How did trolling come to exist

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The troll space began to shift in the early 2000s, when anonymous users of 4chan"s infamous /b/ board appropriated and subsequently popularized a very specific understanding of the term "troll."

In the early 90s, trolls had yet to come into mainstream public consciousness, at least according to the 1993 Big Dummy"s Guide to the Internet. Flame wars, on the other hand, were already an ...

The history of trolling is a history of rhetoric. This particular history of rhetoric is steeped in philosophy and mythology, spanning across cultures, continents, and time. Although trolling principally correlates with the rising popularity of digital spaces native to social media, blogs, and comment sections on websites, trolling as a form of ...

Trolls are shitting all over our internet. You can hardly search for something as innocuous as “dog” on Google without coming across inflammatory attacks on every possible dog-related opinion under the sun. All horrible things have to crawl before they can walk/crush spirits, though. Even trolls.

And while the term “troll” has become wildly muddied, it did have to come from somewhere. We decided to try and find out just where that dark, acerbic origin story began.

There were bulletin board systems. And Usenet. And newsgroups. And people just starting to realize the massive potential trembling beneath their fingertips. Anything was possible! Which, as it turns out, is not always a good thing.

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Whether or not you’re familiar with the term, you do know what flaming is. You’ve seen it under horrible political opinions on Facebook. You’ve seen it choking your Twitter stream. And you’ve seen it in every other comment in the vast wasteland that is . Put simply, a flame is a vicious, personal attack on someone made simply because you disagree with them.

Of course, humans have always had this potential for the irrationally vindictive, but the advent of the internet finally allowed it to thrive. Because as soon as you stuck someone behind a computer, a dangerously insular shield of anonymity came down and, for those inclined, happily took over. In discussing the sort of negotiation tactics that precede a flame war, Norman Johnson, an Associate Professor at Bauer College at the University of Houston explains:

The literature suggests that, compared to face-to-face, the increased incidence of flaming when using

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computer-mediated communication is due to reductions in the transfer of social cues, which decrease individuals’ concern for social evaluation and fear of social sanctions or reprisals. When social identity and ingroup status are salient, computer mediation can decrease flaming because individuals focus their attention on the social context (and associated norms) rather than themselves.

The introduction of anonymity not only made users feel free from the repercussions that might otherwise give them pause, but it also dehumanized potential targets. In other words, the internet gave all our worst impulses just what they needed to thrive.

Because if someone disagreed with you in the real, live social realm, you might feel frustrated, sure, but you’ll also see that person’s as another human with human emotions--not just a jumble of inflammatory words for you to destroy. You’ll take time to reflect, because you’ll realize there are consequences to your actions. Whereas on the internet, a clean slate is a mere username change away.

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