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Lagoon Finance's Nadia Sergejuk explains why the next generation of asset managers will be built onchain

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N3XT LAUNCHES BANK-ISSUED TOKENISED US DOLLAR

N3XT, a blockchain-powered narrow bank, has introduced the N3XT Digital Dollar (NDD), a bank-issued tokenised deposit, enabling real-time US dollar settlement across global markets.

According to N3XT, every NDD is backed one-to-one by cash or short-term US Treasuries, intended to combine the speed and configurability of blockchain with the compliance and safety of a fully regulated bank.

NDD is issued under N3XT's Wyoming Special Purpose Depositary Institution charter, which allows the firm to provide services for crypto assets under a regulated, full-reserve banking framework.

The tokenised deposit also aims to address the desire of institutions to settle payments cross-border, regardless of time zone, by being available 24/7/365, and reducing reliance on traditional banking hours.

NDD also offers transparent reserves, programmable payments, and bank-layer controls for the investigation of potentially fraudulent transactions, among others.

Speaking on the launch, N3XT president and CEO, Jeffrey Wallis, says: "The N3XT Digital Dollar brings regulated US dollar banking onto blockchain rails, enabling institutions to transact globally in real time while maintaining the safety and control of a fully reserved bank deposit.

"Businesses shouldn't have to choose between the speed and innovation of blockchain and the security of regulated banking."

N3XT says NDD is already available to approved clients, and launches in collaboration with Blockchain.com, Five Bells, FRNT Financial, Halborn, Kraken, Ripple Prime, Utila, Zodia Markets, and others.

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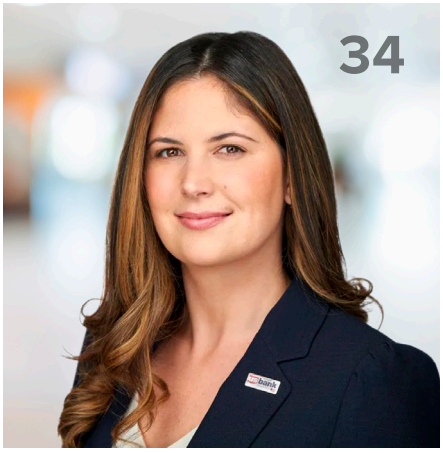

HQLA^{X} SECURES MINORITY INVESTMENTS FROM BROADRIDGE AND DIGITAL ASSET

HQLA^{X}, a provider of digital collateral mobility solutions, has secured minority investments from Broadridge Solutions, and Digital Asset in its Series C-1 funding round.

The firm says that the investments will support HQLA^{X}'s next phase of growth, including the continued evolution of its technology platform, collaboration with Broadridge's Distributed Ledger Repo (DLR) platform, and a planned migration to the Canton Network.

Guido Stroemer, CEO of HQLA^{X}, says: "This strategic investment marks a key milestone for HQLA^{X} as we continue to build critical market infrastructure for collateral mobility. The backing from Broadridge and Digital Asset reflects growing industry momentum behind interoperable, privacy-preserving blockchain solutions, with the Canton Network enabling connectivity across regulated capital markets."

Horacio Barakat, global head of Digital Innovation at Broadridge, adds: "We are pleased to support HQLA^{X} in its next phase of growth as demand increases for scalable, interoperable digital infrastructure across global financial markets.

"HQLA^{X} has built a compelling solution that addresses critical inefficiencies in collateral mobility, and we see significant opportunity in combining its innovation with Broadridge's deep expertise in market infrastructure and market-leading distributed ledger-enabled solutions.

"This investment reflects our commitment to accelerating the adoption of digital assets and collateral mobility to improve efficiency, resiliency, and capital optimisation across the securities finance ecosystem."

Kelly Mathieson, chief business development officer at Digital Asset, comments: "Collateral mobility is a core requirement for modern market infrastructure, and HQLA^{X} has demonstrated how to deliver it in a way that meets the needs of regulated institutions.

"We're excited to deepen our relationship with HQLA^{X} as it enters its next chapter and to support its work alongside the Canton ecosystem to enable more connected, efficient, and scalable collateral and financing workflows across global markets."

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JSCC CONFIRMS POC TO ENHANCE COLLATERAL MANAGEMENT THROUGH CANTON NETWORK

Mizuho Financial Group, Nomura Holdings, Japan Securities Clearing Corporation (JSCC), and Digital Asset Holdings have announced the joint launch of a proof-of-concept (PoC) trial to enhance collateral management by using the Canton Network.

The PoC focuses on Japanese government bonds (JGBs) for which rights are transferred under the BookEntry Transfer Act.

The project will verify, from both legal and practical perspectives, whether the transfer of rights and updates to book-entry transfer records within a hierarchical structure involving multiple account management institutions, can be executed using blockchain technology.

By integrating existing systems with the blockchain infrastructure on Canton, the PoC will evaluate the feasibility of achieving sophisticated, real-time collateral transactions 24/7, while maintaining the legal status of JGBs under the Book-Entry Transfer Act and the Financial Instruments and Exchange Act.

It will also cover cross-border transactions involving stakeholders in and outside Japan.

The PoC will verify use cases involving the transfer of collateral among various entities, including clearing houses, institutional investors, clients, and agents. Further, the project aims to incorporate the relationship with various laws and regulations into its scope of consideration; examine the necessity of amending relevant internal rules and regulations; and consider functional improvements required for commercialisation.

Achieving digital collateral management for JGBs — which are highly regarded as eligible collateral by institutional investors both in and outside Japan — has become an urgent priority, the firms say. They add that maintaining and strengthening the availability and liquidity of JGBs in the digital space is essential to the development of financial markets and the improvement of investor convenience.

By combining existing infrastructure with blockchain technology for JGB management, the JSCC says it aims to enable 24/7 real-time collateral transactions and significantly improve the efficiency of collateral management for trade not only within Japan but on a cross-border basis.

The substantial reduction in administrative tasks related to the posting and substitution of collateral is expected to improve operational efficiency and reduce costs for both financial institutions and investors.

Furthermore, by enabling JGBs to be managed on a blockchain, the group aims to deepen coordination with other digital assets, including digital-native ones, thereby creating value through new types of financial transactions.

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DTIF CRITIQUES NCUA'S PROPOSED REGULATIONS TO ENACT GENIUS ACT

The Digital Token Identifier Foundation (DTIF) has criticised a gap in the National Credit Union Administration's (NCUA) Proposed Rule regulations to implement portions of the GENIUS Act. The DTIF, the registration authority for the Digital Token Identifier (DTI) standard, says the proposed rule lacks a requirement that an Applying Issuer uniquely identify, using a standardised and verifiable code, the payment stablecoin(s) it proposes to issue.

DTIF recommends that NCUA addresses this gap through the Payment Stablecoin Issuer Manual and Subpart B rulemaking. DTIF proposes that the NCUA considers requiring Applying Issuers to obtain and disclose a DTI (ISO 241 65) code for each payment stablecoin for the application process, with guidance offered in the Manual.

It also requests NCUA necessitates DTI, in the NCUA's Credit Union Service Organisation (CUSO)/ Permitted Payment Stablecoin Issuers (PPSI) Registry entry for each licensed PPSI.

