

NY Times teams with Google parent to tame comments

The New York Times said on Tuesday it was teaming with Google parent, Alphabet, in an effort to help filter its online reader comments to maintain a "civil and thoughtful" atmosphere.



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The newspaper said it would work with Jigsaw, a technology incubator at Alphabet, to improve and expand its comments section.

The move comes amid frustration at many media organisations which have been seeking to boost reader engagement without allowing abusive and offensive comments.

"Maintaining a civil and thoughtful comments section is no easy undertaking, as evidenced by the number of publishers who have shut down their comment capabilities in recent years," said Kinsey Wilson, the editor for innovation and strategy at the *Times*.

"But the *Times* has been and will continue to be dedicated to providing our readers with a safe online community to discuss the most important issues."

Currently, the prestigious daily employs a team of 14 moderators who manually review some 11,000 comments each day. Only about 10% of *Times* articles are open to comments because of the time required for review.

Jigsaw uses algorithms to help this process, based on the moderated comments in the newspaper's archives. The open-source system will also be made available to other online publishers, according to the statement.

"We believe open sourcing nearly a decade of *Times* comment archives will benefit the entire journalism industry and

potentially make it easier for other publishers to manage comments on their sites," Wilson said.

The *Times* "hopes that the project will expand viewpoints, provide a safe platform for diverse communities to have diverse discussions and allow readers' voices to be an integral part of nearly every piece of reporting," according to a *Times* statement.

In 2014, *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* agreed to work together on a project funded by the Knight Foundation to create open-source software that can be adapted for news websites to get a better handle on online discussions.

Source: AFP

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