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Our topic for this CONVA is simple:

## **What can't we learn from the internet?**

(Curious about what a CONVA is? Check out our explanation [here](#). Or just jump in and experience it.) This CONVA is being held by Janine's EWP 290 students at SUNY ESF.

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### **First, what we can learn from the internet**

The internet is an amazing resource, a powerful tool, an incredible way to connect to people in other parts of the world. On the internet you can learn about science, literature, philosophy, music, and history. You can get information about other places, read or listen to news, and learn about recent research in your field. You can observe communities and sociological movements. You can create and share creative works. You can get feedback and improve your work.

Lots of communities and circles exist in virtually every field or industry, and interacting with these people can help you gain insight and improve your ability to communicate and argue your point. They can also provide essential fact-checking and insight into issues relevant to your work.

### **Video tutorials**

On the internet, you can find video tutorials for tasks. For virtually any task you care to name, you can probably go online and find step-by-step instructions or even a video demonstrating how to carry it out. Don't know how to tie a tie? Just search youtube, and you can find [a video](#) that will teach you. I learned more helpful tips and tricks on how to paint nails online through tutorials than I ever learned in beauty school. Online tutorials created the sense of one-on-one time with an instructor, which was a rare thing to get in class.

### **Instrument Tutorials**

I wouldn't know how to play some sections of songs in my repertoire if it weren't for YouTube tutorials. From the piano to the cello, all instruments are covered. If I need to know what a piece sounds like before I come into orchestra class, I can immediately look it up on YouTube, iTunes, etc. and listen to it.

I agree with this. Sometimes just looking at something on paper is not enough and I think this idea can be applied to way more than just learning music.

I also agree, to a point. I play around on the guitar and have learned a bunch of songs from looking up chord progressions on an app on my phone. However, it's different if you're in an actual band. There are some parts you just can't learn unless you're in a full ensemble, to hear distinct parts and to learn to play off them. Especially since I was a jazz drummer for ~5 years,

the way you play a tune can drastically change from take to take, and most often I have to adapt to the ensemble and add/remove parts from my score.

## **Games**

Computer games can teach us analytical skills and strategy. Computer games can also be used for procrastination (see topic below) but they also help one relax after a really stressful day. And the best part about computer games is that they are fun when you are playing them.

## **How to procrastinate**

The internet is an amazing medium for procrastination, with endless youtube videos and cute pictures of cats. Not to mention the endless death traps of procrastination that are social media websites. It's easy to lose track of time when scrolling through Facebook, Twitter, or **especially** Tumblr and Reddit and instagram! The key to procrastinating just the right amount with any of this is to keep a constant check on time- know when you need to get serious, log off, and do some work. (Trust me, I deal with this every single day. There's a balance somewhere).

## **Connections across the globe**

The internet connects us to people all over the globe. We can get perspectives from people in other fields and from underrepresented groups located all around the world. You can gain a great deal of insight by hearing the stories and experiences of other people. You can see photos of Paris, read blogs written by women in Egypt, watch videos taken in South America, and friend people in just about any country in the world. Understanding other perspectives can help you in learning how to be a fair and empathic person. It can also provide an excellent resource for understanding what is going on in the world. This is very important if you are responsible for creating policy or if you will be traveling or dealing with a particular community or group of people.

## **A Variety of Viewpoints**

The Internet offers points of views from many different types of people, making the Internet a melting pot of eclectic opinions. Gathering your knowledge from multiple different venues will make you a more well rounded person, open to all points of view.

## **But there are things we CAN'T learn from the internet.**

We can't learn the feeling of [touch](#), human to human/human to animal/human to environment, through the internet.

There's no replacement for learning by doing something. There are definitely things in this world that you can't learn to do simply by Googling it. Like swimming- you can learn about the sport, but in order to know *how* to swim, you have to jump in the water and learn the techniques. There's definitely a limit to what the internet can teach us, but it seems that that limit is mostly in the area of learning how to do something well and properly.