Additionally it asks the requirement of PPSIs to use DTI codes as the primary identifier in the monthly reserve reports, redemption policy disclosures, and regulatory filings.

The DTIF requires DTI registration as part of the application process, adding a DTI field to the PPSI Registry, and committing to a DTI requirement in the forthcoming Subpart B rulemaking. The DTIF says these steps would strengthen the identification, reserve reporting, and supervisory infrastructure the GENIUS Act demands, at minimal cost to applicants of the NCUA.

Additionally the body says it would align the US framework with international best practice and reduce compliance burden for PPSIs operating across jurisdictions.

The GENIUS Act charges the NCUA with licensing, regulating, and supervising payment stablecoin issuers that are subsidiaries of federally insured credit unions (FICU subsidiaries).

The NCUA's proposed rule puts forward regulations to enforce the statutorily required process for approval and licensure of permitting payment stablecoin issuers (PPSIs) subject to the NCUA's jurisdiction.

The GENIUS Act also requires the NCUA to issue implementing regulations by 18 July 2026.

Transcend connects to Canton Network

Transcend Street Solutions, a collateral and liquidity optimisation technology, has connected to Canton Network to enable real-time mobility of tokenised assets.

According to Transcend, it is the only collateral platform that can connect its clients to an entire ecosystem of more than 45 central counterparties (CCPs), five triparty agents, and now distributed ledger technology (DLT) networks like Canton. The service supports clients' ability to move collateral and cash instantly and optimally, across counterparties and markets, using a combination of traditional and tokenised assets.

Transcend is also building connectors from Canton nodes to clients' existing internal systems, with two-way APIs to translate DeFi to and from TradFi. In addition, Transcend is building a node-as-a-service on Canton and the translation software for clients' internal systems to communicate with the DeFi Nodes — starting with Canton and extending to other DLT platforms.

Transcend says that this development extends its role as a central orchestration layer for collateral and liquidity, enabling clients to incorporate tokenised assets into existing workflows without disrupting current operating models.

Keyrock issues onchain corporate bond

Keyrock, a crypto investment group, has issued its first tokenised corporate bond, with the EURC-denominated bond sitting on the Ethereum blockchain.

Sygnum, a digital asset banking group, acted as the distribution partner, with the corporate bond issued through Obligate, a Swiss-based blockchain-based bonds launch platform.

The funds raised from the bond are intended to bolster Keyrock's working capital and operations, in line with part of the next phase of the firm's growth plans.

According to the firm, the tokenised debt issuance serves as a live counterpart to the "slower, more costly, and more rigid for lenders" alternative of traditional debt financing.

Speaking on the initiative, Kevin de Patoul, Keyrock's CEO, says that the launch "marks another step in our growth journey" as the company bridges "traditional financial systems with blockchain technology and its many advantages".

Head of tokenisation at Sygnum, Fatmire Bekiri, adds: "Keyrock's issuance reflects the accelerating convergence of traditional capital markets and blockchain infrastructure. Supporting transactions like this is an important step in advancing the institutional adoption of tokenised financial assets."

Komainu launches new collateral service

Komainu has launched its new Collateral-as-a-Service (CaaS) offering — Komainu CORE.

Komainu CORE is designed to meet growing demand from institutional clients, especially banks and hedge funds, for secure, regulated solutions to support collateralised activities, including trading, borrowing, lending, and settlement.

According to the firm, the service enables clients to accept digital assets as collateral within a robust governance framework, unlocking new opportunities for collateralised lending, trade finance, and other asset-backed workflows.

By leveraging Komainu's full suite of collateral management capabilities, including technology and legal infrastructure, clients gain access to a turnkey solution that simplifies product deployment while ensuring compliance and transparency.

Key benefits of Komainu CORE include: collateral control via lock mechanisms, transparency through API integration and verifiable onchain data, and enforceable notices of exclusive control.

Other benefits are: whitelisted counterparty address management, real-time visibility of collateral coverage ratios (LTV) and margin thresholds, and full traceability for compliance and audit purposes.

Komainu will act as the independent custodian, safeguarding assets and facilitating liquidation in the markets in default scenarios.

Paul Frost, co-CEO at Komainu, states: "The launch of Komainu CORE is an extension of our unique capabilities in bridging Trad-Fi organisations into the digital assets ecosystem. Providing an all-encompassing trusted gateway that banks and asset managers can plug into is, literally, at the core of Komainu's ethos. Institutions now have a secure and regulated path to unlock the value of digital assets as collateral, backed by our proven custody and governance expertise."

HSBC welcomes HKMA's grant of a stablecoin issuer licence

The Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, a wholly owned subsidiary of HSBC, has welcomed the grant of a stablecoin issuer licensed by the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA). HSBC plans to launch a Hong Kong dollar denominated stablecoin in the second half of 2026 under the new licence.

Each stablecoin issued by HSBC will be fully backed by high-quality liquid assets held in segregated accounts, and will meet high financial crime compliance standards.

The HKD stablecoin by HSBC will be seamlessly integrated into the digital platforms, PayMe and the HSBC HK Mobile Banking App. The firm says the stablecoin initiative complements HSBC's offering of a range of secure and regulated digital asset products in Hong Kong, including tokenised deposit services for corporates, digital bonds for institutional investors via HSBC Orion and the HSBC Gold Token.

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TON Foundation partners with SCRYPT

The Open Network (TON) Foundation, a non-profit organisation supporting the development of TON Blockchain, is partnering with SCRYPT, one of Switzerland's stablecoin infrastructure partners, to provide businesses with institutional-grade infrastructure to access USDT on the TON Blockchain.

TON Foundation says that it has selected SCRYPT as its institutional infrastructure partner to meet the increasing demand of stablecoins as the settlement layer of choice for global payments, ecosystem distribution, and treasury operations.

SCRYPT will provide execution, settlement, and fiat access in a move that helps TON Foundation further position TON Blockchain as a scalable alternative to existing settlement networks, the firm adds.

SCRYPT — the operating system for digital assets — enables banks, fintechs, payment providers, and corporate treasuries to access USDT on TON through a single, Swiss-licensed regulated platform. This includes near-instant cross-border settlement, fiat conversions, and fully compliant 24/7 on/off ramps. According to SCRYPT, by combining deep liquidity, proprietary technology, and Swiss regulatory oversight, it enables institutional clients to move, convert, and settle USDT flows on TON Blockchain at scale.

DTCC advances 'Cloud First' strategy

The Depository Trust & Clearing Corporation (DTCC) has outlined developments in its Cloud First strategy, which includes partnerships with Amazon Web Services (AWS) and Microsoft, in a bid to "strengthen the resiliency, scalability, security, and speed" of the firm's core and digital assets platforms. By working with AWS, DTCC aims to modernise its core clearance and settlement capabilities, along with risk applications, by making them more modular, cloud-enabled, and resilient.

The migration intends to enhance operational resilience through the addition of redundancy, improving fault isolation, and enabling more robust contingency and recovery capabilities.

AWS is supporting this phase of the Cloud First strategy through its provision of the public cloud infrastructure for specified core applications serving the firm's clearing agency subsidiaries: The National Securities Clearing Corporation, Fixed Income Clearing Corporation, and The Depository Trust Company.

