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## Online Comments for The Tracy Press

Posted by Motown - 2007/08/11 10:27

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As I read through the articles each day for The Press I feel inclined to comment as do others. I value and respect other's opinions and I even like watching a healthy amount of debate take place. Then come the people who copy your name and make rude statements or incorrect statements that at times are down right mean and nasty. I think it's fun to be able to comment on a story right as you read it and to read other's comments as well, but it's tiresome to see people making absurd comments in someone elses name. It begins to make you wonder who is on here making honest statements based on their actual opinions. It has happened to both my husband and I. I don't mind laughing it off to a point, but these stories are about events that take place where we live and they are things that affect our lives. We have a right to state our opinions without having others muddle up the comments section with their childishness.

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## Re:Online Comments for The Tracy Press

Posted by mommy\_3 - 2007/08/12 06:51

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I agree. I think that it's fine to have the ability to do online commenting, but take OUT the vulgarity, name calling and lack of human manners. That's just ridiculous!

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## Re:Online Comments for The Tracy Press

Posted by NickD - 2007/08/13 04:40

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Unfortunately it is not that simple. I wish it were. =\

The commenting system already has some word checks for rude comments. However it can not read things in context, nor can it 'understand' if a comment is rude or not. That has to come with a strong team of moderators. Yes, a team.

And also, censoring / not allowing comments is a grey area for the TP to become involved in. On one hand people will say thank you, and on the other people will complain of their freedom of speech being violated.

While the comments may be left by an imposter, for the TP to make that assumption and trust one word over another is setting a precedent which could lead to some really negative things being said and done.

We of course would accept any and all suggestions and take them into consideration.

Regards,  
Nick  
SolutionsIC Support

Post edited by: NickD, at: 2007/08/13 19:33

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## Re:Online Comments for The Tracy Press

Posted by NickD - 2007/08/13 04:42

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p.s.: Seeing as how this post relates to a technical issue of the website, I've moved it to the technical inquiries forum.

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## Re:Online Comments for The Tracy Press

Posted by Motown - 2007/08/13 06:38

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I understand that you can't call out someone who may or may not be spoofing the comments section. Maybe if it was set up like the forums where it's a sign up/sign in sort of thing it could be controlled a little better. They'd have to register with an email address and they can be booted for foul language etc. I really don't appreciate someone using my name and making statements about my character etc. I like having a voice and being able to comment and debate. I really don't want that to be taken away. I also understand that registering doesn't solve the problem entirely because anyone

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can sign up with an email address. It's a great priviledge to be able to comment on this site. I'd hate to see the Tracy press have to eliminate this service. Thanks for your response.

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## Re:Online Comments for The Tracy Press

Posted by JimF - 2007/08/13 08:13

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How about enlisting "trusted readers" as volunteer, part-time moderators?  
An automated moderation system which allows a certain number of readers to vote a comment "off the island" would also be a way for the readers to delete the trolls and rude comments.

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## Re:Online Comments for The Tracy Press

Posted by John Baxter - 2007/08/13 12:16

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I think these problems come and go like the tide. There will always be those people who thrive on disruption. Any attempts to fight this in earnest will likely be met by more determined methods of the perpetrators. As we've often seen, if you ignore them and take away their fun, they'll go away. If they come back, just rinse and repeat.

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## Re:Online Comments for The Tracy Press

Posted by johnnyc - 2007/08/14 01:17

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people have the right to make childish comments if they wish just the same as you have the right to state your opinion.

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## Re:Online Comments for The Tracy Press

Posted by johnny\_c - 2007/08/14 01:44

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i take that back, i dont know what im talking about. please feel free to flame me. :P

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## Re:Online Comments for The Tracy Press

Posted by TP Web - 2007/08/14 12:13

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I like Jim F's idea about a sort of "community policing" strategy. If enough individual users vote a comment down, it is removed. Hmm, it might work.

Sometimes we get e-mails informing us of super inappropriate comments. Really bad words are automatically filtered and need approval. (The "F" word is most popular).

