The Notorious RBG: A Memorial

As you can guess from the title, this article focuses on a very special person. US Supreme Court Justice and feminist icon Ruth Bader Ginsburg died at her home in Washington, DC, on September 18, 2020, from complications of metastatic pancreatic cancer. The 87-year-old, who was appointed to the nation's highest court by President Bill Clinton in 1993 was the longest sitting Supreme Court Justice. She was also only the second woman, after Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, to serve in this position. Later on, as right wing thoughts gained prevalence, Ginsburg was increasingly often at odds with the Court's more conservative members due to her more centred political leanings. As such, she was a woman of controversy and her death was highly publicised, bringing joy to few and grief to many others. I believe a glimpse into the life of this wonderful lady would provide a lot of context and understanding of why she made her choices.

As I was researching for an intro, I tried long and hard to find the right words to paint her impact on our lives and I have come to realise that no amount of introduction does her justice; it's best to let her work do the talking as was the case during her life. If you are living in Canada, chances are you have benefitted from the work she has done over the past 50 years. When we think of the leaders who shaped our modern world, Ginsburg's name will no doubt be among the first. Yet many have never heard of her. So why are countless people around the globe mourning the passing of this seemingly unknown person? Why is she such a prominent role model during a historically divisive time?

The answer lies in how she did it. Ginsburg's let her work do the talking as was the case during her life. If you are living in Canada, chances are you have benefitted from the work she has done over the past 50 years. When we think of the leaders who shaped our modern world, Ginsburg's name will no doubt be among the first. Yet many have never heard of her. So why are countless people around the globe mourning the passing of this seemingly unknown person? Why is she such a prominent role model during a historically divisive time?

The answer lies in how she did it. Ginsburg's
Hello Skuligans,

What an interesting time we are all in. I’m not sure how I feel constantly living through a future history book chapter. Nonetheless, I hope you are all staying safe, especially by following COVID regulations and wearing your masks. Let’s all do our part with this and encourage others to do the same.

These past few months have been rather overwhelming in all directions. I’ve had the opportunity to start my PEY and actually apply my engineering knowledge in the workplace. Wise words from me: I suggest paying attention in class now so you don’t have to learn everything on the spot like I’m doing...

If you are currently in class, I hope you’ve all been able to adapt relatively well. Be forgiving of yourself and don’t be afraid to ask for help from professors and fellow peers! Don’t forget to take some breaks and to take care of yourselves! Take a walk and enjoy the fall colours while you can!

This edition of the Cannon, we have brought to you a variety of intriguing articles about tech, online classes, and personal anecdotes. I love the variety we have within our team and our own experiences coming together for you all to read. If you have any comments or discussions you’d like to share (or frog memes), my inbox is always open.

Writefully yours,

Alyson Allen
Navigating the News in Today’s Climate

ALYSON ALLEN
Cannon Editor-in-Chief

I start off my day scrolling through Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and then back to Twitter again. The same stuff pops on my feed: the new COVID numbers, political debates, infographics about world issues, and most likely a few lovely pictures of frogs in between it all. I refresh the feed again and again, until I eventually struggle to get out of bed.

Once I get to work, I pull out my phone again, but this time to put on a playlist of all my favourite political podcasts. Flipping through Canadaland and their media criticism; The Daily by The New York Times to make sure I haven’t missed out on any North American issues, and Today Explained from Vox to get informed about global issues. I digest this information, one word at a time, building up a map in my head of what state the world finds itself in.

I get back home and go on my phone again. I read through the infographics people have posted, and I share content that I want my friends to learn about. I always ask myself, “What am I doing to help people learn about these issues? And am I doing enough?”

Let’s look into navigating the media, especially in today’s political climate.

The Echo Chamber

I repost mostly any information that I think others might want to also read. However, people who see what I post most likely are my friends, who already know how I feel about certain issues. Chances are, whatever I repost, my friends will most likely share that same information. That’s great! They’re learning too! But the information all exists on very, very similar feeds, causing a big echo chamber.

Sure, we sometimes have discussions on our thoughts, but we mostly align on everything. We aren’t really reaching out to anyone new with what we say. If anything, if someone doesn’t like what I post, chances are they’ve already muted or unfollowed me. Everyone has most likely tailored their feed to what they want to see the most.

A Diversified Feed

When it comes to political issues, I try to make sure I understand all facets of the story to fully understand the situation. I try to ensure that I can easily access the information I need to fact check other sources. Although basic human rights, such as healthcare, clean water, and gender/sexuality equality aren’t debatable, seeing different perspectives in politics can help you learn where you stand on issues and question what you are reading.

Let’s take the pandemic as an example. The Ontario government made restrictions rather ambiguous for a period of time. News sources cling to fear-mongering tactics to garner attention and clicks. Meanwhile, people tend to over-worry and are then more proactive with their safety measures. Other immensely popular news sources like BlogTO love to focus on patios, trips, and activities people can do which could contribute to creating crowds in those locations.

At the same time, we get constant daily COVID updates reported in numerous ways by varying sources; some may focus on reporting pure data, others use keywords like “highest”, “worst”, and “surge”; others

“ I can’t deny that it has been disheartening, frustrating, and stressful to see everything and feel hopeless about it all.

especially are destined to be filled with content selected for viewers with similar political views to the original source. This alone shows that the media you consume isn’t always perfect, so test out different sources and follow new people with different experiences on socials if you can!