DTCC is expanding its partnership with Microsoft to innovate and accelerate the deployment of the DTCC Digital Assets service on Microsoft's cloud computing platform, Azure.

Through Azure, DTCC says it will be able to design and operate digital asset platforms that can "scale dynamically, support new market use cases, and evolve alongside rapidly changing technologies".

Microsoft will extend its current work with DTCC Digital Assets to include all initiatives across the business, including plans to advance digital market infrastructure and support the development of digital asset platforms.

DTCC will leverage Microsoft's AI and engineering capabilities, in addition to insights from Microsoft Research. ■

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MAKING THE MOVE

As onchain asset management moves from fringe to financial infrastructure, Nadia Sergejuk, co-founder at Lagoon Finance, explains why the next generation of asset managers will be built onchain and why the race to own that infrastructure is already underway

You have a fairly unusual combination of backgrounds — finance, law and web3. How did those threads come together, and what drew you specifically to infrastructure-layer work at Lagoon?

I trained as a lawyer in Denmark and the UK, and as part of this training I was introduced to smart contracts — i.e. programmable agreements — in 2015. This was my first 'aha!' moment, where I knew that the financial and legal sectors would be shaped by this technology. Later in life, I worked in funds on the buy side, and some of these funds began buying bitcoin as early as 2016. This also gave me a strong understanding of the internal workings of different funds — big and small, institutional investors as pension funds, and retail-focused products, funds that operate as a 25-man lean team managing 10 billion assets under management (AUM), and funds that are part of bigger conglomerates as for example an asset manager of a big insurance house.

These experiences shaped my understanding of the problems, the opportunities and the evolving landscape of asset management and wealth management sectors. If you consider operational inefficiencies in traditional asset management and finance, coupled with the digitisation of wealth management and money flows, you quickly realise that blockchains are much better at powering global money flows than traditional systems.

At the same time, you see a huge proliferation of digital dollars, especially in the global south, where traditional financial markets are not well developed, infrastructure is built from scratch, and local currencies are weak, which makes people seek out digital dollars. All this means that as capital moves onchain, there is a need to manage the capital. And this is where Lagoon Finance comes in — it is the Infrastructure for onchain asset management.

For traditional institutions, there is a pull and a push factor. The pull is new distribution channels for existing products. The push is for operational efficiencies, which lead to increased margins. Especially the wealth management and asset management sectors have historically been reluctant to innovate and are still to this date driven by manual processes.

The onchain asset management space is getting crowded. What's the specific gap Lagoon is filling that others are not?

Lagoon is the digital asset management infrastructure built by asset managers for asset managers. As an infrastructure layer we turn any strategy, onchain or offchain, directional or neutral, into institutional-grade investment vehicles. We provide the programmatic portfolio and fund management infrastructure for any fund, any asset, any strategy on any chain. Lagoon is the only infrastructure that lets managers deploy in minutes, not weeks, without changing their existing governance or execution processes.

You have spoken about asset managers moving into digital assets as the big opportunity. How far along is that shift really, are institutions genuinely ready, or is it still more talk than action?

Franklin Templeton. BlackRock. Apollo. Fidelity. Janus Henderson. Coinshares. HSBC. J.P. Morgan. Citi. Coinbase. Nasdaq-listed names. We are now speaking to private banks all across Europe wanting to launch digital asset products to their audiences. Small and mid-sized asset and wealth managers are either launching new products or tokenising existing products to launch the so-called share class 'T'. I would say the institutions and traditional firms are here, and they represent a serious, addressable market for Lagoon.

The gap in the market isn't a lack of tools. It's a usability, compliance and integration gap. Most platforms require a manager to adapt to the platform and the chosen ruleset. Lagoon adapts to the manager. Lagoon offers an open-architecture, the so-called 'Vault Factory'. A manager can deploy a vehicle through Lagoon using any preferred custody solution and will maintain absolute control over all processes and the vehicle post-deployment. Our infrastructure is intentionally 'zero-dev', ie, it requires no additional development work to facilitate the most complex investment strategies in accordance with managers' investment mandates.

RWA tokenisation has been discussed for years but is now actually moving. What's changed, and what do you think finally tipped the market?

Real-world asset (RWA) is ultimately traditional investment strategies materialising as new products on chain. Imagine a private equity (PE) fund launching a vehicle through Lagoon that buys cash-generating businesses in the real world, restructures them, and shares the cash flow with allocators into the strategy. Onchain, this will be categorised as an RWA product onchain, whereas in traditional finance, this is a classic PE buyout strategy. Beyond that there is reinsurance products, tokenised stocks, money market funds on chain and much more. All these are well-known products in the traditional world, these are just being relaunched onchain. And for managers, launching onchain offers a new distribution channel and operational efficiencies in managing a fund, which ultimately leads to better outcomes for both investors and managers.

You have highlighted stablecoins as central to the future of asset management. Do you see them as infrastructure, or as a product in their own right and does that distinction matter?

Stablecoins are both product and infrastructure, and that is precisely why the distinction matters. They are a product issued by a private entity, but once in circulation, they operate as infrastructure that DeFi, asset managers rely on as a unit of account. That dual nature is exactly where the risk lives. It is a nuance, but potentially an important

one to have in mind, as we see more and more stablecoin issuers. For consumers, the value added is the same. However, the risk posed by different private issuance vary and it is important to understand who is behind the issued stablecoin, the degree of decentralisation, how the peg is maintained, what its track record, circulation amount, longevity, and regulatory acceptance.

"In three years, Lagoon will be the default infrastructure for any manager, TradFi or crypto-native"

As the last thing you want, whether an institution or private individual, is to start using a stablecoin that loses its peg if the market conditions become stressed. Just remember the run on the bank experienced by Silicon Valley Bank, where Circle held some of its deposits that pegged the USDC. This gave quite a few people a scare regarding USDC peg.

Then you also have a lot of so-called structured products posing as stablecoins. As a consumer I would be very careful as in reality you're buying a structured instrument that calls itself a stablecoin just because there's a lot of demand for stables. But is the team skilled and experienced in running the strategy? Can the strategy withstand the test of time in stressful market conditions? They have become the backbone of DeFi, with a massive expansion over the past year. With so many new stablecoins entering the market, analysing and auditing their characteristics and risk profile has become a dedicated job for any serious asset manager. Not every stablecoin is created equal.

Lagoon operates across over 18 chains. How do you think about regulatory risk across jurisdictions, is that a feature or a vulnerability at this stage?

Technology and financial regulation have always been fragmented, complex and multilayered. The regulatory landscape is dominated by a few nations around the globe that lead in setting the tone when it comes to the regulatory standards, approach, and certainty for the technology and financial sectors. I believe the answer should always be that if you're aiming to comply with some of the most clear and strict requirements, you will be on the safe side no matter where you operate. This means that we aim to keep the highest standards to be on the safe side. At the same time, it is a constantly evolving landscape, difficult to track, especially as businesses operate in a multijurisdictional environment. For years now, a lot of blockchain-based products haven't had the clarity needed to comply.

DeFi risk frameworks are still immature. How does Lagoon approach the tension between moving fast and building something institutional-grade?

