

Content Moderation

Peter Carragher, adapted from Joseph Seering (KAIST)

**TRUST &
SAFETY**
TEACHING CONSORTIUM

2026-04-18

Content Moderation

Content Moderation

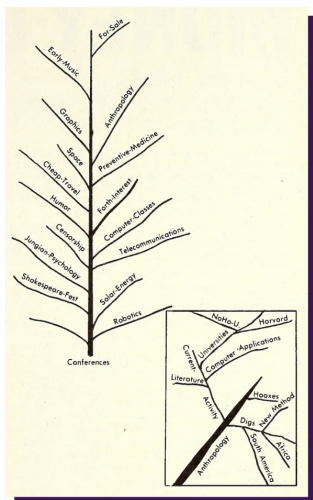
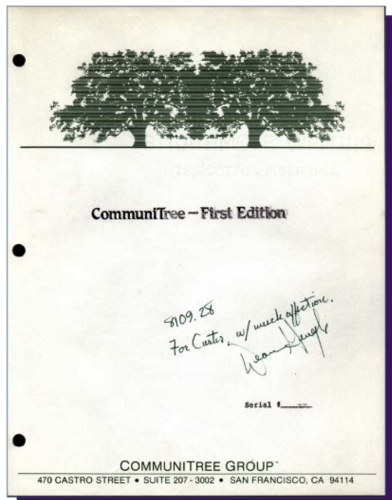
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- Begin to understand the breadth of models for content moderation
- Learn how to conceptualize different approaches to moderating a space.
- Reflect on how these models could evolve in the future

└ Learning objectives

Today we will:

- Begin to understand the breadth of models for content moderation
- Learn how to conceptualize different approaches to moderating a space.
- Reflect on how these models could evolve in the future



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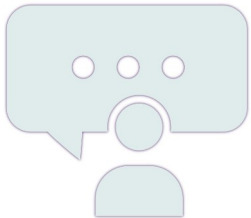
Content Moderation



I want to begin with a story about the early history of content moderation. In 1978, an Electronic Bulletin Board Service called CommuniTree was founded by tech entrepreneurs in the San Francisco area as one of the first publicly accessible online communities.

“We are as gods and might as well get good at it”

It was built on a strong, cyber-utopian ethos inspired by figures like Stuart Brand and R. Buckminster Fuller. Its creators felt that they were at the vanguard of a digital revolution, and they weren't shy about sharing this sense of self-importance. The very first post made to CommuniTree opened with a Stuart Brand quote – “We are as gods and might as well get good at it”



- System admins could not filter incoming messages
- Difficult to remove posted messages
- Anyone could use “control characters”

(Stone 1991, 1993)

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ANTI-CENSORSHIP ETHOS

Part of the underlying ethos built directly into the structure of CommuTree was a strong aversion to anything resembling censorship. System operators couldn't filter incoming messages to screen out problematic content, it was difficult to remove messages once they were posted, and any user could use what were called “control characters”, basically giving them a subset of administrative powers.



- System admins could not filter incoming messages
- Difficult to remove posted messages
- Anyone could use “control characters”

(Stone 1991, 1993)



1982

(Stone 1991, 1993)



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(Stone 1991, 1993)

In 1982, Apple made deal with the government to install computers into high schools in exchange for tax breaks, and enterprising high schoolers quickly discovered CommuniTree. Unimpressed by the intellectual and pseudo-spiritual attitudes of CommuniTree's citizens, they expressed their opinions by filling the board with all manner of messages that better matched their level of maturity. Per an account from Stone, 1993 (<http://software.bsdocumentary.com/APPLE/II/COMMUNITREE/vampires-excerpt.txt>): "it didn't take long for the kids to fill every byte of disk space with every word they could think of that meant shitting or fucking, and then they'd add control characters on top of that, characters that could mess with the program or stop the floppy drives. The sysops couldn't see the messages arriving and couldn't remove them afterward. The Tree was doomed."

Within a few months, CommuniTree was dead.