However, a normal media consumer, I would say, doesn’t put that much effort into using the Internet, especially if their intent is escapism. It’s easy to ignore all the problems happening, but being completely ignorant about human rights and the pandemic isn’t something to be proud of.

Can others learn to care?

A few months ago, I got really upset when people’s feeds weren’t solely advocating for human rights. I’m incredibly privileged. At the end of the day, while I turn off my phone and “disconnect” from information on racism, someone who is of this experience can’t do the same. So I try to make sure I’m constantly learning, signing petitions, and when I can, donating.

That’s when I failed to recognize that not everyone cares and quite honestly, I can’t force them to care. Not everyone is always hooked on the latest news. Not everyone has the same tolerance for the endless bombardment of information every time they try to escape into the online world. As much as I’d love to shove a newspaper in front of a friend and make them read through articles, I know that’s completely ridiculous.

But what I have found success in is having genuine conversations at the right time, without shoving information down someone’s throat. I also show potential outcomes to taking action or to knowing information about certain political topics — such as the outcome of a petition going through.

Returning to the pandemic, it’s disheartening to see people constantly violating regulations, including hosting large gatherings, attending parties, and not wearing masks. Those who simply do not care tend to have the philosophy that they are invincible and that their actions won’t have any consequences. Yet it doesn’t hurt to try to express your concerns politely. For instance, I’ve sent messages such as, “Hey! Just as a heads up, cases are going up and quite a few cases are due to restaurants, please be safe if you can! Let’s have a call sometime!”

I think the most important factor in making people care about things is to not attack, nor pander, nor be condescending. I know it’s easy to let anger get in the way, but, generally speaking, people react negatively to strong emotions and are more receptive to honest conversations. This can be really difficult to do,
News
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and it can be incredibly hard to listen to people defend themselves in ways that doesn’t make sense to you. It’s especially difficult with individuals who downright refuse to learn. In that case, you can’t really force them to change, but you can keep going with your own growth.

Avoiding media burnout

Everything I have discussed so far can make it rather overwhelming just to navigate the news. Do we really always have to be logged in, searching for the newest stories, assessing if that news is even legitimate, or convincing our friends to also care? To be quite honest, it’s quite a bit of work. The biggest takeaway for me is gaining a basic understanding of how news and media work.

Staying up to date with current issues is something I believe many should attempt to do if they can. Finding ways to make media more interesting to you, such as finding YouTube channels, podcasts, writers, and more, can make the journey much easier.

Yet, I can’t deny that it has been disheartening, frustrating, and stressful to see everything and feel hopeless about it all. There have been numerous times where I have expressed my frustrations publicly about others whom I thought weren’t caring about COVID precautions, or been so cooped up on one story that I forget everything else, or that I end up getting glued to my screen reposting nonstop without taking time to even properly eat.

I’ve also been on the other end of this stick, annoyed with people yelling about others getting out of the house during Wave 2 of the pandemic, thinking they’re overreacting about it all. Then I realized I was just so burnt out and hopeless about the whole situation after reading the daily numbers continuously climb.

It is okay to take breaks, but remember that not everyone has that privilege. Take that step away from the phone, take a breather, and get back to it whenever you’re ready. I stepped away from my phone for a bit, and came back refreshed and with less unnecessary pentup anger.

Your media experience can still be enjoyable, and don’t feel guilty about that.

Additionally, I think it’s important to remember that everyone shows how they care about information and media differently. Some may not be as public as, say, myself who actively partakes in sharing and creating content for others to see. You may be learning it off to the side or discussing it at home, without posting that information for everyone to see. You’re doing your own part in navigating your way through the media. If anything, it’s far better than performative action, where people simply showcase what they supposedly do that is good for political causes, without actually doing it for the right reasons.

In the end, navigating the news is not easy. With so many different perspectives, algorithms being tailored to your tastes, and the stress of the political climate, it can be easy to just want to turn it all off. Finding the balance between what is a healthy amount of media intake, while still being aware of what is happening, does take time and energy. But, I highly recommend testing new sources, methods of engaging with media, and starting discussions. Media is a powerful tool, but turning it into something more casual in your life may provide benefits to your overall wellbeing.

The Changing Status of Women in Society

VAMA DAVE
Cannon Writer

From as early as 900 BC, there was the establishment of a strong, patriarchal society in most of the ancient civilizations that existed during that era. The gender roles were rigid and for the most part, irreversible. High regard was bestowed upon men who assumed roles of authority including those of fathers, kings, rulers, warriors, farmers and political rule-makers, whereas women were considered as second-class citizens whose ultimate goal in life was set to be the birther and caregiver of children, and whose work included nothing more than household chores.

The 19th century was when women were finally allowed the basic right to vote. In 1893, New Zealand became the first self-governing country to allow women to vote in parliamentary elections. On the other hand, there are countries like Kuwait and Iran that did not achieve voting rights for women till the year 2005. The journey to achieving voting rights for the women of Canada itself encompassed more than 20 years for complete achievement. On the provincial level, some women could vote beginning in 1916. It took a few years for the suffrage of women to expand to the federal level. Asian-Canadian women and First Nation women did not win the right to vote until the 1940s and 1960, respectively.

The 21st century has given women a privilege far greater than any of the women in the past have ever received. This is the fruit of the labour of multitudes of rebellious women over the course of the past few decades who managed to create a space for themselves and for other women in a diversity of male-dominated professions. Any profession you talk about, there will be women who have contributed massively and set an example for the generations that follow.