My team and I have firm roots in traditional finance, while also being around at the onset of digital assets. This means that we're taking the best TradFi risk management practices have to offer and combining them with the constantly evolving best practices in blockchains. It is not a one-time and done approach, it is a foundational practice that underpins everything we do, from our original architecture design to day-to-day activities.

Lagoon is intentionally built to minimise the attack surface and maximise flexibility for managers using the infrastructure to impose their preferred rules and institutional standards, from distribution of powers to auditability, and ultimately control of the entire stack. Because every time a manager launches their vault or investment vehicle on Lagoon, they have full control. Lagoon doesn't control either design choices or everyday management of the product.

Nasdaq and major exchanges are moving into crypto market infrastructure. Does that validate what you are building, or does it complicate it?

It validates that the future of finance is onchain, and blockchains are the new backend of TradFi — blockchains are a better alternative to traditional systems when it comes to global money flows and settlement of capital markets.

Where does Lagoon need to be in three years for this to have worked?

In three years, Lagoon will be the default infrastructure for any manager, TradFi or crypto-native. By then, the broader thesis will have played out, i.e. blockchains will have matured into the backend of global money movement and asset management, and Lagoon will be the core engine of that stack. The distinction between onchain and offchain will have vanished because the world's leading managers use Lagoon to run the entire lifecycle of any investment vehicle.

When a manager deploys on Lagoon, they select their primary deployment chain. Then assets can move across chains or offchain with no limitations on strategy. The strategy is defined inside the manager's chosen custody solution. Lagoon functions as a non-custodial, pass-through infrastructure. Lagoon does not custody assets, and the vehicle's 'ownership' and 'management' rest entirely with the manager from the moment of creation. Thus, the responsibility for jurisdictional compliance remains with the manager, who can tailor their instance to the specific laws of the chosen country. ■

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Hitting the mainstream

Matteo Carminati, head of product at Komainu, looks at how traditional institutions have been taking up digital assets, and how the next phase will be defined by interoperability

For much of the past cycle, the central question in digital assets was whether traditional financial institutions would engage at all. That question now feels materially less contested. Across banking, asset management, and market infrastructure, digital assets are increasingly being treated as part of a broader shift in how assets may ultimately be issued, held, financed, and transferred.

The harder question is no longer whether institutions see the relevance of digital assets, but whether they can incorporate them into the operational fabric of modern banking, built on decades of legacy processes and systems. As interest becomes more established, the main constraint on adoption is shifting from strategy to implementation. In practical terms, that means interoperability: the ability to integrate digital asset activity into the systems, controls and workflows through which banks already manage trading and settlement.

From intent to implementation

For many institutions, the first step has been at the asset level. This includes understanding the difference between the wider idea of digital assets and the specific cryptocurrencies asset class. Understanding the ethos and the goals of different projects: BTC, the digital gold, is different from ETH, designed for builders, and they are both different from HYPE, built to decentralise trading. Understanding how to think about their volatility, where yield opportunities may exist, and how cryptocurrencies or tokenised assets should be assessed alongside more familiar instruments. Many firms are further along on that journey than they were even a few years ago.

The harder step comes once an institution has decided it does want to participate. At that point, the challenge becomes operational. How does digital asset activity fit within the bank's existing operating model? How do new forms of trading, settlement, reporting, or collateral management sit inside infrastructure that has been built over decades for a very different market structure?

That question goes well beyond connectivity and messaging protocols in the narrow technical sense. It touches data architecture, control frameworks, reconciliation processes, oversight, and the wider governance mechanisms through which regulated institutions absorb anything new. For banks, digital assets do not arrive in isolation. They arrive in the context of legacy systems, layered approvals, and operating environments with well-established processes and clear responsibilities, where change is deliberate and often slow.

The reality of bank infrastructure

Parts of the digital asset market continue to assume that the efficiency gains associated with blockchain-based systems will, over time, be enough to force institutional change. The logic is understandable, but it does not fully reflect how banks adopt new infrastructure in practice.

Banks do not introduce new technology simply because it appears directionally better. They adopt it when it can function within existing processes, risk standards, and internal accountability structures. That is a much higher bar than much of the market rhetoric implies.

Large institutions are built around strict controls and established processes, many of which were not designed with digital assets in mind. Some of those processes may look inefficient from a digital-native perspective, but they are embedded in how banks operate across every other asset class. Digital assets, for all their long-term significance, still represent a relatively small part of that overall landscape.

That matters because institutions are unlikely to redesign core operating models for digital assets in one step. The more realistic path is one in which digital asset activity can fit into existing systems with the minimum possible disruption.

Bridging ambition and reality

Interoperability is sometimes framed too narrowly, as though it were simply a matter of APIs or message formats. In practice, the challenge is broader. The question is whether

digital asset workflows can be made usable inside institutions whose systems were designed for a different era of finance.

That means working with existing operational logic, even where that logic does not naturally align with blockchain-based infrastructure. It means recognising that banks have established ways of handling communications, controls, reporting, and approvals, and that any workable approach has to start from those realities rather than ignore them.

The long-term direction of travel may be a financial system in which more assets are issued and managed natively onchain, but institutions are unlikely to move directly to that end state. Progress is more likely to come where the initial technology and operational lift is manageable, allowing institutions to first become comfortable with digital assets themselves.

That dynamic is already visible in tokenisation. Native issuance onchain may be the end goal for some market participants, but many institutions are starting with structures that preserve more familiar legal and operational arrangements while introducing selected onchain elements. The same principle applies more broadly to digital asset adoption. Institutions are more likely to move where they can build confidence step by step, rather than absorb market risk, technology change, and process change all at once.

It is not easy to find the right trade-off between pragmatism and disruption. However, the state of the market and of traditional financial institutions seems to suggest that a more pragmatic approach is preferable, at least in this market cycle.

Beyond market risk

For institutional participants, digital assets — and cryptocurrencies in particular — are often discussed primarily in terms of volatility, liquidity, and counterparty exposure. Those risks matter, but for banks, they are only part of the picture.

The more difficult question is often whether the institution can absorb the operational consequences of introducing digital asset capability at all. How is information ingested? How are records generated? How are workflows supervised? How are new activities reconciled with existing reporting and control structures? What has to change internally before a digital asset process can be treated with the same confidence as any other regulated activity?

Think about transactions that cannot be rejected or stopped from reaching a wallet, and resulting anti-money laundering (AML) concerns; think about onchain fees, the need to keep wallets topped up or to deal with a constant erosion of the asset (and related reconciliation breaks) or, even worse, the inability to move it. These are non-issues for crypto native companies, but could be showstoppers for traditional financial institutions that do not take them into consideration.

Seen in that light, interoperability is not simply about enabling access. It is also about reducing enough technology risk and change risk that institutions can begin participating without having to rework everything around them from day one. The more effectively the industry can reduce that implementation burden, the more likely digital assets are to move into the mainstream of institutional operations.

Fragmentation is slowing adoption

The difficulty is that the industry still lacks common frameworks for solving this well. There are many solutions in the market, but far fewer standards for how traditional banking infrastructure should interface with digital asset workflows across settlement, collateral, reporting, and control environments.

That fragmentation is costly. It extends delivery timelines, increases operational overhead, and forces institutions to treat each integration exercise as a bespoke project.