I feel like you can learn pretty much anything on the internet in this day, but that is all you can do. It is hard to 'experience' through the internet. You may learn how to do a lot from the internet, but you cannot experience it via the internet. The internet provides information but not experiences.

### **Social skills**

I think we often see people demonstrating social skills on the internet, but that's probably not where they learned them in the first place. Virtual conversations and social interactions will never replace face-to-face interactions with other human beings as the way to learn social skills.

They may never replace face-to-face interactions but i do think that using social media for communication is an important and vital thing to learn how to accurately and acceptably use the internet for interacting with others.

I agree the internet takes away from social skills. The internet is a great source for communicating with others but by relying on this technology, it is all we know anymore. People are losing the ability to talk face-to-face and are avoiding confrontation because the internet is an easier way for others to state an opinion and hide behind a screen rather than address someone personally.

Yes, technology is advancing and as a society we need to adjust to these new changes but that doesn't mean we need to lose sight of traditional writing on paper. Social skills are very important to have and essential in ALL work fields. Today, many people are losing that ability to interact with others resulting in less efficiency in their work.

### **How to interact with people**

What you can't learn from the internet is how to truly interact with people. Talking with people in person is much more fast-paced. You cannot reword a sentence to make it sound more intelligent and you cannot adjust your grammar. Having a conversation with someone over the Internet, while a great way to meet a lot of people, is less personal and lacks the connection one needs to succeed in the real world.

The internet can't teach us to be real people either. in fact, it sometimes teaches us to hide behind a screen name. So, how do you really know who you are talking to is a real person?

Studies show that 90 percent of our communication is through body language and tone of voice. That's why communication on the internet will always be a pale second to communicating in real life.

This is true especially for humor. Many times when communicating or writing on the internet I will not make a joke or say something that I normally would when talking face-to-face because I know that my tone won't be carried through to the recipient. As a result most of my conversations end up being short and fact-based with fewer tangents and less small talk than a face-to-face conversation.

### **Hands-on experience**

We can't learn with hands-on techniques through the internet. If you want to learn how to ride a horse, for instance, you need to actually get on a horse. No number of YouTube tutorials can replace that experience. You can play tennis all you want on a Wii, but that's not going to translate into you being a great tennis player in real life.

You can't do hands-on things in virtual reality, and you don't get the same feelings you would get in real life. Most people learn better when they are more interested in the subject. If you feel something towards something, it would cause you to be more interested in learning a subject. Which do you think a ten-year-old would chose? A) Looking up facts about dogs on the internet and looking at pictures of dogs on the internet or B) actually playing with a dog while learning facts about the dog from another human being. Hands-on techniques work better for some people than things on paper or on a computer screen.

Virtual design

The internet has a seemingly infinite amount of information that we can learn. However, the how-tos and facts can only teach you so much. You need to use the information in practice in order to truly learn them. You may have 1000 ways to beat someone in a fight, but if you never fight, your information is useless.

I believe any knowledge gained can be useful whether it is from the internet or hands-on. However, hands-on knowledge can speed up the learning process through experience and allow the information to be remembered over a lifetime instead of instantly forgotten when unused.

There are many videos online, more specifically youtube, about experiences people are having but you, yourself, may have a different experience to the same thing that is going on in the video. You may act, feel, or think differently than that person in the video. For me, I love watching motorsports, but it is certainly not the same watching someone ride rather than actually getting outside and doing it yourself.

***Hugs/Tactility***



***"I have always wanted to touch or hug people I know online. So far, you cannot simulate this online"***

CC image by [Loren Kerns](#)

### **Taste and smell**

Similarly, you can't learn on the Internet how something tastes or smells. You can learn how other people describe that thing's taste, but so far the Internet is only able to convey the senses of sight and sound. Other senses rely on language for us to interpret them.