For instance, while having a conversation about powerful and path-breaking attorneys you will not fail to think about Ruth Bader Ginsberg and Hillary Clinton. The field of science would be incomplete without the contributions of great female scientists like Cynthia Kenyon and Nina Tandon. Jane Austen, Virginia Woolf, Maya Angelou have with their writing added richness to the world of literature. Women like Angela Merkel, Theresa May and Jacinda Ardern have changed the face of politics with their remarkable leadership skills.

Talented actresses like Meryl Streep, Oprah Winfrey and Sandra Bullock helped shape cinema into what it is today. The world of business has been conquered by several women, some of the biggest names being Susan Wojcicki, Gina Rinehart and Whitney Wolfe Herd. The world of music wouldn’t be the same without the artistic excellence inculcated into it by women like Beyoncé, Lady Gaga and Mariah Carey. The generous philanthropy of women like Mother Teresa, Noella Coursaris and Lauren Bush has changed the world only for the better. The social activism of Susan B. Anthony, Rosa Parks and Malala Yousafzai shattered stigma and brought about several necessary radical changes.

Even as these women are being named, we realize that there are myriads of other women just like these, who have made their mark and made massive contributions to a variety of professions for the past multiple years across the globe. To make it concise, in the very inspiring words of Sheryl Sandberg, “we need women at all levels, including the top, to change the dynamic, reshape the conversation, to make sure women’s voices are heard and heeded, not overlooked and ignored.” As long as we follow this path of giving women equal opportunities in all professional fields, we will continue to make the world a better place for them.

Women continued on page 5
all humans worldwide.

While discussing the status of women in society, it would be careless not to mention the heinous crimes committed against them owing solely to the fact that they belong to the female gender. It is common knowledge that Canada is considered one of the safest countries in the world for women to live in. Yet, if we were to put down some statistics with respect to gender-based violence, you would be shocked to learn that crimes against women are still extremely prevalent. Half of all women in Canada have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence since the age of 16. Approximately every six days, a woman in Canada is killed by her intimate partner. On any given night in Canada, 3,491 women and their 2,724 children sleep in shelters because it isn’t safe at home and about 300 women and children are turned away because shelters are already full.

This doesn’t even begin to cover the violence inflicted on women in other parts of the world. 35% of women worldwide have experienced either physical or sexual intimate partner violence or sexual violence by a non-partner at some point in their lives and this does not even begin to include sexual harassment, which is another huge issue for women worldwide. 137 women across the world are killed by a member of their own family every day. Women and girls account for 72% of all human trafficking victims globally, mainly for the purpose of sexual exploitation. At least 200 million women and girls aged 15-49 have undergone female genital mutilation in the 30 countries with representative data on prevalence. Approximately 15 million adolescent girls (aged 15 to 19) worldwide have experienced forced sexual intercourse or other forced sexual acts at some point in their life.

If we start considering in particular the conditions of women in the countries of Afghanistan, DR Congo, Pakistan, Somalia and India, you would deem it as nothing short of a disgrace to humanity. The statistics presented should be enough to raise your hair and make you question the safety of women in today’s world. If you shift your focus from the math and open your eyes to the atrocities against women, you will realize that every single number in the presented statistics equals one more girl who has lost the opportunity of a bright future, one more woman whose life has been disfigured, or one more family that has been crushed at the hands of patriarchy.

“There is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women.”

In the year 2020, with everything the world has been through, these wise words of Kofi Annan serve to be extremely truthful. Those countries where women are given greater rights and equality, are by far some of the most developed nations on the face of the globe. Reaching the current position that women hold in today’s global society was nothing short of a tedious and a rough journey. The fight to uphold equality for women has taken centuries of toil. In the 21st Century women finally have a voice that they are allowed to use, and opinions that they are allowed to share. They certainly still have a long way to go.

There is a fight against sexism and discriminatory practices that needs to be fought, a demand for equal pay for people of all genders doing the same amount of work that needs to be granted, and the abolishment of the evils that exist in the mindsets of people that are shackled by the ghosts of patriarchy that needs to be fulfilled. If people of all genders fight for a society free from bias based on the mere grounds of gender, consciously make an effort to provide opportunities based on merit, with an understanding that every human being has equal psychological capabilities and deserves equal respect, the world will automatically become a better place to live in.
Northern Ireland. Users on the app have since taken to discussing these politically sensitive topics by captioning their videos with things like "pretend I'm doing a makeup tutorial" to hide from moderators.

In addition to bans on topics like these, there have been many accusations against TikTok about data farming. Its parent company, ByteDance, has been accused of ties to the Chinese Communist Party, and as such, people have generally worried about Chinese governmental access to international user data. In a Washington Post article from July 2020, they found no real evidence of data flowing into a specifically Chinese address. Most went to US-based clouds, including servers from Amazon, or backups in Singapore. Though, this doesn't necessarily mean that the data remains exclusively in America. In December 2019, a Californian college student named Misty Hong filed a class-action lawsuit against the app, accusing it of transferring her private data to Chinese servers. She alleged that she downloaded TikTok in spring 2019 but never created an account. Instead, the app allegedly made one for her without her consent and even possessed a file of her private information on two China-based servers, including videos she made but never posted. The two servers are allegedly Bugly (owned by Tencent, China's most prominent app company and owner of WeChat) and Umeng (part of Alibaba). This lawsuit has further exemplified American worries and suspicions about TikTok's private data storage and its broader uses.