It also reinforces the sense that digital assets remain operationally separate from the wider fabric of institutional finance.

If digital assets are to scale, that cannot remain the default model. More mature interoperability standards may prove just as important as product innovation in determining whether digital assets become structurally embedded in institutional markets.

The path ahead

None of this suggests that progress will stall. The direction of travel is already evident. Regulatory clarity is improving in key jurisdictions. Institutional understanding of digital assets is materially deeper than it was in earlier cycles. And the conversation is broadening beyond crypto exposure to encompass the more structural implications of onchain finance, tokenised assets, and programmable market infrastructure.

At the same time, the pace of adoption will continue to be shaped by institutional realities. Large financial organisations move by building confidence incrementally, proving operational viability, and narrowing the gap between what is strategically desirable and what is operationally workable.

That is why interoperability is likely to become one of the defining issues of the next phase of market development. The industry has already done much of the work required to establish that digital assets matter.

The harder task now is making them work within the operational reality of modern banking. Until that gap is narrowed, institutional interest will continue to outpace institutional implementation. ■

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Reshaping servicing models

Zarah Choudhary speaks with Eamonn O'Callaghan, Ireland-based global head of ETF Product at CACEIS, about the forces driving the expansion of ETFs and how digital assets and tokenisation could influence the future of the ETF ecosystem

The global exchange traded fund (ETF) market has undergone rapid expansion over the past decade, transforming both investment strategies and the infrastructure required to support them. As assets continue to grow, service providers are adapting their operational models, technology platforms, and expertise to keep pace with a market that is becoming larger and more complex.

Eamonn O'Callaghan, Ireland-based global head of ETF Product at CACEIS, says several structural factors have contributed to the growth of the ETF market across regions.

"There are a number of drivers behind the expansion of ETFs," he explains. "One of the most notable developments has been the growth of active ETFs. A few years ago they represented less than two per cent of the market, but that figure has now grown to around six or seven per cent depending on the region."

While still a relatively small segment compared with passive strategies, the rise of active ETFs is contributing to broader market momentum. At the same time, O'Callaghan points to a shift in investor behaviour, with capital increasingly moving away from traditional mutual funds towards ETF structures.

"We've seen a broad movement from active mutual funds into ETFs, both passive and active. Investor surveys consistently show that when investors reallocate capital, many are moving funds from active mutual funds into the ETF wrapper."

This trend has been particularly visible in the US, where asset managers have increasingly converted mutual fund products into ETFs.

"There has been a significant number of mutual fund-to-ETF conversions in the US in recent years," he observes. "We haven't seen the same level of conversions in Europe, but the shift in the US has certainly contributed to ETF growth globally."

Retail participation is another factor shaping the market, particularly in Europe where adoption is still developing.

"In the US, retail investors have been active ETF users for many years," O'Callaghan notes. "In Europe the retail segment is still evolving, but we're seeing increased adoption as investor education improves and self-directed investment grows. Germany is a strong example of this trend, and similar patterns are beginning to emerge in other European markets."

Ultimately, however, the enduring appeal of ETFs lies in the core characteristics of the structure.

"The ETF wrapper offers several key benefits: liquidity, relatively low cost, transparency, and accessibility," he says. "Those attributes resonate strongly with investors across different segments."

Tax efficiency also plays a role in the European market. Irish-domiciled ETFs benefit from favourable tax arrangements when investing in US equities, which has helped position Ireland as a key ETF hub.

"An Irish-domiciled ETF can benefit from a reduced withholding tax rate of 15 per cent on dividends from US equities, compared with the standard 30 per cent rate," O'Callaghan explains. "That efficiency is one of the reasons why roughly 75 per cent of all European ETFs are domiciled in Ireland."

Operational implications for asset servicers

As the ETF market expands, asset servicers and custodians are adapting their operational infrastructure to support the scale and complexity of the products.

Supporting ETFs requires specialised capabilities compared with traditional mutual funds, particularly in areas such as order management and portfolio transparency.

"One example is the portfolio composition file, or PCF," O'Callaghan notes. "This file is central to the ETF ecosystem because it provides authorised participants and market makers with the information needed to price and trade ETF shares."

The PCF must be produced prior to market opening, creating tight operational timelines for administrators.

"You need the ability to calculate the net asset value on trade date and produce the PCF overnight," he explains.

"If that process isn't completed correctly and on time, market makers cannot price the ETF on exchange."

Order management also differs from traditional fund structures.

"ETFs involve specific order types, such as directed cash orders or custom orders, which are not present in the mutual fund world.

"That means administrators need specialised order-entry portals and systems capable of supporting those requirements."

Over time, the rapid expansion of ETF assets has forced service providers to rethink their operational models.

"When ETFs first launched in Europe around two decades ago, the systems supporting them weren't necessarily built for the scale we see today," O'Callaghan says.

"As assets have grown, service providers have had to evolve their technology, reduce manual processes and focus on automation and straight-through processing."

The products themselves have also become more complex.

"Originally, ETFs were relatively simple passive strategies, often with a single share class and currency. Today the market includes a much broader range of strategies and asset classes."

This evolution has increased the need for specialist expertise within servicing organisations.

"As issuers launch more sophisticated products, service providers need deeper technical expertise to support those structures," he adds.

Europe and the US: Structural differences

Despite the global growth of ETFs, the market structure in Europe differs significantly from that of the US.

"The US ETF market is much more mature and significantly larger — roughly four times the size of the European market," O'Callaghan says.

Retail participation is also more pronounced in the US, supported by long-standing investment structures such as retirement savings plans.

"In the US there are far higher levels of self-directed investment, which naturally feeds into ETF adoption."

Europe, by contrast, presents a fragmented landscape shaped by multiple jurisdictions and exchanges.

"Europe consists of 27 countries, each with its own exchange infrastructure. When launching an ETF in Europe, issuers need a nuanced sales and distribution strategy that reflects those regional differences."

Trading mechanics also differ between the two markets.

"In the US, the vast majority of ETF trades are conducted 'in-kind', where authorised participants deliver a basket of securities in exchange for ETF shares," O'Callaghan explains.

"In Europe the situation is almost the opposite — most trades are conducted in cash rather than through in-kind transfers."

Structural differences have also existed around share classes. Europe has long supported multi-share-class ETFs, whereas US products historically operated under a single share class model due to patent restrictions that have only recently expired.

Technology investment and scaling for growth

With ETF assets continuing to rise, infrastructure investment has become a priority for service providers.

"ETF assets in Europe currently stand at around €3 trillion," O'Callaghan says. "There's a commonly cited view that ETF assets double roughly every five years."

If that trajectory continues, European ETF assets could exceed €6 trillion by the early 2030s.

"That level of growth has significant implications for everyone servicing ETFs," he explains. "If your business could be twice as large in five years, you cannot rely on manual processes. Systems must be scalable and automated."

Technology integration across the ETF ecosystem is becoming increasingly important.

"We're seeing greater connectivity between authorised participant systems, administrator systems and issuer systems," O'Callaghan observes. "Technologies such as APIs and FIX messaging allow orders and data to move automatically between those systems."

Issuers are also demanding more sophisticated reporting capabilities.

