Don’t Feed the Trolls: A Training Model for Congenial Collaboration Online

This presentation opens with an opinion poll comparing responses from session participants with typical collaborative behaviors in virtual settings, highlighting those that challenge or outright interfere with positive, constructive interactions. Tracing the continuum from bad to worst, it moves from online communicators’ pet peeves to increasingly disinhibited virtual conduct, all the way to downright toxic behavior, including trolling. Vivid examples of actual cases are provided along the way.

Next, the session offers several models for online civility, conflict resolution and behavior. It examines such diverse resources as the virtual conduct code established by Virginia Tech University after a hostile student shot 31 others and finally himself; guidelines by Leslie Morton, the nation’s only Civility Ambassador on a university faculty; and Tim O’Reilly’s proposed Blogger’s Code of Conduct, culminating in Virginia Shea’s famous Core Rules of Netiquette. Finally, participants respond to six key questions raised in Online Civility and Its (Muppethugging) Discontents, by Sheril Kirshenbaum of Discover magazine, to explore their own beliefs about appropriate behaviors in virtual interactions. If time permits, attendees will be able to compare their conclusions with those of upper-division students in a distance learning setting at George Mason University.