We want to censor as little as possible, of course. Otherwise, what's the use of speaking up?

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## Re:Online Comments for The Tracy Press

Posted by Motown - 2007/08/14 12:42

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I agree that it shouldn't be censored too much, but I think my issue is that someone else can take the name I use for posting and make statements about my character or about issues that do not represent my opinion. The comment section asks for my email address and I do not want to be misrepresented. That is the issue I have. I'm not as concerned about what people have to say when using their own name, but not when they are using mine. They've even used my husbands. That's the problem I'd like to see solved, so we can continue to state our opinions.

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## Re:Online Comments for The Tracy Press

Posted by joedawgsteel - 2007/08/14 15:58

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I thought this was the Tracy Press....not the New York Times. The website I'm sure doesn't get that many comments. So it really shouldn't be that difficult to monitor rude comments, etc.

Post edited by: joedawgsteel, at: 2007/08/15 09:36

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## Re:Online Comments for The Tracy Press

Posted by John Baxter - 2007/08/14 18:12

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I see what you are saying Motown, but seriously, what are we all hoping to accomplish with our posts? Are we really thinking that we are going to change people's points of view? Chances are that our fellow knucklehead posters are just as stuck in their opinions as we are, and will not swing over to our camp just because they've read our pithy morsels of wisdom. Are we going to change the world with our opinions and comments?

I doubt it. I understand you get frustrated when someone uses your name. The same thing has happened to me. However, that doesn't stop me from putting my opinion out there, though. I continue to opine. Heck, I could even make up a new name for every post, and that doesn't change the fact that my opinion is getting out there.

And with a little luck, I will change the world! :)

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## Re:Online Comments for The Tracy Press

Posted by blake carter - 2007/08/15 01:26

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why not just make all posts anonymous? the only problem i see is that we all have tremendous egos and want credit for saying something smart.

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## Re:Online Comments for The Tracy Press

Posted by John Baxter - 2007/08/15 10:26

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Blake,

That may be the smartest thing I've read here.

Score one for your ego! :)

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## Re:Online Comments for The Tracy Press

Posted by NickD - 2007/08/16 09:16

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joedawgsteel,

Please refer to my previous post. You're right, this isn't the New York Times. However, that doesn't mean we can censor comments.

Also, on popular articles the comment count can easily sky rocket. So sometimes it can definitely be a handful to keep track of everything.

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I'm liking the suggestions so far! Keep them coming!

Regards,  
Nick D

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## Re:Online Comments for The Tracy Press

Posted by paulheally - 2007/08/19 06:36

Some interesting feelings and opinions--which we are propogating, right?

Anyway, earlier this year there were some really violent, vulgar and dispicable posts directed to a writer. I contacted the TP via email, and it was taken care of pretty quickly. At the time I suggested and volunteered to be moderator (among many, of course) to zap such garbage as soon as it hit the site. I join with JimF in asking the TP SERIOUSLY consider setting up such a system to monitor and edit the site. Oddly, as I type there is a totally inappropriate comment post under Sam's opinion piece (which I would love to remove IMMEDIATELY--it is the right thing to do), and I saw Cheri had stricken two other articles as well. These appear not to be one time occurences but rather rule. There is a true problem here that appears to be growing, and I encourage the Uppers of the TP to take some action as oppose to marvelling at all the "good suggestions". Lively debate, including artistic license and bits of name calling are gonna happen. Unfortunaltely, proper debate ediquette can and should not be edited and legislated. HOWEVER, vulgarity, slander (see senseless comments under Mickey M's Opinion piece) and other forms of vile and roughish behavior can. The Tracy Press needs to monitor and edit the online comments in the same manner they would their Op-Ed page. If this pap is not copesetic for the printed page, then it is just as unworthy of online publication.

