

**Acceptance statement for the ICWSM 2025 award, delivered by
Cristian Danescu-Niculescu-Mizil on July 25, 2025 in Copenhagen, Denmark.**

Thank you. I'm truly honored to accept this Test of Time Award on behalf of my co-authors, Justin Cheng and Jure Leskovec. First, I want to thank the ICWSM community, not only for this recognition, but for the role it has played in my development as a researcher

I came to ICWSM from an NLP background, at a time when computational social science was still somewhat peripheral in that field. What I found here was a community that was genuinely interdisciplinary, where diverse perspectives weren't just welcomed...but expected.

The quality of the reviews at ICWSM has always stood out to me: they were thoughtful, rigorous, and sometimes...surprisingly candid. In fact, one of the reviews we received for this paper, after praising its "solid methodology," also described it as..."a bit boring."

Now, looking back at that comment with more detached clarity, I think the reviewer may have just been...well, trolling us. Because in the very next paragraph, they went on to outline a series of important future directions that the work enables. And as it turns out, many of those directions were eventually realized—either by us, or by others in the community (including some of you in the audience today).

So in hindsight, I think that review captured the very best of the ICWSM review culture: critical, constructive, and generative (and somewhat funny). Sometimes the most useful reviews are the ones that leave you both humbled *and* inspired.

This paper is particularly meaningful to me personally. It was my first as a faculty member at Cornell, but it also grew out of earlier work during my time as a postdoc at Stanford and as a faculty at Max Planck.

According to my email archive, we used to call our weekly meetings the "trolls meeting"—a name that included not just me, Justin, and Jure, but also Michael Bernstein, with whom we later co-authored the follow-up paper *"Anyone Can Become a Troll."*

In comparison, the paper that is receiving the Test of Time Award today may not have had the flashiest title—and those of you that follow my work (or at least looked at my website) know that I am *all about* flashy titles. Looking at the draft yesterday, I noticed that an early title contender was: "Trolls Will Be Trolls." Which I'm glad we eventually dismissed...because in retrospect, it would have suggested exactly the opposite of what the paper revealed. (So I don't know how

we came up with that idea in the first place.)

So, without a flashy title, something else must have made it resonate over time (apart from luck, of course). I think it was the new perspective it opened: Instead of just looking at what goes wrong in online conversations, we started asking why, and think about how we might anticipate it.

In fact, one of the key insights that emerged from this work—and that shaped much of my research over the last 10 years—was that antisocial behavior online often doesn't originate with stereotypical "trolls": people who are there to purposely wreak havoc. Instead, it can emerge from regular community members, just like me and you, whose behavior shifts over time in response to context, misunderstandings, or accumulated grievances. We also found that there are early signals—subtle cues in how someone interacts—that can predict these future shifts.

That insight opened up a new research direction: leading to the Conversation Gone Awry task and eventually to what we now call Conversational Forecasting—a new class of NLP models that can predict the future outcome of a conversation. And that, as we recently show, can be ultimately used to support and empower people during their ongoing discussions. Offering an alternative to harsher moderation practices.

These conversational forecasting models have since been applied to predicting a range of conversational outcomes—beyond antisocial behavior—including in high-stakes domains like mental health support.

So once again, I want to thank you, the ICWSM community: for the recognition, for the inspiration, and for the kind of constructive skepticism that helps good ideas grow. I'm grateful to share this award with my partners in trolling, Justin and Jure—it has really been so much fun working together!

Thank you.