"Instead of reviewing static reports, issuers increasingly want real-time dashboards that allow them to monitor activity across their ETF platforms."

Active ETFs and product innovation

Innovation within the ETF market is also influencing servicing requirements.

"Active ETFs are an important development, but operationally the difference between

active and passive ETFs is not as large as people sometimes expect," O'Callaghan says. However, some adjustments are required when active strategies involve more complex instruments.

"We are seeing greater use of derivatives, including swaps and options, within some active ETFs.

"Originally, ETFs were relatively simple passive strategies, often with a single share class and currency. Today the market includes a much broader range of strategies and asset classes"

"That requires additional operational considerations to ensure those instruments are handled correctly."

He describes the active ETF market as existing along a spectrum.

"At one end you have high-conviction active strategies, and at the other you have what might be described as 'index-plus' products — essentially index strategies with an active overlay."

For service providers, understanding each issuer's investment strategy remains central to designing the appropriate servicing model.

Digital assets and tokenisation

Looking further ahead, digital assets and tokenisation are beginning to feature in conversations about the future of ETFs.

"There appears to be a growing investor appetite for digital assets as an asset class," O'Callaghan observes. "Several large asset managers have launched products with digital asset exposure."

At present, these exposures are more commonly found in exchange traded notes (ETNs) rather than ETFs.

"We are already seeing digital assets used as the underlying for exchange traded notes," he notes.

Regulation will ultimately determine how quickly digital assets become integrated into ETF structures.

"Some regulators have taken the view that digital assets are not appropriate for retail investors," O'Callaghan adds. "For ETFs to hold digital assets directly, further regulatory developments would likely be required."

Tokenisation, however, is attracting increasing interest across the asset management industry.

"There has been a huge amount of discussion about tokenisation over the past year," he says.

"Many asset managers are seriously considering how they might issue tokenised products."

In the longer term, O'Callaghan believes traditional fund structures and tokenised products could coexist.

"It's possible to imagine a future where an asset manager offers a mutual fund, an ETF, and a tokenised version of the same strategy."

As ETF assets continue to grow and innovation accelerates, the demands placed on asset servicing infrastructure are likely to intensify.

"With the scale of growth we're seeing, every participant in the ecosystem needs to ensure their systems and processes are ready for the next phase of expansion." ■

Eamonn O'Callaghan
Global head of ETF Product
CACEIS

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Tokenised bonds

From pilot to production

Chris Bruner, chief product officer at Tradeweb, discusses how digital infrastructure, regulatory clarity, and institutional engagement are converging to modernise fixed income markets, from issuance and settlement to liquidity and post-trade efficiency

Tokenisation in fixed income has been discussed for years. What has changed to make this moment different, and why are we now seeing real infrastructure rather than just pilot testing?

The shift from pilots to production really comes down to a few things finally lining up.

Regulatory clarity is improving, institutional engagement in digital assets is accelerating, and core market infrastructure is starting to adapt in a cohesive way.

At the same time, traditional markets are already moving toward extended hours and more automated workflows, narrowing the gap between digital and conventional asset classes.

Our recent investment in Crossover Markets is a reflection of that. It's not about chasing crypto as a new asset class — it's about being part of a broader shift in how liquidity is accessed and markets operate.

Tokenisation is starting to be viewed less as a new layer and more as an upgrade to how markets function, particularly around settlement, connectivity, and operational resilience. The question now isn't if institutions will participate, but how market structure adapts as adoption scales.

Tradeweb recently supported a tokenised intraday gilt repo executed onchain and a fully electronic CD auction recorded onchain. What do these milestones show about the practical benefits of tokenisation today in retail and institutional markets?

These examples show that tokenisation is moving into real workflows — not just pilots. What matters for institutions is still the same: liquidity access, pricing transparency, risk controls, and post-trade certainty. In both cases, the goal wasn't to change how prices are formed, but to modernise issuance, settlement, and post-trade processes.

Executing a fully electronic certificate of deposit (CD) auction and supporting tokenised repo flows demonstrates tangible gains: faster processing, more automation and greater operational certainty.

Those are benefits that institutions can already see today, with potential to expand into broader distribution models over time.

How could tokenisation reshape liquidity in fixed income, particularly in more fragmented or less transparent markets?

Tokenisation is unlikely to transform liquidity dynamics overnight.

But by reducing friction and improving how collateral moves, it can make liquidity more efficient over time.

In more fragmented markets, interoperability will be critical — connecting tokenised and traditional assets rather than creating siloes.

Platforms that already aggregate liquidity, like Tradeweb, will play an important role in keeping markets connected and avoiding further fragmentation.

How can tokenised infrastructure modernise settlement and post-trade workflows, and what impact could that have on cost and risk?

Tokenised infrastructure can reduce manual intervention, shorten settlement timelines, and automate workflows through smart contracts.

For institutional markets, the real opportunity is improving efficiency and reducing risk without compromising the governance and resilience standards that already exist.

Tradeweb's focus has been on that infrastructure layer — tokenisation, blockchain experimentation, and partnerships — because that's where the most immediate value is.

What forms of digital cash are being used in tokenised repo flows today, and how do you see this evolving across different payment systems, including stablecoins, bank deposit tokens, and CBDCs? What will ultimately drive client choice?

Today's tokenised repo flows are experimenting with different forms of digital cash — including stablecoins and bank-issued deposit tokens — while central bank digital currencies (CBDCs) remain a more long-term possibility.

Institutional adoption will ultimately depend on things like regulatory clarity, balance sheet treatment, and interoperability.

In practice, client choice will likely be driven less by preference for a specific form of money and more by capital efficiency, settlement certainty, and how well this type of digital cash fits into existing treasury and collateral frameworks.

What needs to happen next — across regulation, technology, and market structure — to support more efficient, always-on capital markets?

Sustained progress will require continued regulatory alignment, standardisation, and institutional-grade connectivity.

Market structure tends to evolve before full market maturity, through better transparency, liquidity formation, and post-trade certainty.

As traditional markets extend hours and digital assets already operate 24/7, the focus needs to be on interoperability and resilience.

Ultimately, infrastructure drives participation, and participation drives liquidity.

How quickly we move toward more continuous, efficient markets will depend on how cohesive that progress is across the industry. ■

Beyond electronic trading

The digital evolution of securities finance

Nick Delikaris, chief product officer at EquiLend, explores how connected infrastructure, shared data, and digital market frameworks are reshaping securities finance, as institutions move towards a unified operating model spanning traditional and tokenised assets

Over the past decade, securities finance has quietly undergone one of the most significant structural shifts in its history. What was a fragmented market has evolved into a digitally connected ecosystem where automated workflows, electronic trading platforms, and standardised protocols now underpin daily activity.

The digitisation of trading, while transformative, was just the first chapter of a much broader evolution. Today, more than US$4 trillion in securities are on loan globally, yet much of the supporting infrastructure still relies on fragmented operational processes. The next phase of modernisation in securities finance will be defined by connected infrastructure.

Recent market developments are accelerating this shift. The global transition to T+1 settlement, growing pressure to optimise collateral and balance sheet usage, and increasingly fragmented data across institutions are exposing the limits of legacy operating models. Firms need infrastructure that can synchronise data, automate lifecycle events, and provide a consistent operational framework across participants.

