Project Document, User manual

Comment Anywhere

* Project Overview

Comment Anywhere is a web service that allows users to submit to and view a unique comment section for on any webpage on the Internet. Comments are viewed, posted, and interacted with via the Front End, which is a downloadable browser extension for Mozilla Firefox. The Back End stores data, provides that data to users, and validates that users have permission to retrieve given data or submit given new data.

* Motivation, Core Difference from Existing Comment Providers

Internet denizens have long found ways to have vibrant communications about a wide variety of content. In the past, more websites supported these conversations through comment sections, but many have shuttered their comment sections in recent years. [Medium-Why websites closing comments…] Instead, the avenues of discourse have become social media sites such as Twitter, Facebook, Reddit,, and bulletin board style forums, decoupling the conversation from the content itself.

While these sites may have a higher quantity of overall content than a given news site, they lend themselves to agendas and one-size-fits-all moderation policies while, at the same time, fragmenting the conversation and diluting information available to viewers of the core content. The conversation about a given point of interest on the internet becomes dispersed amongst any number of social media posts, thereby burying much valuable information and well formulated alternate views.

There is a usefulness and market desire to see comment sections closely coupled with the content, that will follow the content wherever it goes. Comment Anywhere achieves this by permanently tying a comment section with a given URL and making those comments available immediately to users as they browse the web through a browser extension. A unique comment section is available to every unique domain and path combination on the internet, allowing users to offer feedback and insights on under-commented areas of the internet, such as government and business websites.

* Other Differences from Existing Comment Providers

There are a few other features, besides permanent, content-tied comment sections that make Comment Anywhere unique. First, posts have three dimensions of ratings; “funny”, “factual”, and “agree”, allowing users to sort on several dimensions that they are interested in. Other comment sections have only one dimension of rating (e.g. Reddit, Twitter) or limit sorting options. (Facebook) Comment Anywhere also has the notion of Domain Moderators, users with privileges to moderate comments, but only for a specific domain. This allows us to create and enforce tailored moderation policies with respect to comments posted on a particular domain, when necessary, without having to apply those moderation policies universally across the website.

* Social Implications

At their best, comments are a forum for lively debate of the issues reported on or expressed in a piece, as well as a source for personal experiences and further information related to the content. The idea that information should be freely accessible runs deep within the ideology of the internet, and the notion that speech should be free is central to the values of this nation. Comment Anywhere can provide voice to alternate and silenced opinions that challenge entrenched agendas across the world, facilitating the speaking of truth to power and enabling societal change.

System Block Diagram

Implementation Details

* Difference from Design
* Challenges during Implementation

Use of software engineering principles

User’s manual; usage, etc.

References  
<https://medium.com/global-editors-network/why-news-websites-are-closing-their-comments-sections-ea31139c469d>

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Appendix: Team Details and Individual Contributions

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