My suggestion:

Set up some standards and procedure for posting. These do not have to be stringent or completely impinge on the free speech rights of individuals, just hold them accountble to being on the very fringe of civility. With Free Speech comes accountability. Bring together a group of TP volunteers to monitor the site for posts that do not meet the standards. I would then set up a system whereas readers can "flag" inappropriate posts and the abuse of the service, thus ensuring prompt attention to truly abusive posts including what appears to be the fashionable sport of impersonating or slightly changing the names of REAL participants. Just like grafetti, if you keep cleaning it up, the taggers get tired and move on. Lastly, I would strongly encourage a more stringent registration process. All participants must register providing pertinent information like phone, address and email info. You can take things a bit furher and require the actual use of your name--heck, opinion pieces and letters the editor require this exact information. These steps alone will send the Uncouths packing.

So why is this only a "good suggestion" and an idealistic hallucination and totally impractical in the 3D world? The answer lies on the front page of Saturday's TP--"316,376 page views and GROWING". Whom do you think this statement is geared towards? First, the egomaniacs (like most of us that enjoy having our say and shouting to the world :) and Second, ADVERTISERS. Completely banish any thought of Freedom of Speech protection. It is all well and good, but if you set up a system that deletes and discourages the participation of Rogues and Knaves, you also cut out about 50% of your participating population; thus cutting site activity and advertising allure. And I am not just referring to the posters, but also the folk that do not post but keep returning to see what new indecent maliciousness is being wrought. I am very sure the good folk of the TP do not support Vularity and Boorishness, but I can not believe they do not mind the namecalling, the posting wars and uncivility that DRIVES the numbers under the heroic umbrella of Freedom of Speech and Expression. To be frank, it does provide for some good and humerous reading. HOWEVER, at some point advertisers--and maybe that is whom those who are upset with the monitoring of the site should address--may ultimately dictate the level of speech and content that is deemed acceptable and necessitates some form of judicious monitoring. As a business owner, I would never advertise on this site in its current state of being.

I love the ability for good folk to instantly respond to articles and opinions as well as engage in "lively" debate. I have no problem that civility is often bent in such activiites when exercising our right to speak--which is not altogethe guaranteed when a private entity is involved. Meaning, even though as a media outlet, the TP has a preordained duty to champion Free Speech and abhor is limits, it still has the right to edit and limit what goes on ITS site no matter how frontier-like, lawless and untamable the Internet may be viewed.

Thank you for letting me share my thoughts

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## Re:Online Comments for The Tracy Press

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Thank you for letting me share my thoughts

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## Re:Online Comments for The Tracy Press

Posted by paulheally - 2007/08/19 07:11

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Previously, I just read a few articles and drew my conclussion about the vularity of some responses. Now I decided to go through the whole thing (and of course UP the page counts) and wow--this site is rife with sickness and sick people. More than ever, I am hoping good folk will stand up and strongly encourage the TP to make some changes to ensure good and lively debate and not the bar-room, gutter trash (clear difference from Trash Talking) we must endure as part of

the process on reading both the article on line and comments some may have.

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## Re:Online Comments for The Tracy Press

Posted by NickD - 2007/08/19 16:27

I'd like to make clear that I am actually not an employee of the Tracy Press. I work for the company who develops and enhances tp.com, SolutionsIC. I also happen to be the lead developer on the site as well.

I am asking for further suggestions to help the TP themselves see what people want / suggest, and to give them more options when they decide in-house how to handle article comments.

Having a moderator team is a good suggestion, the only problem is setting up a system to make sure all moderating is done in a unbiased manner. Perhaps allowing moderators the ability to make things inappropriate, and than an admin (obviously a tp employee) approves or does not, the comment in question.

One problem I've encountered in the past with giving the public the ability to mark items inappropriate is that the feature is often abused in the same way that the commenting ability is. The same people leaving vulgar and rude comments will use the feature to mark down people leaving worthwhile comments. And as can be seen, the good people are often outnumbered by the bad.

And one other option, which would go along with any other system implemented is a better registration process. Perhaps one that requires a real email address, and validation of the account.

Keep um coming!!!