So, who owns TikTok now? After an executive order signed by Trump ordered ByteDance to sell its US operations, various American companies have been locked in a bidding war. In September, Oracle Corp. won, beating out Microsoft among others. According to the Wall Street Journal, the Oracle deal is more of a partnership than an acquisition, and might not involve a direct sale. In mid-August, Trump had voiced his support for the Oracle bid by calling it a "great company" and describing the owner, Larry Ellison, as a "tremendous guy, a tremendous person." Ellison's Rancho Mirage hosted a 2016 fundraiser for Trump, which prompted 300 Oracle employees to stage a walkout called "No Ethics, No Work." A Change.org petition demanding Oracle's senior management condemn Ellison's support of Trump garnered 10,000 signatures. Ellison later tried to distance himself by saying to Forbes he allowed Trump to use his property but was not present at the event.

Also important to note is the CEO, Safra Catz, was a member of the Trump transition team in 2016 (promising an Oracle executive to resign). According to the Santa Barbara Independent, Vice-Chairman Jeffrey Henley was the single largest Santa Barbara-based donor to Trump's "Victory" PAC, giving $50,000 in March 2020. All this is to say, the Trump administration had much to gain from Oracle acquiring the TikTok deal, and vice versa. This relationship became especially apparent after Trump stated in early August 2020 that the US Treasury should get a "substantial portion" of the sales cost of TikTok's American-based operations. Some have also been critical of the Trump administration's Chinese xenophobia and argue TikTok's data management is no different than Facebook, Google and Twitter, but it faces more scrutiny because it's Chinese. The President has notably not shied away from this kind of xenophobia in the past, notably calling COVID-19 the "Chinese virus" or "Kung Flu." In a photo taken by Jabin Botsford for The Washington Post in March 2020, Trump had even crossed out the word "corona" in his press conference script and wrote in "Chinese." Trump has stated many times he doesn't see how calling COVID-19 the "Chinese virus" is racist or xenophobic, despite mounting criticism from the Asian-American community. Following its partnership with an American company, TikTok seems to be enjoying a more secure spot in the American marketplace, coupled with less suspicion. How long it'll stay that way remains to be seen.

**The Ideal Online Course**

**OPINION**

**JEREMY SHARAPOV**
Cannon Editor

As an in-person Winter semester looks bleaker and bleaker, we must come to terms with our online present and future. However, while all our courses this semester have to contend with the same online nature of delivery, I'm sure that you would agree that some are running better than others. This article is my own reflection of what works best and doesn't, along with what I've heard from friends, so this description might not be the end-all-be-all for everyone. I hope that this will make both students and professors reflect upon how their courses are running, and provide feedback to improve any future online courses to come.

Firstly, let's address the elephant in the room regarding the different types of online courses: synchronous courses, where the professor would livestream a lecture through services like BlackBoard Collaborate and Zoom, with opportunities for like questions and comments; vs asynchronous courses, where the professors post videos for you to watch on your own time, and answer any questions separately. To be honest, I don't think one approach is superior overall over the other, both can be run well or poorly. However, one thing that I can say is that I feel like I am more comfortable and it is much easier to ask questions about content in a synchronous setting. I find myself skipping Q&As/Office Hours because I don't have any glaring questions to dedicate scheduling myself to go to them regularly, and oftentimes Piazza responses can come too late. The human interaction between my classmates and I also helps with the loneliness of everything being online. On the other hand, being able to watch asynchronous videos whenever I want does have its benefits as well. It feels satisfying to binge through all the weeks lectures of a single course in the span of a few hours, watching them on weekends when I am usually more free is nice, and that 1.5x video speed helps grind through them faster than watching live in real-time.

What makes this question more interesting is that when Winter 2020 first shifted online all of a sudden, most of my professors that semester opted to lecture synchronously, however, in the Fall 2020 semester when professors had more time to plan out their courses, the vast majority chose an asynchronous approach. With only one of my courses in both semesters opting for the opposite approach, I found myself disliking that style of delivery more in that particular semester. When the majority of my courses were synchronous, my day was generally very structured, however, it felt difficult for me to find time to force myself to watch the asynchronous videos. When the majority were asynchronous, it felt annoying to have to constantly attend that one course three
times a week when I could be working on more pressing tasks at that time. Indeed, I found myself skipping those lectures more than usual, but, thankfully they were recorded so I could revisit them later.

This comes to my first general recommendation, which is that all course material should be recorded for any future watching. Many students are in time zones that are suboptimal to be attending some of their lectures and tutorials live, and even for those that don’t, sometimes I’m too nervous panicking about that midterm in an hour to be paying full attention in a lecture. And even when we do pay attention to most of the lectures, watching them at home like many of us do can sometimes be extremely distracting, and we might lose focus for the five minutes where the professor introduces an extremely important topic in the course. The same can be said for tutorials, which, while it is preferable to attend live to ask any questions, sometimes I feel like I just understand everything the TA is doing and would feel comfortable to watch later without any questions should I miss one.

