Legal and Social Issues Involving Internet Interactivity

As I read Chapter 11 in Ryan Thornburg’s [**P*roducing Online News***](http://www.cqpress.com/product/Thornburg.html) about making journalism a conversation, two legal and social issues involved in on-line journalism stuck out to me. The first is a social issue that revolves around users commenting on on-line stories.  The second is legal issues coming from a journalist’s activity on social networking sites like [**Facebook**](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M5gtN16gOr8) and [**Twitter**](http://socialnetworkingnewsdaily.com/social-networking/what-is-twitter-for-beginners/). In this changing world of multi media policies must also change to include these issues.

Having a comment section is a great way of  increasing the interactivity of an article.  However, there is also social issues that stem from allowing the general public to share their opinion in such an open manner.  Sometimes comments are not appropriate.  This can lead to interested readers shying away from commenting on articles.

If I were to run a news room I would make a policy concerning users commenting on on-line articles.  My policy would start with a code of conduct that would simply state that commenters should be respectful in their posting. The rest of my code of conduct would include:

* Require readers to register with my website before commenting.
* Require journalists to use a spam filter like [**Akismet**](http://akismet.com/how/).
* Require the consultation of the [**COPPA Act**](http://www.ftc.gov/privacy/coppafaqs.shtm) to understand how to deal with people under the age of thirteen.
* Prohibit unnecessary duplication of  material.
* Prohibit all vulgar, disrespectful, and unrelated material.

All of these policies would be enacted to keep content in the comment section relevent and readers comfortable.

I feel that when journalist use social networking sites they need to understand the content of their pages can reflect on the reputation of themselves in a professional setting and their employer.

If a employee uses material he or she has access to at work or accidently discloses the identity of a source through a personal blog or socal media site there could be serious legal issues.  An example of this kinda of policy can be found in the [**New York Times Companies Policy**](http://www.nytco.com/press/ethics.html#B5).

In my news room I would add a policy about conduct on a journalist’s social networking site. This would be some of the policies:

* Journalists must remember to treat the internet in a transparent manner.
* Material that belongs to my news room must not be used in a personal web site.
* Journalists should not become any type of “friends” on-line with contacts and sources they work with.
* Do not include offensive language or images as this will reflect badly on the reputation of the journalist and news room.
* Journalist’s personal web posts must remain just that PERSONAL. They should not be misconstrued as the opinion of the news room or any other employer.

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