When I think of my favorite breakfast of two, hot cooked eggs that my chickens laid the day before piled between two thick slices of buttery bread, there is nothing online to compare that to. So many senses are involved in that joyful experience. The sense that my eggs came from happy chickens, the weight and warmth of the nourishing food in my hand, and steam nearly burning my mouth cannot be experienced in any other way.

There are also smells that make you feel joy in moments that cannot be experienced online. I think of my dog and the delightful stink he acquires after weeks of daily swimming in the summer, the smell of the dirt that is being warmed by the sun after the first season's thaw, and the stench of the local farmers spreading manure on the fields in preparation for next year's harvest. These small experiences are what make me feel like myself.

The worst part about not being to smell or taste something you see on the internet is when you're watching a cooking video!! Oh how I would kill to taste that mac and cheese...

### **Color**

One does not have the ability to learn color through the internet or even a photo. Color must be captured by the eye. As a student that has studied art for years, the internet does not produce the true color. Computers are becoming better in resolution but color can only be seen in person. To understand color theory one must stand there and take in the true color. What people think is a true color is actually a mix of shades. One can easily learn the color wheel on the computer but to actually be able to see the color one must experience color in person.

### **Sailing**

The best way to learn how to sail a boat is to go out on the water. It takes time and experience to observe how the boat responds to wind, current, and waves. Sure, you could watch some videos online about sailing and you could learn a lot about different types of sailboats online, but nothing on the internet can replace the experience of being a boat and noticing how it heels as you shift your weight and how the sails fill with wind, depending on which direction you steer the boat in. When you are sailing, you have to respect the weather, the wind, the current, the waves, the river — and acknowledge them as forces greater than yourself. That feeling of humility isn't something I've ever felt on the internet.

### **Traditional Ecological Knowledge**

Traditional Ecological Knowledge is the knowledge that indigenous people accumulate by living in the same place for thousands of years, making careful observations of the landscape, the weather, the plants, and animals. It comes from years of trial and error. Traditional Ecological Knowledge is passed from person to person through oral tradition. By talking to a native elder, you can learn something different than the kind of scientific facts you can learn from browsing the internet. Often, this knowledge is so internalized within a subset of an indigenous nation that it never finds its way to the internet, much less in books or in other print media.

### **Spiritual connection to Nature**

I can spend hours looking at Earth Porn pictures on tumblr or reading stuff about environmental issues or checking out webcams of eagles nesting somewhere and lots of other nature-related things on the internet. But that will never replace the feelings and experiences I can get while hiking in the woods, or fishing in a river, or swimming in the ocean, or even out shovelling snow on a cold winter night.

What about the places we cannot actively travel to in our lifetimes? Wouldn't you say that seeing the images that others have been so privileged to behold and capture and having them share them with us is a way to become closer to this magnificent planet and everything it contains? There is a deep love manifest in the photos and videos of wondrous aspects of nature captured by people that gets imparted on the eyes of the beholder. Many people are not so lucky to get to travel the world because travelling is expensive. I, for one, have found that much of my connection to natural places around the world has come from these sources because I haven't been able to experience nature as much as other more fortunate people have.

I think if you're going to teach a child how to be connected to nature, to care about the environment, you have to take him outside. Let him get muddy. Let him explore. Let him climb trees and wade through ponds and pick wildflowers. Putting him in front of a television or computer will not achieve the same thing.

### **Emotional benefits that come from nature**

Author [Richard Louv](#) argues that spending "unstructured time in nature" is something we all need. He says that spending just two hours of unstructured time outdoors each day is as effective as anti-depressant medicine. He has studies to show the emotional and psychological benefits to people spending time outside every day, whether it's walking in an urban park or hiking in the woods or exploring an urban lot. You can't get that from the internet.

Definitely agree with this. especially with younger kids, not experiencing nature at an early age can affect appreciation for it

### **Learning to learn? (not sure exactly what this topic is)**

The internet is a good place to start for anything really, but learning how to learn should not happen there.

I think the internet is a great place for motivated self-learners.<---- So true!!