One aspect of both often overlooked is the professor’s setup itself, although it is arguably more important in synchronous lectures. I’ve had lectures in which the prof’s microphone quality was so bad that I could often not even understand what they were saying, ruining the entire experience for me. In synchronous sessions, I’ve had profs with terrible Wi-Fi connections that would often freeze up the livestream and straight-up crash the prof out of his own lecture on occasion. I’ve also had lectures where the prof’s neighbours are doing construction which is very audible on the livestream (side note but I had to deal with that myself over the summer, I feel your pain). For this, I would again recommend using RTX Voice to block out background noises on the prof’s end.

Two more small things that go a long way are providing lecture slides and annotating them. When we are provided with slides, it is so much easier and less time consuming to take notes, and we can jot down extra information that is not necessarily on the slides themselves, versus struggling to note down everything that is already written up somewhere and is probably only the basics of what we need to fully grasp the concepts. Annotation is equally important for this very reason; in some courses where profs don’t annotate they often say things verbally which are not written anywhere in the slides, or concepts that can be hard to describe without drawing them out, and it can be frustrating to have to pause the videos to get down every little detail that’s not provided to us. Annotations done by professors, while not perfect all the time, to help emphasize what we should be focusing on and prioritizing when it comes to certain concepts.

Next for asynchronous lectures specifically, timing is everything. I’ve noticed that courses in which the videos have all been recorded over the summer tend to have videos of poorer quality, as the students cannot provide feedback on what they want to see from the videos for following lectures, unlike those courses in which videos are recorded and uploaded weekly. I also find myself falling behind more in those courses because there isn’t a sense of wanting to catch up as soon as new videos are uploaded. On the other hand, one caveat of having lectures recorded weekly is that the upload schedules can depend on the professor’s own free time, and often I have gotten frustrated when lecture videos that are expected to be watched by Wednesday afternoon are only uploaded on Sunday or even Monday, when I am more busy with other course material, versus the Saturday when I was free but the weekly videos weren’t up yet. What is the point of having asynchronous videos to watch anytime in the week when we are expected to watch them in just a few days to be up to date with any synchronous course content?

Another preference with regards to timing is the length of the videos themselves, as in one of my courses with 50-minute lectures that might as well have been synchronous are much more difficult to schedule the time and energy to watch when compared with more 20-minute lectures covering the same amount of content. However, on the flip side, one of my courses has around 10, 5-15-minute lectures to watch a week, and that feels overwhelming when I see the number of lectures I have to get through. I’ve also experienced professors using asynchronous content as an excuse to stuff more lecture time in the courses, with the time for weekly videos adding up to well over the three hours that they were allotted to in the timetable, or have three hours of async content combined with synchronous lectures that eat up even more time. These videos should add up to less than the full three hours because any time for questions has been taken away and allotted to separate Q&A sessions!

Speaking of those Q&A sessions, as I have stated earlier, I am not the biggest fan, as questions are often spontaneous and can be Googled when in an online setting. One way to address questions that I am a big fan of, however, is through the use of Piazza. Piazza can help get your questions answered significantly faster than having to wait a week for Q&A sessions, and it is especially useful for lab-based courses where many students often run into similar issues when completing the labs. I’ve also found that courses with Piazza are overall run much better because there is a lot of opportunity for student feedback directly to the profs, with other students also commenting on the suggestions, all while being anonymous to avoid feeling fear of any backlash. One platform that many courses do use but I strongly discourage using in favour of Piazza are the Quercus Discussion tabs. They are not anonymous, which introduce that anxiety of repercussion back for giving feedback, formatted poorly so it is hard to keep track of comment chains, and, worst of all, students cannot create their own posts and must adhere to the select few that the professor has chosen for them, making them suboptimal for asking questions on particular topics. It is no wonder that these are seldom used by students, so I strongly urge professors using these to switch to Piazza.

Tutorials, I actually find to be much better run online. Somehow not having to go out of my way to sit in a physical classroom with the TA makes them much more attractive for myself to attend. The tutorials in which we go over a given week’s problem set are actually invaluable in this semester where I feel professors don’t go over examples that much in their lectures. However, one nitpick that I’ve noticed in multiple courses is that for questions coming straight out of the textbook, profs often don’t include the questions themselves on the pdfs which makes it harder for us to follow, and leaves us scrambling to try to jot them down when the TAs get to them.

That’s in contrast with many labs and group assignments, which I find to be made more difficult without in-person interaction. Not being able to sit in a lab session with friends to help read over code for bugs or explain confusing concepts is unfortunate and makes them all the more difficult to get done on your own. It also feels like TAs have less time to look over your issues and answer your specific questions during any sessions that may occur, all of which add up to labs taking up much more of my time than had I done the exact same ones in-person. Additionally, communication in group assignments can be a pain when someone doesn’t use the messaging platform of your choice, and working with friends ends up with much more procrastination than being in-person and forcing each other to stay focused. Thus, for most of my group assignments this semester I have tried to work with people I live near and can (safely) meet up with to work in-person, but that is impossible for many students. Perhaps allocating some class time and extra BB Collaborate rooms open anytime in courses, or going out of the way to match students in similar time zones would help. Let me end off with a few unrelated recommendations that I could not fit elsewhere. Please make assignments due at 11:59PM instead of random times during the day; this leads to much more pleasant schedules for those of us who tend to procrastinate. Next, having webcams on during lectures really helps humanize professors, and helps create a more personal relationship with them rather than just listening to a voice on a screen.