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"We are as gods"

vs

Teenagers

So – at the beginning of the social internet, gods fought teenagers, and teenagers won.

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"We are as gods"

vs

Teenagers 🏆

So – at the beginning of the social internet, gods fought teenagers, and teenagers won.



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Google suspends 'free speech' app Parler

🕒 9 January

Gettr, the latest pro-Trump social network, is already a mess

Taylor Hatmaker @tayhatmaker / 5:26 PM EDT • July 6, 2021

 Comment

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This might seem like a bit of a quaint story, but if you take a minute to think about it, it actually sounds quite a bit like something that could still happen today, more than 40 years later. Despite clear evidence from over decades, new platforms and spaces are still created with this same sort of free speech, anti-censorship ethos and are woefully underprepared when things don't go as planned.

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Hate speech on Facebook is here to stay

White Supremacists Still Have a Safe Space Online

Discord is a hub for 150 million gamers—as well as some of the worst people on the web.

Roblox Will Roll Out New Parental Controls After Concern About Sexual Content

WHO ADMINS THE ADMINS?

Hate speech on Facebook is here to stay

White Supremacists Still Have a Safe Space Online

Discord is a hub for 150 million gamers—as well as some of the worst people on the web.

BY APRIL GLASER OCT 09, 2018 • 5:55 AM

Roblox Will Roll Out New Parental Controls After Concern About Sexual Content

And the issues at play can be far more complex and dangerous than teenagers making crude posts – as we've seen throughout the other modules, content moderation has really become a core part of ensuring a functioning society.

THE NEW GOVERNORS

Klonick 2017

DIGITAL CONSTITUTIONALISM

Suzor 2018

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└─ How Do We Talk About Moderation

When we talk about content moderation, we often hear language that invokes metaphors of government and regulation – two of the seminal publications describing the current era of content moderation are titled “The New Governors” and “Digital Constitutionalism”. In this module though, I’m going to encourage you to think a little more broadly about how you view content moderation.

THE NEW GOVERNORS
Klonick 2017

DIGITAL CONSTITUTIONALISM
Suzor 2018

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└ Consequences of Regulatory Framing?



Universal policies
Reactive punishments

Consequences of Regulatory Framing?



- Universal policies
- Reactive punishments

Thinking about content moderation as a regulatory process traps us in a reactive mindset: we write rules, and when those rules are broken, we administer punishments.



Content
posted

Another user
reports it (?)



Content
(or user)
removed

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This sort of mindset might imagine the content moderation process as taking place during the period of time between when a piece of content is posted and when action is (or isn't) taken on it, sometimes with user reports in between.

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However, it can be much more productive to zoom out and consider both the period of time leading up to when content is posted and the period of time after action is taken. In the lead-up period, we can often see signs that something may not be going quite right, and in the aftermath we can see the impact of actions taken on affected users, onlookers, and even more broadly.

Models for content moderation?

- 1 Artisanal
- 2 Community-reliant
- 3 Industrial

Caplan, 2018

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└ Models for content moderation?

Researchers often use a framework developed by Robyn Caplan to categorize different approaches to content moderation. She identifies three approaches:

Artisanal – where decisions are made in-house at companies on a case-by-case basis

Community-reliant – where decisions are made by networks or committees of volunteer users

Industrial – where decisions are made by specialized enforcement teams, often with the assistance of automation and hired contractors, usually separate from policy teams

Models for content moderation?