How did you learn to be self-motivated to learn though? The question might be: Does seeing something on the internet make you curious enough to ask about it and therefore learn about it? Does it make us more or less critical? I've wondered if it enhances critical thinking. You need to think about what you are reading and make a judgement call, that would be deciding what's hoax and what's real.

I think the internet is like any other tool: we can use it to learn valuable things, or we can use it to escape from reality, procrastinate, and waste time. I mean, compare using the internet to reading books. You can choose books that teach you all kinds of amazing stuff, or you could spend all your time reading trashy romance novels.

Trust me, a person who spends literally all her free time on the internet- there are ways to enhance your knowledge of anything, but you can also spend all your time on social media sites freaking out about your favorite TV show or movie with a bunch of random people from all over the world, much like I usually do. The internet is good for a lot of things in this way- it can be a great learning tool, but can also be the key to way too much procrastination and down time (and fun!)

### **Different learning styles**

Everyone learns how to do things differently. We've talked about how school systems have one way of teaching and they expect every child to learn that way but that's just not how it works. This is why it is tough to say you can't learn things from the internet or you can because everyone is different. There are some that are able to take something they read or watch online and apply it to life and others that can't. For me personally, I like to interact with people and learn from a person I can connect with because then I'll really get into learning. For example, I've been pretty good in the kitchen all my life because I loved watching and helping my dad cook. I used to roll meatballs for him, slice and dice vegetables, and saw which spices he liked to use. I would never be able to get that experience from the internet and I don't think cooking would be the same for me. So, what I'm getting at is, everyone learns differently. The internet helps some people learn a lot of things and I've learned quite a bit from the internet, but for me, sharing the learning process with a loved one or a friend or a community member is a much better experience.

Personally I have learned to cook from recipes I found online, and if I didn't know how to do something in the recipe I would just google it. I think this goes along with the fact that everybody does learn differently, while the personal hands on experience and being able to watch someone perform the tasks worked for you, for those who don't have that kind of opportunity can still learn just as well from the Internet.

The internet may make it difficult for some people to learn how to do things if their learning style is uncommon. While the internet may accommodate the learning styles that are common for a majority of its users, it may unintentionally marginalize those who are unable to learn in those ways. If efforts aren't made to remediate this, the internet may in effect turn away those whose learning styles are more unconventional.

### **Good teachers**

I don't think the internet will ever replace the need for good teachers. I learn better when I have a real life teacher who takes the time to get to know me, who encourages me, and who challenges me. I think teachers can use the internet as a tool (and they should), but I think it's important to remember that the internet is a tool, not a teacher.

It's like taking an online class versus taking a regular class in a classroom. You can learn some stuff from an online course, but you won't understand and learn as much as you would if you were physically sitting in a classroom learning about something- there's simply no substitute for it.

I would have to slightly disagree. Your point may be true, but only in the case of specified subjects. For subjects such as math, you can learn a ton online. The internet even provides teachers for you that you can find on youtube or math.com. As online courses are concerned, there are hundreds of courses these days that can be taken online and are obviously accepted by institutions because they are successful. If online courses didn't show results, it would not be a thing still.

I don't think the presence of online courses is proof that they are effective. I think institutions will continue to offer them as long as they can make money off of them. Still, I do agree that you can

learn all kinds of data-based knowledge on the internet. Math and science are good examples. Still, that's not the same as having a teacher who empathizes with you. I don't think the internet will ever totally replace good teachers.

## [khan academy](#)

### **Experiencing Another Culture**

The Internet can only provide information but not experience. Without experiencing cultures in the certain regions with local people, it is very hard to feel the spirit or the meaning of cultural events for the society.

I think a lot of people are limited in their knowledge about another culture; how often can you just hop on a plane and fly somewhere new? While I agree that the internet can't teach you everything about a new culture, and nothing is a substitute for actually visiting, I think the internet can help you begin to experience a new culture. I can google cultural norms, watch videos of everyday life across the globe without being limited by time or money.