If a course tends to have many quizzes over the semester, please consider counting only several of the students’ best ones instead of all of them; I and others view these “quizzes” we take as just more midterms when considering how much each is worth. Being able to get away with having a bad day during one or two really helps alleviate stress. And remember, all of these recommendations are from my opinion and may not reflect the opinions of students in your particular courses; and by saying that how to run midterms and exams is a whole different can of worms that I do not wish to tackle here. We are, however, all in this together, so let’s make the most of the resources we have this year! This year is the first year we get a Fall Study Break, or as everyone still calls, “Fall Reading Week,” so at the very least we have that going for us! Good luck with classes everyone!
F!rosh Week 2T0

PHOTO CREDIT: YIXIN TIAN
GRAPHICS CREDIT: MAYA DAI AND BEN GOEL
During her 27 years as a Supreme Court Justice, Justice Ginsburg often argued against unfair laws. However, her most passionate dissents were always to defend women's rights.
What is Skule External Relations?

ANIKA SHENOY
Cannon Writer

This year, the External Relations Directorship is back at U of T! While External Relations plays a key role in how U of T interacts with the Ontario engineering community, you may not know who we are or what we do. Read on and you’ll find out!

What do we do?

The External Relations Directorship is your liaison between the Skule TM community and organizations such as the Canadian Federation of Engineering Students (CFES) and the Engineering Student Societies’ Council of Ontario (ESSCO). We attend meetings, seminars and conferences hosted by these organizations with the purpose of advocating for the needs of engineering students. We are overseen by the office of the Engineering Society President, and we report to him monthly.

What's new this year?

In the past ten years, UofT’s involvement with external organizations has been low. Moreover, a few years ago, the VP External role was removed from the Council due to our low involvement in interschool affairs at the time.

The tide has since turned, and we are now pursuing a more involved role in interschool matters. External Relations has been reinstated in EngSoc as the External Relations Directorship. Now, with committed directorship and as part of a very influential (and big!) engineering school, we are well positioned to make an impact within the Canadian student community.

Who is new this year?

Your External Relations Director this year is Katie Vranesic, and she is the main point of contact between external organizations and the EngSoc Council. Katie comes with a vast amount of interschool experience. She began in 2018 by winning the Cup, an interschool social competition between UofT, McMaster and Waterloo. Since then, she has helped organize interschool SUDS in 2019 and 2020, and she has been the External Director for the B&G committee since 2019. Katie and the rest of the External Relations team are eager to increase UofT’s involvement among fellow Canadian engineering universities.

So when a smart and selfless person like Ginsburg passes, we rightly want to celebrate her life and contribution — not only as a pioneering lawyer and universally respected Justice but also as a wife and mother. It is a testimony to Ginsburg’s sense of right and wrong that we applaud her tenacious drive for equal justice. But we also are taking this otherwise sad occasion to remind ourselves why we admired her in the first place. And it is perhaps because of today’s political divisiveness that we yearn to celebrate Ginsburg’s calm, civil discourse. Her brilliant legal mind, courage in the face of cancer, and respect for others.

The question must be asked: Why, in the year 2020, is the work of this great lady under threat of being completely undone? Why have people moved so far from idealistic principles that the safety and empowerment of minorities in the USA hinged on the survival of an 87 year old woman? Well, whatever the answer may be, the fate of our neighbours is not in our hands. As an increasingly volatile modern USA starts to encounter security problems, both internationally and internally, it has become necessary to learn from their actions and mistakes so as not to repeat them for ourselves. We can only hope that her successor Justice Amy Coney Barrett will prove to be as instrumental to the promotion of human rights in the USA. But it is also our job to hold these individuals accountable and ensure they carry out their mandates. It is a never ending struggle but we must perform with diligence to make sure heroes like Ruth Bader Ginsburg did not live their lives in vain.
What Happened to Skype?

NEHA MARFANI
Cannon Writer

Ever since quarantine started and we all have been zooming through our classes, online meetings, and other social interactions; you probably have wondered a question at the back of your mind. Why are we Zooming and not Skyping? What happened to Skype? Where did Skype go when we needed it the most? Where did Skype go when it was its time to shine? Well, I am here to satisfy your curiosity!

Let’s start from the beginning. Skype was launched in 2003 by a company founded by Niklas Zennström and Janus Friis. Initially Skype only offered voice calls through a computer. However, in 2006, video conferencing features were introduced. This widely changed people's perceptions of communication as video conferencing became one of the most popular forms of conversing. Businesses adopted Skype for conference calls and saved money on expensive trips, families felt closer to each other despite being across the globe, and, best of all, it was a free service! You only needed to create an account, and bam, you could see your cousins in Asia through your computer screen!

In 2011, however, Microsoft purchased Skype for $8.5 billion, hoping to create improvements in its design and introduce new features. The same year, Zoom, WeChat, and Snapchat were founded and Apple launched its iPhone 4S. Microsoft’s acquisition of Skype faced a lot of challenges as other messaging and communication apps gained popularity. Microsoft depreciated Windows Live Messenger in favour of Skype and it became the default messaging app for Windows 8.1 in 2013. Microsoft also completely changed Skype’s internal framework. When Microsoft acquired Skype, the service utilized peer-to-peer networking. This technology allowed for computers to be connected to each other directly over the internet. This was not efficient for mobile devices so Microsoft decided to switch to cloud-powered servers back in 2013. This transition was long and difficult and resulted in numerous glitches and bugs in the app. Skype became unreliable. It became only a matter of time until Skype got replaced by other video calling and communication apps like Apple Facetime, Facebook Messenger, and WhatsApp. These were relatively easier to use by comparison, and were far more reliable to boot.