Regulation is playing a growing role in accelerating modernisation. Traditional frameworks such as 10c-1a, Securities Financing Transactions Regulation (SFTR), and Basel III/IV are increasing reporting requirements, balance sheet scrutiny, and operational transparency, acting as defensive catalysts that raise the cost of fragmented infrastructure.

At the same time, newer frameworks including Markets in Crypto-Assets Regulation (MiCA), the distributed ledger technology (DLT) Pilot Regime, Staff Accounting Bulletin (SAB) 122, and Financial Innovation and Technology for the 21st Century Act (FIT21) are establishing the legal foundations for institutional participation in digital assets and tokenised markets, acting as market access enablers that give institutions the regulatory clarity needed to engage in emerging digital financing and settlement models.

Today, the industry is entering a new stage of development that goes beyond digitising execution. The focus has shifted to building infrastructure that connects trading, post-trade processes, and emerging digital asset markets into a single ecosystem.

From digital trading to digital infrastructure

Electronic trading has already reshaped the front end of securities finance. Automated workflows, improved inventory transparency, and faster execution have become standard features of the modern market. As a case in point, Next Generation Trading (NGT) trade counts have increased more than 80 per cent since 2019, to over 3.5 million trades a month today, illustrating how standardised electronic trading has become across the industry.

However, much of the infrastructure that supports securities finance transactions remains fragmented. Portfolio management systems, collateral, and risk platforms, and proprietary custodian systems often operate independently and do not communicate with one another natively. Each maintains its own records of positions, lifecycle events and collateral movements, forcing firms to reconcile information across multiple internal and external systems.

Digital assets and tokenised instruments are becoming increasingly embedded in financial markets. Tokenised funds have crossed the US$500 million threshold in assets under management, a growing number of firms have introduced tokenised securities products, and stablecoins are drawing significant attention for their ability to streamline capital flows and reimagine how payments can function.

As tokenised instruments begin to coexist with traditional securities, the interoperability challenge becomes more acute. Institutions need infrastructure capable of synchronising data, lifecycle events, and operational records across platforms and counterparties. Without that connectivity, the benefits of automation and digital market access remain constrained by fragmented operational architecture.

That is why the next stage of innovation in securities finance is less about digitising trading and more about building integrated infrastructure that connects execution, data, and post-trade workflow processes across institutions and asset classes.

One platform, one network

A defining characteristic of the next phase of securities finance will be convergence. Institutions increasingly want a single operating model that allows them to manage traditional securities and digital assets within the same framework. Running separate operational environments for each asset class is inefficient and introduces operational risk that compounds across counterparties.

This convergence is beginning to blur the historical boundaries between secured financing markets. Over time, firms are likely to operate a single infrastructure layer capable of supporting both securities lending and repo activity within the same operating model.

"Stablecoins are emerging as an important bridge between traditional secured financing and digital markets"

In digital environments, these markets may increasingly intersect through stablecoin-based settlement and collateral mobility, creating a unified secured financing ecosystem rather than separate operational silos.

Achieving this requires a shared technical architecture built on standardised data schemas, common API layers, and synchronised transaction records that allow systems across institutions to interact with the same lifecycle data. This shared infrastructure also creates a powerful network effect; as more institutions connect, each new participant expands the pool of liquidity and counterparties while reducing operational friction and reconciliation costs for all existing participants, mutualising both cost and risk.

In practical terms, this allows firms to access digital asset financing, tokenised securities, and traditional securities lending workflows within a common operational environment while maintaining the governance standards required by institutional markets.

The three pillars of the digital ecosystem

Addressing this challenge requires a coordinated architecture spanning infrastructure, data, and market access. Three foundational components are emerging to support this ecosystem: distributed infrastructure, shared transaction data, and digital market execution.

These pillars form a dependency chain. Infrastructure enables synchronised data. Shared data enables trusted market execution. Without a common infrastructure layer, institutions cannot reliably synchronise lifecycle information across counterparties. Without trusted shared data, digital markets cannot operate with the transparency, governance and operational discipline required by institutional participants.

Pillar one:
Canton network — the infrastructure layer

The Canton Network provides the distributed infrastructure layer that enables institutions to synchronise financial workflows across a network of independently run applications, while maintaining privacy, governance, and regulatory controls. Supporting applications built using Daml — a smart contract language already adopted by a number of global investment banks, broker-dealers, and financial market infrastructures — the network is designed to support the operational and regulatory requirements of institutional finance.

Unlike fully transparent public blockchain environments, Canton's architecture allows multiple institutions and platforms to synchronise shared contract state and create a single source of truth across a distributed network without exposing sensitive data or relying on centralised control. This distributed model also reduces operational risk by eliminating single points of failure that exist in centralised systems, as participants synchronise lifecycle events across the network while maintaining their own governance frameworks and system environments.

Pillar two:
1Source — the data foundation

Securities finance has long operated without a universally shared transaction record. Lifecycle events, from allocation to recalls, corporate actions, and collateral movements, are tracked across multiple internal systems, requiring continuous reconciliation between counterparties.

1Source addresses this by creating a unified ledger that acts as a single source of truth for securities finance transactions. By standardising lifecycle data and synchronising information across participants, the platform has the potential to significantly reduce reconciliation while improving transparency across the trade lifecycle. Leading institutions, including BNY and National Bank of Canada, are already leveraging 1Source to drive greater transparency, efficiency, and control across their operations.

This shared ledger also delivers meaningful regulatory benefits. A synchronised, auditable

transaction record supports reporting requirements under SFTR and US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) Rule 10c-1a while strengthening internal audit and governance controls, consolidating what are currently separate reporting workflows into a single data layer. The same architecture can support both traditional financial instruments and digital assets, positioning 1Source as the operational bridge between traditional finance and the emerging digital asset ecosystem.

Pillar three

Digital prime — enabling digital markets

Through its investment in Digital Prime, EquiLend is expanding into institutional infrastructure for digital asset lending and financing. Institutional participation in these markets has been limited by gaps in infrastructure, transparency around collateral, counterparty exposure, and lifecycle management that has lagged behind the standards that govern traditional securities finance.

Stablecoins are emerging as an important bridge between traditional secured financing and digital markets. While digital-native firms approach tokenised securities through crypto financing and stablecoin liquidity, many traditional institutions are initially engaging stablecoins for their potential to streamline collateral movement and settlement payments. As these approaches converge, the infrastructure required to support both must operate within a single governed framework.

Digital Prime's Tokenet platform addresses these gaps by providing an institutional marketplace for digital asset lending and financing. Tokenet connects lenders and borrowers through an automated platform that supports trade negotiation, collateral management, and lifecycle processing within a controlled operating environment. Critically, the platform incorporates the risk and governance mechanisms familiar to traditional securities finance, providing transparency around counterparty exposure, collateral positions, and transaction lifecycle events in a manner consistent with internal risk frameworks and credit committee expectations.

By applying the operational discipline of traditional securities finance to digital asset lending, Digital Prime provides institutions with a pathway into these markets without requiring a wholesale shift in governance or risk management practices.

Bringing the ecosystem together

While each pillar addresses a different layer of market structure, their real value lies in how they operate together in a single transaction workflow.