### **Change of heart**

The most important thing we cannot get from the internet is a change of heart. A person is capable of learning that being violent is bad. But, if they are a violent person, the internet cannot change the way they view the world.

(Why not? I've read articles on the internet that have changed how I view the world. I've had conversations with people over the internet that have changed my thinking.)

I personally believe that people should spend money on memories rather than material items. No matter how much I read on the internet that certain clothes are "in" it will not change my value for memories rather than short lived highs.

But the internet is not where fashion and the consumerist model of consumption began. Before the internet, there were magazine ads, billboards, television commercials, fashion shows, movies, etc. I don't think we can blame the internet for how people spend their money. I do think that memories come more from the real life experiences rather than time spent on the internet.

A more scientific (and controversial) example is religion. No matter how many papers, documentaries, or anything scholarly comes out "proving" religion/god do not exist, millions, if not billions, of people will continue to believe in god.

But what does that have to do with the internet? Many churches have websites. You can read articles by religious clergy on the internet. Heck, you can get [Spark Notes of the Bible](#). I think you can learn a lot about religion on the internet.

Yup, I can definitely learn a lot about different religions on the internet. However, I was not able to virtually visit a Jain temple through the internet, or see my friend ringing the temple bell, or bowing. I didn't exactly receive my Catholic confirmation through the internet, either. Perhaps experiencing religion the fullest way is sharing it with another person?

You can learn a lot about anything on the internet that can change your opinion/view on something- just because you haven't experienced much of something in real life, doesn't mean seeing information (correct information, anyways) or opinions about it won't change your

perspective. The only thing you wouldn't be getting through the internet is a face-to-face debate/conversation about the subject.

### **Right from wrong**

Anything you put on the internet is visible to nearly everyone else with internet access. Browsers can comment, share, and (if they're handy enough) even make changes to others' material. If someone grew up in a situation in which his or her only interactions were via the internet, I don't think they would have a complete handle on the concept of right and wrong. I realize these concepts vary from place to place, and so it's all entirely relative, but due to the massive volume of users and materials on the web it seems that the varying opinions of the millions of other internet users (from one extreme end of the spectrum to the other) would distort the concept for the individual.

### **Complementary**

I think trying to separate "what we learn from real life" and "what we learn from the internet" is difficult because I think the two can complement each other. To learn how to play Ultimate Frisbee, I need to practice in real life, whether it's throwing with friends, doing drills, or playing game after game. But that doesn't mean the internet isn't helpful. I've used it to study other players, to look up rules, to find stretches, etc.

What about using Wii to practice sports? Can it get so good you don't need the real thing?

I don't think playing sports on a Wii is anything like playing sports in real life.

Wii sports is definitely nothing like real sports.

I have always thought that learning something on the internet can complement what you are learning in the real world. For instance I use youtube constantly as a reference to help reinforce an idea that I was wondering about. I guide fly-fishing and have fished myself for 15 years yet I will still watch youtube or use the internet to look up different techniques that I may already know. Sometimes when I do this I end up gaining another perspective on something that I had thought I already mastered.

The online tutorials can only show several examples or moves. One must practise in real life in order to master a certain skill. Even for software skills. For example, online Photoshop tutorials can only show you how to apply different functions and adjustments of pictures. To edit your own pictures you need to perform the steps yourself.

### **To Care**

I don't think that the internet has taught us how to care just yet despite all of the attempts to try and teach us what to care about. To learn how to care you must actually have a reason for caring and something inside of you that makes you care. If you do not have that piece inside of you, then you probably won't care about anything despite the internet trying to teach you what to care about something and how.

The constant stream of ads and distractions on the internet allows your focus to constantly slip from one topic to the next. This prevents a genuine care towards one single thing, instead we are stretched out trying to show interest or care in too many topics.