In terms of Skype’s interface, issues began to arise as the application transitioned to cloud-powered servers. Instead of fixing these underlying issues with the app, Microsoft instead introduced newer features which left the users frustrated. As a result, the company had to redesign the whole app multiple times over the course of the last seven years.

Zoom, on the other hand, has a very simple interface. It is easily accessible by anyone who has a smartphone. You can host free meetings for up to 100 attendees for 40 minutes where people don’t even need to login to an account! Compared to Skype, Zoom is fairly easy to use by people of all ages, does not have bugs or complicated updates.

In 2016, there were rumors that Microsoft was considering bidding $8 billion for Slack, a proprietary business communication platform. However, Bill Gates was against the idea and pushed to focus on improving Skype for Business. In Microsoft’s struggle to dominate the business world, Microsoft Teams was created and launched in 2017, which is now Slack’s biggest competitor. Microsoft Teams is not just a communication platform, it is a platform that offers a wide range of tools and services from Office 365 that support collaborative work and communication in workspaces. As Microsoft Teams gained popularity among businesses with around 75 million daily users, Microsoft announced in July 2019 that it’s planning to end Skype for Business. This service will be discontinued on July 31, 2021 and new customers of Office 365 are being directed to use Microsoft Teams instead.

I had The Cannon Newspaper family think back on their experiences with Skype and here is what they said:

Minha Khan: “7 years ago, one of my friends suggested we video chat on Skype, and that was my first experience with it. I remember perceiving the platform as a shiny, new, novel technology that I was lucky to have access to. It was one of the first of video conferencing tools back then, but after that, google hangouts became the next new thing for kids my age and skype was out of the picture.”

Alyson Allen: “Skype was a way for me to connect with friends over the summers back in highschool. I never had a good internet connection growing up but was amazed when I was finally able to video chat. I eventually used it more to talk to my brother across the country! Then one day I just stopped using it, I’m not sure why.”

Today, we have more apps for video conferencing and messaging than we can count; each offering one thing over another. These apps are constantly being updated, going in and out of style. Who knows, perhaps Zoom will suffer a similar fate in five years!
Our Virtual Future

TAMIM HASAN
Cannon Writer

By now it’s no surprise that the current pandemic we are living through has affected all aspects of our societal and personal lives. Having to shift to a virtual setting for our meetings, events, classes, and everything else in between has caused an unwanted void in today’s world, one that many of us are still adjusting to. However, what if I told you that this void we face isn’t unwanted or that it isn’t a void at all? What if I told you that this virtual lifestyle we are living is one both you and I wish to have more of in the future?

Of course, one of the most discernable impacts the pandemic has had is on our education. Large lecture halls have now shrunk to glowing screens and for many of us the university campus is no longer a frequent visit. But this virtuality in education is nothing new. Over the last decade, the traditional form of learning has been largely distorted due to the ease of one’s ability to access information over the Internet. If you really think about it, how much learning was really done in a physical environment before the pandemic began? The concept of learning today involves browsing through videos, forums, and documents over the internet, and is no longer the routine of going from one classroom to the next.

On the Joe Rogan Experience #877 back in 2016, University of Toronto Psychology professor, Jordan Peterson, mentions the current separation between “university” as a concept and “university” as a physical institution. He claims that the process for learning today no longer occurs physically, and that one could argue the real university exists on the web through resources such as YouTube, a revolution he deemed “as overwhelming as the Guttenberg (printing) press revolution.” When making these claims on the podcast episode back in 2016, he mentioned the importance for universities to shift their content online and adjust to the rapid advancements in the field of learning was going through. In present time, the pandemic has forced institutions around the world to place their content in an online arrangement. Maybe the end result of this situation is a form of permanence in the virtuality of education. With the exponential advancement in technology we see today, the virtual world seems to be swiftly taking over our real one. We all know that “cloud systems” and “artificial intelligence” are the latest focal points of innovation but where does it lead us? What’s the next big transition we will go through? Well, tech pioneers such as Mark Zuckerberg believe that the next wave of technology is that which can transport us deeper into the virtual world. In a recent interview with Tech youtuber Marques Brownlee, Zuckerberg expressed his visions for the future, primarily stating the things his employees and him are achieving at Oculus, a subsidiary of Facebook Technologies LLC. Facebook acquired Oculus VR for $2.3 billion back in 2014, and since then has released their own commercial virtual reality (VR) headsets and collaborated with Samsung in the development of the Samsung Gear VR Headset. Today, Oculus is one of the world’s leading investors in augmented reality (AR) and VR technology and their goal is to create technology that “delivers a sense of presence,” as mentioned by Zuckerberg. The tech mogul believes that AR and VR systems are “the next big computing platform” and wants to create technology that connects us better than our current apps and phones are capable of. If you’ve ever tried a VR headset before, you know that it is a product that steals control of your senses and sucks you into the world you’ve wrapped around your head. Though this powerful product currently seems no more than a nifty gaming extension, it is one of the first steps towards creating a limitless technology.