-Nick

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## Re:Online Comments for The Tracy Press

Posted by shalaina - 2007/08/20 03:26

The registration/validation idea is a good one and would reduce the amount of clutter. It's not foolproof, of course, but would be an improvement. For the casual poster, it would be nice to still allow unregistered comments, but to support filtering of those comments or an icon or other visual tag to indicate they are unregistered. The filtering would hide all of the unregistered comments with a single click by the end user.

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## Re:Online Comments for The Tracy Press

Posted by Motown - 2007/08/20 03:39

I'm all for the moderator, but my issue in the beginning is that when I post something with my name someone else can come along and make rude comments under my name as well. I don't appreciate my name being used in that manner. Making postings anonymous is good too. I don't care if I get credit for what I say. I just feel that it would be a good idea to simply have to sign in for all aspects of commenting whether it be the forum or casual commenting. That way nobody can use someone elses name in a manner that is disrespectful or rude. Every person would have their own user name and it can't be copied. Your name is associated with your email address etc. It won't solve the issue of rude or vulgar comments, but at least it will be with their name and not mine.

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## Re:Online Comments for The Tracy Press

Posted by johnnyc - 2007/08/20 05:01

you guys sure whine a lot.

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## Re:Online Comments for The Tracy Press

Posted by cptnimo - 2007/08/20 07:30

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Nick D.,

Just have someone from TP do the moderating. All news is biased in the first place. Let the staff at TP decide whether a comment is appropriate or not. I'm sure that a lot of the vulgarity and racial/sexual/etc. comments would disappear though.

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## Re:Online Comments for The Tracy Press

Posted by NickD - 2007/08/20 09:18

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cptnimo, it is not my place to tell the TP how to run their website. I, along with my coworkers, recommend the best 'plan of attack', however how the site is ran is ultimately up to the TP.

That is one of the reasons why we have these forums; to let people give input into how they'd like the site to work. And to also hear what the biggest problems / issues are with it.

As with a lot of things out there, a dynamic website such as the TP.com needs a lot of work, and has a lot of moving parts. What we're trying to do is make sure all the gears mesh well together.

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Motown, having a more controlled registration process would fix the issue of people using your name. Allowing anonymous posting would only make it worse. Then people would simply sign your name at the bottom.

Regards,  
Nick

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## Re:Online Comments for The Tracy Press

Posted by JimF - 2007/08/20 10:17

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The reason you need a community of mods to do anything which would be effective is because people post 24/7, and the TP doesn't have personnel to watch this thing. Cheri and Amanda have to get some sleep once in awhile. TP staff, I am volunteering to be a PT mod, I think Paul did too. Just a charter and authority to delete vulgarity at first would be a start.

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## Re:Online Comments for The Tracy Press

Posted by JimF - 2007/08/21 04:29

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Looks like the TP is not the only paper struggling with morons who like to abuse comment sections and forums <http://tinyurl.com/yp432j> from the Indianapolis Star

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## Re:Online Comments for The Tracy Press

Posted by blake carter - 2007/08/21 16:45

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we do not need moderators, we need a better registration process. it goes like this:

to comment, one must enter their email address. TP sends a confirmation email to supplied address. The confirmation email contains a link and a passcode to the TP website. Member follows link, enters passcode, viola!

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with as much complaining about everyones politics and moral stances on here, i have a gut feeling that some person will post their sincere thoughts only to have a moderator who disagrees or has a personal grudge to delete that comment (not saying that those who voluteered would do that).

i did about 5 minutes of research and found this tool that some web developers use:

<https://www.typekey.com/t/typekey>

im not familiar with typekey, maybe nick can shed some light for us...

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## Re:Online Comments for The Tracy Press

Posted by Motown - 2007/08/22 01:48

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I think the registration is a good start. Moderators would serve to keep vulgarity out of the comments section. I believe if you can find several mods with various interests you'll be fine when it comes to what gets thrown out. I think that we get enough commenting traffic on this site to warrant that as well as enough to notice if a mod is pulling comments just because they don't like what someone says. I'm sure there's at least one person from the press who watches this page on a regular basis. Have a couple community based mods and one from the press.

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