Webinar Series: Moderating User Generated Content & StoryShare

1. What is the difference between Pre- and Post- moderation?

Pre-moderation is when user generated content is reviewed before being posted online. Users generally prefer the instant gratification of seeing their contributions posted online immediately, which is why post- moderation is preferred. If they have to wait to see that content, they are less likely to come back and interact.

Post-moderation is when user generated content is posted immediately and then reviewed or removed after it's displayed on the site. People are more likely to participate in your blog or other projects if they can comment freely and see their comments posted immediately. Post-moderation isn't as scary as it sounds, though. There are various tools and best practices that you can use to make post-moderation work for you.

2. What are some of the tools my station can use to help with post-moderation?

There are several tools that you can implement that will help you successfully post-moderate user generated content.

Spam blockers: These programs thwart auto-spam that could use your blog comments to publish links to various unsavory enterprises. Programs like Captcha will install a little box on your comment form where users will have to type in the letters or numbers before posting a comment. Some of these programs have audio versions—they say the numbers or letters out loud—for blind users. Engage uses a program called Mollom that has proven to be quite effective. Some other PBS blogs use reCaptcha.

Foul Language Filters: These programs are often preset with a vocabulary of common vulgarities (including phrases used in hate speech). Usually these programs will send a comment that uses any of these words to a moderation queue, where you can read it and determine whether to post it or not. Engage uses a program called WebPurify that has proven to be quite effective, it costs $50 per year but you don't have to think of every unsavory word or phrase that you wouldn't want used on your site, we have found it well worth the cost..

Community Guidelines: These are ground rules you can use to outline the behavior you expect from your users. Guidelines should ask users to keep their comments focused and free of profanity, personal attacks, or hate speech. The rules should ask users to refrain from self-promotion and fund-raising, and to treat others kindly. Engage offers some sample guidelines that you are welcome to cut and paste to use on your own site.

<u>Human moderation:</u>   Even though there are many products to help with post-moderation, there is still nothing more valuable than an actual human being taking the time to check comments and make sure everything posted to your site is ok. It's rare, but filters don't always catch everything and you'll need to take a little time each day to skim your pages for unacceptable content. For the Engage site we generally find it sufficient to check for new comments once or twice a day, when broken up into multiple sessions it only takes around 5-10 minutes each time.

3. We promote ourselves as a child-friendly site, which makes post-moderation a little more difficult. In this case, is it ok to pre-moderate?

In the end, you need to do what you feel most comfortable with as it relates to your station. If you have content that is directed specifically to children younger than 13, you need to ensure the site is COPPA (Children's Online Privacy Protection Act) compliant, which dictates that special care needs to be taken when collecting or displaying personal information from children.   More information on COPPA is available at http://www.coppa.org/.

If your site has content that is not specific to kids, pre-moderation can work but as noted above, pre-moderation makes it a lot harder to create a forum for two-way communication with users. If you post clear guidelines and employ a tool or two listed above, there really is no need to worry about post-moderating content.

3. I've had some issues with YouTube commenters - they tend to be a lot less formal, kind of hit-and-run weird comments, so I'm doing pre-moderation. Often the usernames themselves are kind of offensive.

Unfortunately YouTube does not have a built in filter for comments. The only way to cut down on undesirable comments is to turn on comment moderation (pre-moderation) for select clips and approve/reject the comments, one by one. Kevin Dando (kdando@pbs.org) has many tips about this so please contact him for more advice on this subject.

4. If I post-moderate, is there a way to find out when new comments arrive on my blog without having to check it all day long?

Yes! Some blog platforms permit authors to receive a notice by email whenever a comment is posted, making the effort a lot easier. Different platforms offer different services for this so you may need to contact your webmaster or IT guru for more information.

If you use the Engage Comments Engine, we provide both a private RSS feed, as well as email notifications when comments are posted, or just when they're flagged as being offensive by your users. If you're interested in learning more contact Jonathan Coffman (jdcoffman@pbs.org)

5. Regarding StoryShare: Is it possible to get a feed of shared stories from different stations?

No, not with the current StoryShare tool that was used for The War and Carrier. However, we have heard many requests for this functionality and would like to incorporate feeds into future versions of story sharing tools.

6. What happens to all the collected StoryShare stories after collection ends?

Nothing right now. All the collected stories are housed in a database at PBS which isn't going anywhere. After active story collection has ended, users will be able to search for and access all the stories through the StoryShare module. The ability to search either for stories collected through you station or stories collected nationwide will remain active. In future versions of the tool, we'd like to find ways to make the stories more accessible so they can be highlighted or fed outside the StoryShare interface.

7. Can I use StoryShare for my local project or can I only use it for big PBS national projects?

The current StoryShare tool was designed to be used around high-profile national projects, however the PBS Engage team is working on developing a more light-weight story sharing tool that will be available for stations to use for local initiatives.

8. What future programs are going to use StoryShare?

In the immediate future, *We Shall Remain* and *National Parks* are working out ways to offer up story sharing opportunities to stations. However, the tools they might use may or may not be versions of the existing StoryShare.

9. How do we get access to SRC? I don't know who has the passwords at my station.

The password is usually kept by whoever manages your local Web site. If you don't know who that is, or that person has left, send us an email and we can help you.