that takes links to news stories posted on social networks and presents them in a magazine-like format.

(AP) -- Apple Inc.'s iPad has hatched a new breed of magazines, one filled with a constantly changing mix of articles, photos and videos picked out by your friends, family and other people within your online social circle.

This new twist on digital publishing comes courtesy of Flipboard, a free iPad application that made its debut Wednesday.

Flipboard is mining the hundreds of millions of Web links posted each day on two of the world's most popular outlets for sharing information and imagery, Facebook and Twitter.

All those links are automatically converted into a "social magazine" format that's customized for anyone who allows Flipboard to sift through their Facebook and Twitter accounts. Instead of having to click through a hodgepodge of links, Flipboard users will be able to flip through digital pages with all the text and images already displayed on Apple's hot-selling computer tablet.

The content of this advertising-supported magazine will change as frequently as the links posted within a Flipboard user's Facebook and Twitter accounts.

"Everyone will have a different magazine each day," said Mike McCue, Flipboard's CEO.

In hopes of making things even more personal, Flipboard bought another startup called Ellerdale that developed technology to analyze what kinds of information appeal to different people.

Theoretically, Ellerdale would allow Flipboard to figure out users' favorite sports teams and other unique interests, based on their reading patterns and comments.

Flipboard, based in Palo Alto, Calif., is drawing upon the assorted specialty lists created in Twitter to offer categories focused on particular interests, such as technology and sports. It also plans to hone its technology to render links from other popular social media tools, such as the photo site Flickr and the professional networking site LinkedIn.

McCue started working on Flipboard late last year as it became apparent that Apple was working on a computer tablet. He had been looking for something new to do since last summer when he left Tellme, a voice recognition company that he co-founded in 1999 and sold to Microsoft Corp. for about \$800 million in 2007. Evan Doll, a former Apple Inc. engineer who worked on the iPhone, joined McCue in building Flipboard.

The 15-employee company is starting out with \$10.5 million in funding from two prominent venture capital firms, Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers and Index Ventures, and two social media pioneers, Twitter co-founder Jack Dorsey and Facebook co-founder Dustin Moskowitz.

Flipboard also sold a stake to actor Ashton Kutcher,

who is likely to influence what appears in people's social magazines given that he has 5.3 million Twitter followers. He even posted a link about Flipboard on Wednesday.

More information: <http://www.flipboard.com>

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