

# Internet as a societal polarizer

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TECHNEWS WRITER

You're wrong.

Now those are two words that no one ever wants to hear. But this simple observation of arguably basic human nature, combined with recent developments in how humans seek and access information, has some very profound ramifications.

Information access has always been very tightly constrained. When Guttenberg started the printing revolution, everyone read the Bible because that was the only book printed in bulk. Even with the invention of mass media, casual consumers of information still have very little say in the type of information they consume. A Soviet citizen in the 60s heard TV, newspaper, and radio content glorifying the state and the communist way of life, while his American counterpart, in essence, hears the same thing regarding democracy and consumerism.

Then, of course, Google happened. Google made the content of the Internet not only easily accessible, but easily customizable. On the TV and radio, even with today's hundreds of channels, you see what the show producers want you to see. On the Internet, however, you see only what you want to see.

While great for the consumer, this unprecedented level of control over our intellectual intake has many immense dangers. Instead of broadening our scope of learning, internet browsing instead tends to polarize our existing views, or even worse, blind us to the possibility of valid conflicting views.

This concern is actualized when the University of Minnesota published the results of a study titled "The Internet and Racial Hate Crime: Offline Spillovers from Online Access," and the summarizing statement of conclusions read "The incidence of racial hate crimes increased by 20 percent when a new broadband provider entered an area, according to new research from Carlson School of Management and NYU Stern."

The study makes two key observations. First of all, the correlation between broadband access and rate of racially charged hate crimes becomes highly significant only when there already exists a high level of segregation and racially charged keyword queries in the American county being surveyed. In racially hostile demographics, the positive correlation of hate crime and broadband access was sometimes as high as 200%, while progressive or liberal counties saw little to even negative correlations. The point being proven here is that internet access

did not instill in everyday citizens an urge to commit hate crimes, except when the citizen in question already likely had been exposed to racially-charged ideals.

The second observation made by the researchers further affirmed the ideal polarization theory by noting that over 60% of the crimes recorded were committed by what popular media would call "lone-wolf actors," individuals who are acting on their own behalf, without external motivation from an organized group. This observation leads us to conclude that individuals with internet access are—instead of being pressured by outside organizations to adopt certain views—actively seeking affirmation on their own for views they already hold. After all, no one likes to hear that they are wrong, and everyone wants the affirmation that they are thinking, doing, and believing the right thing, no matter how wrong even the majority of their peers may view those thoughts, actions, and beliefs. This affirmation of fringe views frowned upon by the majority of civilized society, tragically, is made possible and sustained by access to the Internet, which has already firmly established itself as a staple of modern life.

Mark Twain once wrote that "Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it

sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime." The Internet, at its creation, was meant to allow its users to virtually travel across institutions and environments to access information and ideals not locally available, it was meant to be a tool to broaden our minds and banish our bigotry. And yet, once again, a powerful tool created for human benefit has been warped by the base desires of the human individual, drawing from the Internet only the ideals which suit them, and in effect, building a concocted reality of handpicked ideals around themselves, with the intention of vegetating within forever.

While normally optimistic, I see no feasible solution to the issue at hand. The adaptation of the Internet was far from a well-controlled event, and the freedom it embodies has been enshrined too wholly and unquestioningly for drastic change or heavy regulation. Like racism, cronyism, corruption and nuclear proliferation, the use of the Internet to self-deceive is just yet another regrettable blemish of the human condition, one that is far from impossible to remove, but we can seemingly only hope for its removal within our lifetimes.

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## IEEE to host technical writing presentation

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The Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers (IEEE) is the world's largest professional association dedicated to advancing technological innovation and excellence for the benefit of humanity. IEEE and its members inspire a global community through IEEE's highly-cited publications, conferences, technology standards, and professional and educational activities. Anyone interested in learning more about how to publish papers in IEEE periodicals and conferences as well as time saving search techniques for finding technological content

should join IEEE at IIT for a presentation titled "How to Write a Technical Paper for Publication with IEEE."

IEEE Client Services Manager Jalyn Kelley will present an overview of how to become an IEEE author on Tuesday, October 27 in Life Sciences 111 from 1-3 p.m. This presentation will cover topics such as how to select an appropriate IEEE periodical or conference, how to organize your manuscript, and how to work through peer review. She will discuss how successful IEEE authors structure quality work to improve their chances of being accepted. You can learn how to avoid common mistakes and ethical lapses that will prevent your manuscript from being accepted. Kelley

will also provide insights into what editors look for in a submission and discuss some common reasons that editors and reviewers reject papers.

