

TROLLS UNDER THE BRIDGE:  
ANONYMOUS ONLINE COMMENTS  
AND GATEKEEPING IN THE DIGITAL REALM

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the trend of anonymous online speech and the evolution of traditional gatekeeping roles of journalists as new media interaction with the public becomes commonplace. A textual analysis explores the opinions held by journalists and commenters (to online news sites) on the topic of online comments boards, trolling and the role anonymity places in public discourse on the Internet. The issue of civility among posters to anonymous online comment boards must be studied if journalists hope to navigate the relationship with these participatory news consumers going forward. In order to benefit from the opportunities for interactivity that new media provide, the industry must work to understand the phenomenon of trolling and devise a way to promote productive conversation that protects the marketplace of ideas while maintaining civility.