- Artisanal
- Community-reliant
- Industrial

Caplan, 2018

Artisanal



Community-reliant

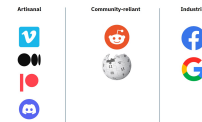


Industrial



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Caplan, 2018

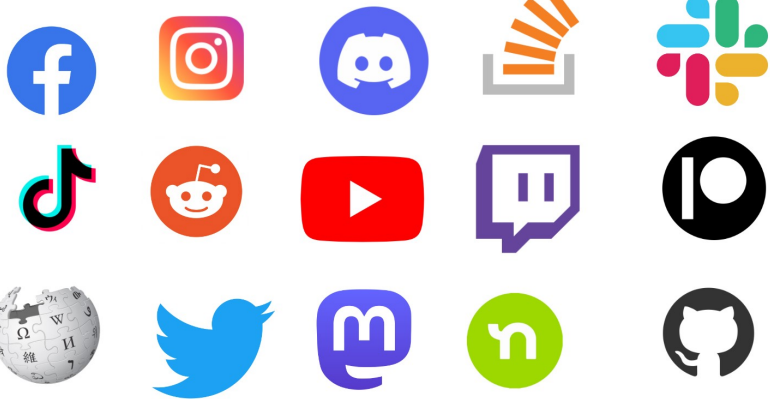
In her 2018 paper where she defined these categories, Caplan gave a number of examples of platforms that fell into each – she listed Vimeo, Medium, Patreon, and Discord as Artisanal companies; Reddit and Wikimedia as Community-reliant; and Facebook and Google as Industrial.

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But...

There are really elements of each in all of these.



As I was working on these slides I tried my best to think about all the platforms I could remember that are moderated in some nontrivial part by volunteers, and these are the ones I came up with kind of off the top of my head. Most academic research has focused on a subset of these (circled), but volunteer moderation is actually sneakily part of a lot of different ecosystems that people don't often think about. For example...



How to use moderation tools

As a moderator, you'll help review and manage comments people leave on a video or the messages participants send during a stream's live chat. You'll remain a moderator for the channel until the creator removes you.



Instagram Rolls Out New "Live Moderator" Feature. Here's How to Use It



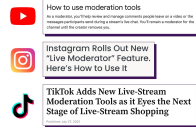
TikTok Adds New Live-Stream Moderation Tools as it Eyes the Next Stage of Live-Stream Shopping

Published July 27, 2021

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Beyond the platforms that we usually think about as being moderated by volunteers, designated volunteers can actually moderate comments and users on things like tiktok and youtube and instagram livestreams, and instagram and youtube creators can moderate comments on their posts at least to a certain extent. It's a little hard to find out about these tools and functions because the documentation is pretty thin, but it's definitely something that does happen.



What's the scale?

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└─What's the scale?

So what's the scale of this? Beyond just how many platforms rely on volunteer moderators, they actually do quite a lot of work. Facebook is of course the behemoth in this space, and I wish we had more updated numbers on this, but as of 2020 there were more than 70 million volunteers moderating groups and pages, and even if only one percent of those are active at all, that's still quite a lot of moderators.

(<https://www.facebook.com/community/whats-new/facebook-communities-summit-keynote-recap/>)

What's the scale?

70+ million Facebook group/page moderators as of 2020
Much of Reddit has been moderated by volunteers since 2005
On Discord, volunteers moderate servers that have up to **many hundreds of thousands** of users

What this looks like on Twitch

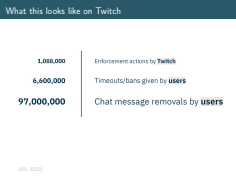
1,088,000	Enforcement actions by Twitch
6,600,000	Timeouts/bans given by users
97,000,000	Chat message removals by users

(H1 2022)

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└─What this looks like on Twitch



To give you another perspective on scale, here are some numbers from Twitch's transparency report, I think this was the first half of 2022. (https://safety.twitch.tv/s/article/H1-2022-Transparency-Report?language=en_US)

About 20% of those 97,000,000 were manual removals, and the rest were removed by automated tools based on settings the users manage.

Apologies to current and former Twitch folks here, this isn't a totally fair comparison, but it should give a sense of the scale of how big this is.

But More Broadly?