Kelley will also discuss strategies for using IEEE Xplore effectively for a literature review. She will talk about how to stay up to date on the latest research using saved alerts and downloading citations into bibliographic management databases. IEEE Xplore is the premier database for research in electrical engineering, electronics, computer science and related disciplines. This database, produced by the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers, is a digital library providing full text access to more than 3 million documents,

including journals, magazines, conferences, and standards, as well as content from IET (Institute of Engineering and Technology), Alcatel-Lucent and VDE Verlag.

This presentation is open to any interested IIT student, regardless of major. Students are not required to be members of IEEE. Lunch will be provided to all attendees. This presentation will provide a good insight into the process of writing, submitting, and receiving approval for the publication of technical writing. Any student interested in publishing in any technical publication should consider attending this event to receive fist hand outlooks and advice about the topic.

## CSA meeting discusses campus safety app, upcoming events

**Ricardo Torres**  
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Commuter students make up a large part of the student body at the Illinois Institute of Technology. They face the daily challenge of commuting to school from different parts of Chicago and sometimes their journey may take hours. Due to this long distance from campus, they tend to be detached from campus activities and have fewer opportunities to socialize with the student body. Fortunately, the Commuter Student Association (CSA) focuses on helping connect commuter students by providing them with fun activities and keeping

them updated with events and opportunities on campus.

The CSA held their second general body meeting on Tuesday October 13. It was hosted at the Bog instead of the usual Wishnick Hall location. The meeting was lead by the CSA President, Kevin Tapia. He welcomed the students to the meeting and handed over the floor to William Gordon who represents the CSA in the Student Government Association (SGA) meetings.

William Gordon spoke about the Rave Guardian App that SGA is attempting to bring to campus. This application will help create a safer community at IIT and it will have

more of an impact on commuter students because they will be able to travel at night and feel safer on campus with the Rave Guardian App. The app contributes to a more secure environment by providing users with features that they can easily access on their phones. Among the many features, it offers a feature called the Panic Button. Pressing this button will immediately alert campus safety with your location and your personal profile information. This is ideal for when a student is traveling at night and needs immediate assistance. Gordon informed the students to support SGA as they will be petitioning daily on the MTCC Bridge to bring the Rave Guardian app to campus.

The floor was returned to Tapia who spoke about the fun events that the Commuter Student Association will be hosting for the month of October and early November. Some of the events mentioned included SkyZone, Statesville Haunted Prison, and the Dia de los Muertos Party at IIT. The dates are yet to be announced for these events so Tapia encouraged students to look out for these activities by connecting with the Commuter Student Association on their Facebook page and by joining their mailing list by sending an email to commuter.students.iit@gmail.com.

## Blow off some steam, burn some rubber

**Labib Rauf & Austin Gonzalez**  
TECHNEWS WRITER & OPINION EDITOR

Last Wednesday, the 14th of October, officially marked the halfway through semester, meaning by now all the midterms should be over. Midterms can be very stressful, and the Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE) is here to help with a great way to blow off some steam: Racing simulation.

What's more fun than ripping around corners of a track at breakneck speed? Ripping around corners of a simulated track and not breaking your neck when you invari-

ably crash! On October 13, SAE presented its simulator to students in the MTCC. It was originally supposed to be held in Perlstein Hall, but, because of electrical problems, it had to be moved to the MTCC Bridge. Even in the face of this problem, the event was very successful with several students getting a chance to feel what it's like behind the wheel of an Formula SAE car. Because of popular demand, SAE will now be hosting this racing simulation event on the MTCC Bridge every Tuesday during the lunch hour starting at 12:40 p.m.

Do not mistake it to be a normal ar-

cade game. It is not a game; it is an experience. This simulation gives the real life thrilling experience of a real Formula SAE time trail. The simulator uses a top-of-the-line force feedback system so you can feel the tires grip the road. The base of the simulator is a real chassis that ran in past competitions for Illinois Tech. Take it from a person who actually tried it, I would definitely recommend it to anyone who aspires to be like Sebastian Vettel (winner of Formula 1 from 2010 untill 2013).

With this simulation, you can compare yourself to the best race car drivers in the

world. Not only that, you can also compete against your friends. It is not easy; only people with skills can win.

If you think you have the skills, then come to the bridge on Tuesday and compete against all of the participants. The winner will win a limited edition souvenir from SAE. The winner will also be able to walk away with the title of "Best Racer at IIT." So what are you waiting for? Stop stressing over exam results and come to the event for a little excitement.