

# Why curation is a hot topic in ad tech

## Article

The [programmatic](#) strategy known as curation is gaining traction in the [ad tech](#) space. Curation is a message from supply-side platforms (SSPs) to demand-side platforms (DSPs) that they're ignoring valuable inventory. SSPs are increasingly using elevated data to make curated inventory more accessible, and in turn heighten advertiser value, before DSPs have the opportunity to commoditize ad buys.

“The rise of curation represents a pendulum swing in programmatic. Where DSPs have historically been responsible for selecting the most performant ad inventory on advertisers’ behalf, sell-side ad tech is staking a claim,” said our analyst Evelyn Mitchell-Wolf.

Already in 2025, curation is a growing trend. It was a hot topic at [CES](#) this year, with publishers like Yahoo! pitching white-glove supply-side services.

Leaning on data from the sell side is not a novel concept, according to Mitchell-Wolf. While the Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) introduced Seller Defined Audiences in 2022, buyer adoption didn't take off. Now that the term "curation" has gained traction, IAB renamed its product Curated Audiences in December.

The open exchange will continue to lose share of programmatic ad spending to private marketplaces (PMPs) this year, which speaks to the desire among advertisers for more transparency. The rise of curation, Mitchell-Wolf said, is another manifestation of that heightened standard.

### **Easing demand-side demands**

Curation has sparked debate in the programmatic space. Some advertisers argue that it's a rebranded version of ad networks that come at a higher price tag, but others view curation as a way to ease pressure on the demand side.

"By making audience segmentation decisions and inventory decisions upstream, curation solves a significant portion of the challenges buyers face," said Eric Tilbury, senior director of ad operations and solutions engineering at Inuvo.

Between data segmentation, DSP setup and supply-path optimization, he stressed that "it takes a savvy buyer to get it all right."

### **Making more informed media buys**

Eric Danetz, president of Cognitiv, pointed to curation as one of the most misunderstood trends in 2024. Essentially, the role of curation, if executed well, is to, "give advertisers a much richer understanding of content on a page."

He stressed the value for both advertisers and publishers, who can miss out on reaching the right audience and monetizing when using keyword technology over audience sentiment analysis, for example.

"When brand safety removes something when it's inappropriate to remove it, you're actually losing an opportunity," said Danetz, speaking to curation's potential when paired with AI.

“You’re not able to monetize your inventory when the perception is that your content isn’t brand safe or brand suitable, when it actually is.”

The use of antiquated technology to block certain buys is a detriment to both buyers and sellers, according to Danetz—something that curation looks to address.

“The benefit does go across the entire ecosystem,” he said. “If you’re using the right technology, you’re creating the right environment, and you’re enhancing monetization, that’s good for everyone.”

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