Most common Twitch moderator tasks in past 28 days

Welcoming and socializing newcomers to the community	75%
Contributing to or participating in discussions in chat	74%
Managing irritating or disruptive behavior (e.g. spam, nonsense, malicious links)	65%
Manually deleting chat messages	63%
Taking actions against individual viewers (e.g. bans, timeouts)	61%
Monitoring conversations to proactively avoid conflicts	53%
Manage general incivility (e.g. rudeness, immature behavior, social faux pas)	51%
Warning offenders that they could be punished	38%
Managing or customizing chatbots or chat commands	31%
Learning or gathering information about viewers to support engagement	31%
...	...

N = 1047 active Twitch moderators

(Seering and Kairam 2023, "Who Moderates on Twitch and What Do They do?")

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Content Moderation

└ But More Broadly?

Now to be fair, moderators do a lot more than just removing stuff. This is from some recently published work that I did with Sanjay actually about what volunteer moderators do on Twitch, and they definitely do some of this removal and banning work, but a lot of what they do is much more social.

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Breakout task one

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└ Breakout task one

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Imagine you're starting a wiki for your favorite game/book/ sports team/ tv series.

With your group, take 5-7 minutes and write a draft set of rules that you want people to follow when contributing /commenting on your Wiki.

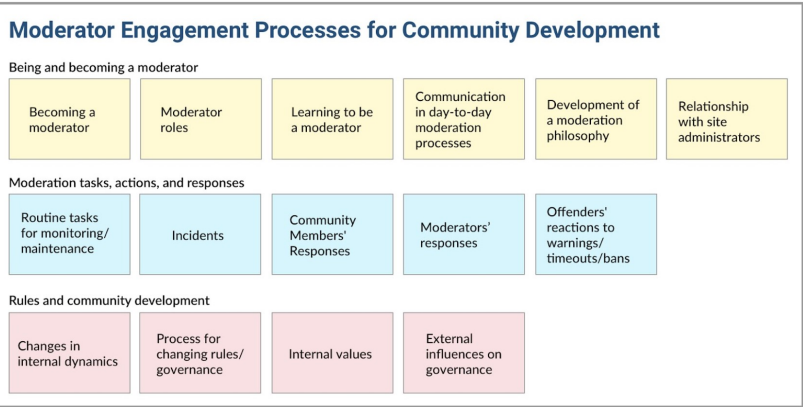
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Part 1: Moderation Processes
and
Moderators' Roles

(Seering et al. 2019, "Moderator Engagement";
Seering et al. 2020, "Metaphors for Moderation")

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(Seering et al. 2019, "Moderator Engagement")

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Content Moderation

1. BEING AND BECOMING A MODERATOR				
Step	Theme	T	R	F
Becoming a moderator	Friend, family member, or connection	4	2	13
	Recognized from other moderating experience	3	3	4
	Stand-out member of the community	15	14	11
	Availability at important times of day	2	2	5
	Volunteered or applied to become a moderator	0	10	6
Role differentiation	No different roles	0	0	8
	There is a head mod and/or hierarchy	2	3	11
Learning to be a moderator	Discussion or instructions	6	5	11
	Implicit understanding from being in community	7	2	8
	Learning by doing	0	12	13
Communication between moderators	Discussion about moderation decisions	7	12	10
	External platforms are used for communication	4	10	4
	Internal platforms are used for communication	0	14	13
	Off-topic or social conversations	0	3	3
	There is little or no communication	2	5	2
Development of a moderation philosophy	Valuing direct engagement	3	2	3
	Hands-off approach	0	4	2
	Maintaining a neutral stance	0	2	4
	Moderators as group "police"	0	3	4
Relationship with site administrators	Little or no engagement		19	14
	Work together to address problems		10	2

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(Seering et al. 2019, "Moderator Engagement")