## **Internet is Impersonal**

"To care" made me think about how impersonal the internet is. You can watch youtube videos, see facebook pictures, read someone's articles, but the whoever posted the videos, pictures, etc, does not seem as real as if he or she was standing in front of you. It is hard to see someone online and fully grasp that he or she is real, going about their day somewhere. This disconnect from reality is what I believe to be the cause of online bullying. Online bullies only see a screen and words and pictures; they don't see the person behind the posts.

I totally agree. Just think about all your facebook friends or Instagram followers. How many of them would you actually say "Hi" when you see them? It is really easy to have friends in the internet or to show people you do not like them because it is kind of unreal and we feel safe sitting behind our computers. However, can you count on all you friends and followers when you actually have a problem? Probably not.

Furthermore, they don't see the damage they do by [cyberbullying](#). Essentially, the internet cannot teach you compassion for others. The anonymity of the internet has created an atmosphere in which bullies can hurt people without ever being caught. The internet has brought tragedies to our lives. Cyberbullying has caused multiple deaths. It is now illegal to cyberbully. If there is any more cyberbullying, the internet might become our own personal enemy.

## **LIFE**

You can not get real life experiences on the internet. You have to actually go out into the real world to feel, learn and experience. The internet only going out there and doing something. You can watch a video of the Great Wall of China. But you won't get the different aspects of actually going to China, like being tired from hiking, getting sweaty, feeling the breeze or smelling the gross dude next to you. The internet does not allow for living in the moment, seeing, feeling, and creating an ever lasting memory.

I have to agree. No one on their deathbed say, "I wish I spent more time surfing the internet."

If anything, someone on their deathbed might say something along the lines of "I wish I had spent less time on the internet and more time doing things I love with people I love."

## **To Care (cont.)**

One of the hardest things about the internet is that it is hard to truly care about the things we read, and view online. Sure we may watch a video of the BP oil explosion and want change in the oil industry, but will you actually do anything? We may watch a video about animal cruelty and think that its insane how horrible animals across the world are treated, but are you actually going to do anything? In order to have an actual connection to things in life you need to not only visually see them, but also connect to them on a much deeper level. If you actually visit an area that has experienced a disaster, then that visit will create emotions that can't be created just by going on the internet. There is a huge difference from actually visiting and caring about things than just sitting in your pajamas in your dorm wasting a few minutes on the internet. So although

people can say that their experience on the internet caused them to care about things, it won't even compare to the experience and connection they will feel if they actually visit said area.

### **What a Tree Feels Like**

You cannot learn what a tree feels like. Writers of the Internet can be as descriptive as they want, you can attempt to describe a physical feeling. In order to experience what the bark of an oak tree, the wind on your face, or grass in between your toes, you need to go outside. This is one huge barrier with the Internet. Even with the coming development of virtual reality, feeling will likely never be virtualized. You can try to convert a feeling into images, videos, sounds, and words. Your brain can try to convert this into feeling (relying on memories of this feeling to try to recreate feelings), but NOTHING will ever match being able to reach out and touch something. Scent is another great aspect of reality that is lost in the virtual world. It is believed that scent is the one of the greatest links to our memories. It is also one of the hardest senses to recreate, unless there is something that you are actually smelling.

love this^

### **About Yourself**

You have to learn about yourself through, well whatever it takes. Each individual experience is different for everyone. I love the environment because I feel that everything has its place and are able to relax. I have learned a lot about myself while attending our class. Didn't think that an English class could teach me some much more. The internet is a loving distraction. After everything I've read, I am now ready to lie. That sounds horrible but we are lied to everyday about the true consciences of our choices. We have been lied to about plastic, electricity, and food. If I had the money I would employ the marketers that have done such a good job on us. I don't fully understand exactly what I am implying. I see the statistics of all the animal, plants and land that are being destroyed and want them to have the same future we wish upon our children. I also don't think this is an us versus them. We are all in this together. The internet will supply you any answer you ask of it, but it cannot define who you are. I like the internet because it is a gray area.

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