

The Paper Trip III

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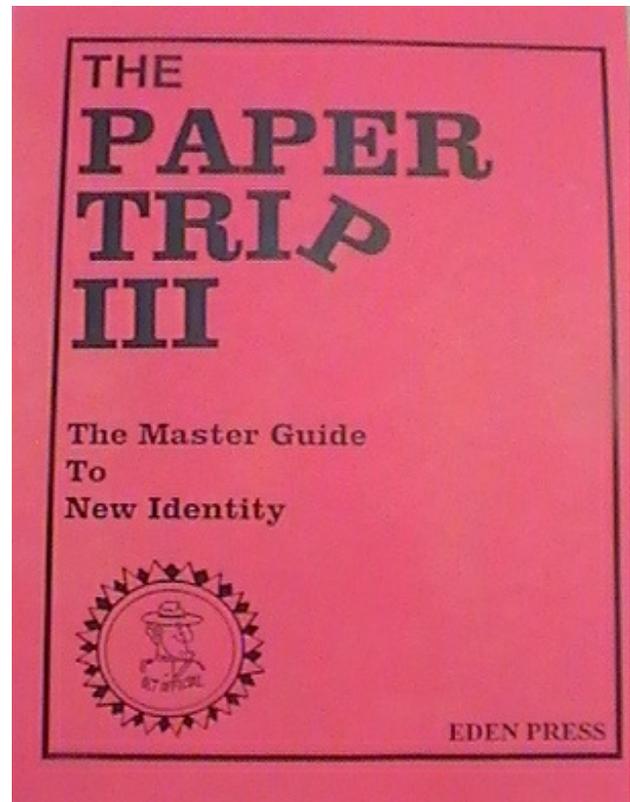
Considering the great danger to one's health and happiness that [secret police infiltration](#) into local dissident groups poses, maybe basic privacy measures aren't enough to keep someone out of [legal land](#). A comprehensive, long-term solution is needed to thwart undercover operatives and informants, something above and beyond [using disguises](#) or [keeping your own counsel](#). If you are willing to use an online persona while using [the Internet](#), then why wouldn't you also be inclined to use an offline alias as well?

Nearly every American is born with legal identification documents (ID). As the original set of ID you grew up with, your entire social history is inextricably bound up with it, from where you were born to whether you are a licensed driver. "Paper-tripping," simply put, is the practice of constructing and using alternate ID; the phrase "to go on a paper-trip" refers specifically to building such a new ID from scratch.

Generally speaking, there are three levels of ID. Level One ID is nothing more sophisticated than *an assumed name*; it entails not so much documentation as the necessary attitude and acting skills that are truly necessary in order to pull off a convincing alias (in this regard, Level One ID is little different, if at all, from simply [using disguises](#)). Level Two ID is *your walking around ID*; the very minimum documentation here would be a commonly used government-issued ID, such as a driver's license (or, in a pinch, a state ID card). Level Three ID is a *complete change in your ID*; the minimum required documentation would be a Social Security Number (SSN) in a totally different name and birthday than from your original set.

Some will argue that only Level Three ID constitutes actual paper-tripping, and I think they are correct, for how can you acquire Level Two ID without necessarily having Level Three ID first? Level One ID is already used by many Internet users (although only some of them [mask their IP addresses](#), which begs the question as to how seriously the rest of them value their privacy, but I digress), so you would think using a pseudonym while running errands in their area of operation (AO) wouldn't be that much different, would it? Alas, the multitudes of brave keyboard commandos and stoic cyber-warriors are shockingly *nowhere to be found* in their local AOs where they are needed the most!

Now, it should be kept in mind that paper-tripping is very different from [becoming a state citizen](#). The key distinction here is that instead of escaping from the tangled web of constraints placed upon you by virtue of the fact that you are U.S. citizen, you are instead "working within the system" (as it were) in order to eventually use another mask that you can take on and off at will, thus (hopefully) providing you with the flexibility you need to evade the American police state. While paper-tripping might appear reformist because of its methodology, its intent is more in line with [guerrilla warfare theory](#), in that the whole idea is to use your enemy's weapons against himself (he grows weaker as you grow stronger).



Paper-tripping is also *not* identity theft. As a practice, constructing and using alternate ID not only avoids harming anyone who might be a victim (no victim = no crime), but also it takes pains to not [violate even mala prohibita](#); this is why it's vitally important for paper-trippers to stay updated on the current rules for all the forms of ID they would need to construct and use (especially considering that Reid's book was published back in 1998 and circumstances have changed quite a bit, to say the least). Identity thieves steal the IDs of hapless victims as a covert form of theft; paper-trippers *construct* their own IDs through direct application in order to evade oppression, thereby causing harm to no one (except perhaps to the government's pride in their [indiscriminate mass surveillance dragnets](#)).

So, what *do* paper-trippers actually use, anyway? They make use of mail drops, which are critical for conducting correspondence with those government entities responsible for issuing legally binding ID (generally speaking, PMBs don't require a physical address when you rent one, as opposed to P.O. boxes). With regards to birth certificates, paper-trippers have used the infant identity method, as well as the legal name change process and, most importantly, the delayed certificate of birth technique. As the foundation for constructing Level Three ID, the birth certificate is the proverbial "foot-in-the-door" for gradually acquiring SSNs, driver's licenses, and even U.S. passports.

[Barry Reid's *The Paper Trip III: The Master Guide to New Identity*](#) is a truly original look into a subject that even few political dissidents dare to tread. Is this due to inertia, or is ignorance and fear of the unknown at play here? As the author himself puts it:

| *"Give them the paper they want, and you'll get the paper you want."*

What could be more difficult than that? Well, perhaps convincing the people who are [vetting you into their little dissident group](#) to not consider you as "a government agent," but then again, if they were really prudent, wouldn't they be paper-tripping too?