

Moderating Comments: taming trolls and banning the bores (BeebCamp)

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How do you moderate comments on a website without reducing free speech? Joanna Geary from The Times online @timesjoanna is sick of being accused of gagging readers because they don't put every abusive or banal reader comment up on the website.

Anyone who looks at the comments on news/comment websites like The Guardian's Comment Is Free will recognise how fragmented and uncivil the 'debate' can be. Trolls are the worst problem, but Joanna points out that on a busy site, sheer repetition is just as big a barrier to a coherent thread.

Suggestions for a cure include putting up a payment barrier (!) and dumping the cruddy comments into a separate thread.

Of course, it would help if the website is clear about what it wants the reader to do. If you say Have Your Say then don't be surprised if that is precisely what the public wants to do.

Perhaps we ought to work harder to incentivise 'good' comment posters? Highlight the best comments, for example, so people get kudos for cleverness.

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