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2. MODERATION TASKS, ACTIONS, AND RESPONSES				
Step	Theme	T	R	F
Routine tasks for monitoring/maintenance	Approving new members	0	0	13
	Contributing to the discussion	6	2	8
	Keeping the space "clean" or managing potential conflicts	4	3	8
Incidents	Disruptive behaviors	13	12	5
	General incivility	16	14	14
	Targeted attacks	16	11	10
Community Members' Responses	Critiquing offenders, explaining rules, defending community	13	6	9
	Flagging or reporting content	8	19	13
Moderators' Responses	Banning, timing out, or muting users, removing content	18	12	15
	Explaining to users why they were punished	2	20	10
	Use of tools beyond bans/timeouts for moderation	12	17	6
	Warning offenders	16	10	15
Offenders' reactions to warnings/timeouts/bans	Escalate behavior or resist	8	12	13
	No reaction	0	7	2
	Reform or apologize	8	12	9
	Seek clarification or request review	6	9	5
3. RULES AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT				
Step	Theme	T	R	F
Changes in internal dynamics	Community evolves and/or grows over time	8	10	7
	Issues or problems arise	2	7	12
	Temporary special situations	4	0	2
Process for changing rules	Community input	0	6	1
	Discussion among mods	3	12	8
	Executive decision	20	4	2
External influences	Site rules	0	9	3
Internal influences	Personal values	5	0	3

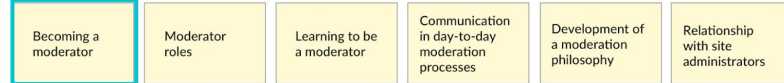
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(Seering et al. 2019, "Moderator Engagement")

Moderator Engagement Processes for Community Development

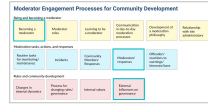
Being and becoming a moderator



Moderation tasks, actions, and responses



Rules and community development



(Seering et al. 2019, "Moderator Engagement")

└ Becoming a Moderator

“My moderators are people who have been members of my community for a long time, who have intelligent opinions about things, who have shown me that they can be reasonable about things that are difficult.”

(T19)

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(T19)



Chat Rules:

- Follow the Twitch Community Guidelines
- Be kind!
- Respect other humans
- Include everyone
- Listen to the moderation team

Ok, got it!

Hi!



RULES IN BRIEF

1. **Be Nice:** No Racism, Bigotry, or Offensive Behavior.
2. Nothing Less Than **20 Years Old**, and **Don't Soapbox**.
3. Ask **Clear and Specific Questions**, with **Time and Place in Mind**.
4. Write **Original, In-Depth and Comprehensive Answers**, Using **Good Historical Practices**.
5. Provide **Primary and Secondary Sources** If Asked. No Tertiary Sources Like **Wikipedia**.
6. Serious On-Topic Comments Only: **No Jokes, Anecdotes, Clutter**, or other **Digressions**.
7. **Report** Comments That Break **Reddiquette** or **the Subreddit Rules**.



WAYS TO NOT GET B&:

- 1) Don't resubmit the same meme over again - we will automatically ban you for being annoying and boring.
- 2) Stop complaining about the content on the page - we know it's bad.
- 3) Don't spam message the admins/mods - yes we all talk to each other and no, we don't know *why* someone deleted your meme, nor do we care Lol.
- 4) Don't advertise.
- 5) Don't sell UCBMFET merch. Your designs are bad and it ain't special unless its Berkeley Special 🤔
- 6) No prejudice allowed, unless your name rhymes with "Swiss Drill", then you're fair game for annihilation.
- 7) Do not submit reposted content - OC only and we will ban you forever. At least put the effort of shmooping a Cal logo or hat into the meme.
- 8) If your name is "Albert Castro" - you're automatically b&.
- 9) If you're homophobic, transphobic, a known perpetrator, xenophobic, racist, etc, you will automatically be banned. If you KNOW somebody in this page who IS and would want them removed, please contact an admin. We believe you.

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Content Moderation



Moderator Actions

“Primarily what I use the bot for is to prevent link spam, links to youtube, porn, malware...”

(T3)

“It’s better to do it on your own bot because you can code it to what you want.”

(T12)

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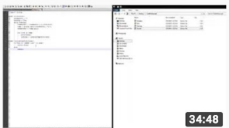
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Build a Twitch.tv Chat Bot in 10 Minutes with Node.js - Tutorial

Dev Coffee • 54K views • 2 years ago

Download Node.js - <https://nodejs.org/en/> Node.js Tutorial - https://youtu.be/Do_Hsb_Hs3cTmi.js Documentation ...