For traditional equity securities lending, NGT and 1Source already demonstrate this model in production. The same dependency chain extends directly into digital markets, as the following example illustrates.

Consider a tokenised US Treasury repo transaction. The Canton Network provides the distributed infrastructure that allows participating institutions to coordinate the transaction across a shared environment while maintaining privacy and governance controls.

1Source provides the synchronised data layer, ensuring both counterparties reference the same lifecycle record for the trade, collateral movements, and settlement status.

Digital Prime's Tokenet platform provides the execution environment where lenders and borrowers negotiate and transact in tokenised collateral.

The result is a transaction lifecycle that operates across multiple institutions without continuous reconciliation between independent records, reducing settlement discrepancies, improving collateral visibility, and enabling more efficient asset allocation across financing and margin obligations. For institutions managing large securities finance portfolios, these are not marginal gains. They translate directly into balance sheet optimisation and meaningful reductions in operational cost.

Infrastructure for a hybrid market

Securities finance has always been a networked market built on relationships between lenders, borrowers, custodians, and intermediaries. What is changing is the infrastructure that enables those relationships.

The digitisation of trading marked an important milestone, but the next phase of evolution will be defined by something more significant: a unified digital ecosystem capable of supporting traditional securities, tokenised instruments, and entirely new forms of financial activity.

Over the next 18 months, EquiLend will be positioned to enable all three pillars and offer an operating model capable of handling both digital and traditional securities within a single framework.

The drivers behind this shift are already present: compressed settlement cycles, collateral efficiency pressures, tokenised asset growth, and new digital financing markets.

Adoption will not be without friction; regulatory variation across jurisdictions, legacy system migration costs and the coordination required across a multi-participant network are real implementation considerations.

But the architecture is designed precisely to absorb that complexity, providing institutions a governed, phased pathway into the digital ecosystem without abandoning the operational standards that define institutional finance. ■

INDUSTRY APPOINTMENTS

Taurus selects Kohlhofer

Taurus, a Swiss provider of institutional-grade digital asset infrastructure, has appointed Milena Kohlhofer to the role of strategic partnerships executive, based in New York.

Her duties will comprise expanding the firm's strategic relationships and supporting the adoption of its digital asset infrastructure.

Kohlhofer brings over 18 years' worth of experience to the role, spanning digital assets, capital markets, and financial technology, joining Taurus from Ownera, a UK fintech and digital asset interoperability firm, where she was head of sales and partnerships, Americas. She has also spent time with U.S. Bank as head of digital assets for capital markets, along with a decade at Citi, holding digital assets and capital markets roles.

Commenting on her appointment, Kohlhofer says: "I am excited to join Taurus at a time when demand from US financial institutions for robust, regulated digital asset infrastructure is accelerating."

Lamine Brahimi, co-founder and managing partner at Taurus, adds: "I'm very pleased with Milena's appointment, which reflects Taurus' continued commitment to the US market. She brings a rare combination of experience across digital assets, capital markets, banking and strategic partnerships, as well as a strong understanding of what leading financial institutions need as they build and scale their digital asset capabilities."

ClearToken appoints Cerezetti

ClearToken, a digital financial market infrastructure (FMI) provider, has appointed Fernando Cerezetti as chief risk officer of its subsidiary, ClearToken CCP. ClearToken is also currently progressing its application process with the Bank of England to become an authorised central counterparty (CCP). In his role as chief risk officer of ClearToken CCP, Cerezetti will be responsible for leading the development and oversight of the CCP's risk management framework.

Reporting to the ClearToken CCP board and working closely with senior leadership across the Group, Cerezetti aim at ensuring that ClearToken CCP's risk infrastructure meets the rigorous standards expected of an authorised Central Counterparty under UK European Market Infrastructure Regulation and the Bank of England's supervisory framework.

With over two decades of specialist experience, Cerezetti most recently served for more than five years as head of Model Risk Management, Data, and Governance for ICE Clear Europe.

Prior to joining ICE, Cerezetti spent three years as a risk advisor in the Bank of England's Risk, Research, and CCP Policy Division.

Benjamin Santos-Stephens, CEO of ClearToken, says: "It is a pleasure to welcome someone of Fernando's experience and knowledge to ClearToken, to add even further to the team of all-stars we are building here.

"To attract people of Fernando's calibre to the company is a great endorsement of our vision to deliver a future-proofed, regulated financial market infrastructure that can deliver on the promises of digital assets and tokenisation, and pave the way for large scale institutional adoption."

Commenting on his appointment, Cerezetti adds: "ClearToken is a company that is reshaping core post-trade services for digital assets, and I'm delighted to join them at such an important and exciting time."

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INDUSTRY APPOINTMENTS

Rapatz joins DAAA board

Alexander Rapatz has joined the board of the Digital Assets Association Austria (DAAA), a non-profit association serving as a voice for the Austrian digital asset sector, following over 15 years in the financial services industry. His experience spans venture capital, investment management, and legal structuring.

Rapatz is currently CEO and founding partner of Black Manta Capital Partners, an investment banking and tokenisation as a service firm, a position he has held since the company's inception in 2018.

At Black Manta, he pioneered the Markets in Financial Instruments Directive II-regulated security tokenisation, with a primary focus on bridging the gap between legacy capital markets and blockchain finance.

Securitize appoints Redfearn as President

Securitize, a US-regulated digital asset securities firm, has appointed Brett Redfearn, former Director of the US Securities and Exchange Commission's (SEC's) Division of Trading and Markets, as president of the company, in addition to joining its board of directors.

Redfearn was with the SEC between 2017 and 2020, overseeing a number of rulemakings and policies, which involved efforts to modernise the National Market System and enhance market transparency.

He brings three decades of financial experience with him to his new role, including 14 years in senior roles at J.P. Morgan and a period as head of capital markets at Coinbase.

As president, Redfearn will work with the firm's leadership team to expand its platform across issuance, trading, and fund administration, in addition to helping shape Securitize's long-term strategy as a member of the board.

Prior to the appointment, Redfearn spent four years as Chairman of Securitize's advisory board.

Commenting on the appointment, Carlos Domingo, co-founder and CEO of Securitize, says: "As tokenisation becomes an integral part of core financial infrastructure, his experience will help ensure this transition is built to improve existing market structure, with the protections and integrity investors expect."

Redfearn adds: "I'm extremely excited to work with this innovative team to help transform financial markets and deliver opportunities and efficiencies to investors and issuers, while remaining committed to investor protection and market integrity."

Standard Chartered appoints Matthiessen

Standard Chartered has hired Ole Matthiessen as global head, Transaction Services and Digital Assets.

Matthiessen will lead a newly unified team in Corporate & Investment Banking (CIB) comprising transaction banking — trade, payments, and cash management — and financing and securities services — custody, clearing, and settlement — along with CIB's fast-growing digital asset capabilities, says the bank.

According to the CIB, Matthiessen brings extensive expertise across a broad spectrum of financial products, spanning transaction banking and derivatives through to structured lending solutions and capital markets.

He joins after 18 years at Deutsche Bank, where he most recently served as co-head of the Corporate Bank division and a member of the Group Management Committee. ■

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