How to build your own chat bot for Twitch in 30 minutes! (Python)

Bad Nidalee • 37K views • 3 years ago

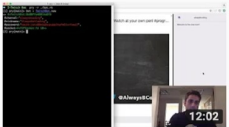
I had a TON of requests for how to do this. Hopefully this answers the questions that you guys have been asking. To get your ...



Create Your Very Own Twitch BOT - How To Setup a Twitch Robot. (100% Free)

Fmentz • 56K views • 3 years ago

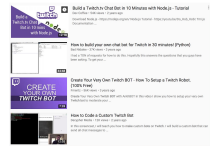
Create Your Very Own Twitch BOT with AnkhBOT In this video I show you how to setup your very own Twitch bot to moderate your ...



How to Code a Custom Twitch Bot

Decypher Media • 12K views • 2 years ago

In this screencast, I will teach you how to make custom bots on Twitch. I will build a custom bot that can send all chat messages to ...



Relationship with Admins

“No idea. If they've ever audited us, it's unbeknownst to me.” **(F7)**

“No clue. I would assume like never.” **(F14)**

“I'd be surprised if they knew we existed to be honest.” **(R17)**

2026-04-18

Content Moderation

└ Relationship with Admins

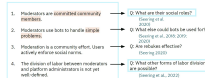
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1. Moderators are committed community members. → Q: What are their social roles?
(Seering et al. 2020)
2. Moderators use bots to handle simple problems. → Q: What else could bots be used for?
(Seering et al., 2018; 2019; 2020)
3. Moderation is a community effort. Users actively enforce social norms. → Q: Are rebukes effective?
(Seering 2020)
4. The division of labor between moderators and platform administrators is not yet well-defined. → Q: What other forms of labor division are possible?
(Seering et al., 2022)



Breakout task two

2026-04-18

Content Moderation

└ Breakout task two

Breakout task two

People have started contributing to your wiki. There are lots of comments you have to look through to decide what's allowed.

With your group, create a tab in the spreadsheet, copy the comments, and rate each comment as -1 (not okay) or 1 (okay). Copy your group's final ratings back to the main tab.

Reference Disagreement Deconvolution

“I see myself more as a gardener kind of mod so to speak. I'm very active, planting new posts and also removing the weeds.”

- R1

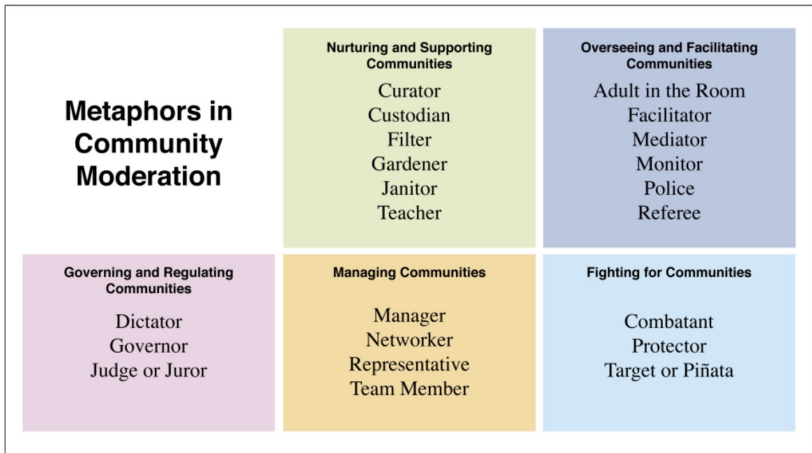
2026-04-18

Content Moderation

“I see myself more as a gardener kind of mod so to speak. I'm very active, planting new posts and also removing the weeds.”

- R1

2026-04-18



(Seering et al. 2020, "Metaphors in Moderation")