Would going further into the depths of virtual not be a phenomenal improvement? We have the potential to save countless hours of our lives otherwise wasted on traveling, replace large, space-occupying areas to build more homes, and interact with one another in a borderless world that we ourselves get to create. Maybe movies like Ready Player One and all those episodes of Black Mirror weren’t far-fetched after all?
MINHA KHAN
Cannon Editor

The Stationery Shop

Tehran, Iran. As they keep meeting over the summer in that same stationery shop, surrounded by the books and poetry they both love, they fall into a blossoming romance, finding hope and love in each other even as the political conflict in their country worsens, and even when everything falls apart.

This book had a significant impact on me; I don't know exactly why or how but somehow the characters and their stories permeated my inner state and settled within me in a way where I think I won't ever forget about them, this book or any of it. When I began reading The Stationery Shop, I was choosing to enter the lives of Roya and Bahman into my heart, to them, to it. I had finished this book for the first time in a long time. I had finished this book within the night, and with each turn of events and utterances of verse from Roya or Bahman, the book became more and more meaningful. I felt grief, sadness, and pure emotion well up inside me, and the full moon outside called me to read under the knowing gaze of the open sky, so I went out to it. Sitting in the balcony at night, the moon saw me as broken with tears on my face, but I felt whole for the first time in a long time. I had finished this book, discovered Roya and Bahman, their love for each other and poetry, and vaulted open my heart to them, to it all. When I turned the last page, I almost leapt out of my chair to retrieve my small, black notebook. I had read Rumi's verse in the book over and over again, but I finally found the words for my own. I had broken through.

Reading, Again

The Stationery Shop was one of the few books I had recently picked up since the end of first year, coincidentally when I became resolute on detangling myself from technology that seemed inescapable. Before I left Instagram, I had seen one of the few books I had recently picked up since the end of first year, coincidentally when I became resolute on detangling myself from technology that seemed inescapable. Before I left Instagram, I had seen Rumi's verse in the book over and over again, but I finally found the words for my own. I had broken through.

September 28th- The End

I knew I was going to finish the last sweep of the book within the night, and with each turn of events and utterances of verse from Roya or Bahman, the book became more and more meaningful. I felt grief, sadness, and pure emotion well up inside me, and the full moon outside called me to read under the knowing gaze of the open sky, so I went out to it. Sitting in the balcony at night, the moon saw me as broken with tears on my face, but I felt whole for the first time in a long time. I had finished this book, discovered Roya and Bahman, their love for each other and poetry, and vaulted open my heart to them, to it all. When I turned the last page, I almost leapt out of my chair to retrieve my small, black notebook. I had read Rumi's verse in the book over and over again, but I finally found the words for my own. I had broken through.

The morning following the ending of the book, I couldn't wake up, even though I had class. I didn't want to endure the inevitable reflection of the book's end if I was awake.

This sounds dramatic because, well, it was but it was as if I started with my heart whole and, as I passed through the ending of the book, it began to disintegrate piece by piece; the more I read, the more the grief encapsulated within the last chapters of the book became clear. By the end, with all the tiny shards of my heart having been carried away, none was left for me. It had all drifted away, perhaps into the pages of the book itself. But, in a sense, I was immensely grateful that a piece of me was forever embedded within Roya and Bahman’s story.

Some Backstory

I've always been a quiet advocate of solitude and, similarly, I've always been burrowed in books. But as I grew up over the second decade of the 21st century, technology continued to settle deeper into our lives and, with added schoolwork accompanying my peers and I as we rose through elementary and highschool, solitude and books became more of a distant wish, a whisper of past-self, than a part of reality. At the start of high-school, the books in my room were still neglected, but I began to write poetry. Using music to tune into my emotions, I felt free to string together strands of thoughts and sensations into transparent yet clouded poems. Time passed, and life changed, and at the end of first year university, after I decided to stop listening to music all-together due to religious reasons, I found myself unable to write poetry.

The Stationery Shop

The Stationery Shop

September 28, 2020 1:56 A.M.

if I knew not of the moon and the stars,
I would find them still
if I knew not of hope and love,
my heart would yet of them fill
and if the sky was black and molten, bereft and broken
I would peel back the layers one by one
my heart is empty as it is full
full because it is left empty
it is not mine nor yours nor anyone's
it is its own
whether it stings at memory of people forgotten
people I don't know and those I never will
it sits within me painfully so
and I stay with it because it is my truth, my grave, my poem.

CREDIT: NASTALIQ: THE GENIUS OF PERSIAN CALLIGRAPHY
Food is a Conversation: CAFE’s Kitchen Gadget Competition

ALYSON ALLEN
Cannon Editor-in-Chief

I’m quite an avid cook, but I admit I am incredibly lazy when it comes to innovation in the kitchen. I cook the same three or four healthy recipes that require minimal effort and time, while providing me with plentiful quantities to last a busy work week. But because I want my time cooking to be such an easy process, I’m always interested in using gadgets that make cooking far more satisfying.

On September 30th, I had the pleasure of attending the Canadian Association of Food Engineers’ (CAFE) online Kitchen Gadget Competition in partnership with SORTEDFood, a food-related YouTube channel with over 2.4 million subscribers who share cooking videos and gadget reviews with people interested in the food world! To be quite honest, I never really thought about the impact that engineers can have within the food industry, especially with gadgets and food systems. But that’s the entire goal of CAFE and their teams!

One thing, however, that always piqued my interest to design products to improve accessibility. This design competition’s case study was dedicated to redesigning current slicing products or designing a new one that would be able to be used by someone with Welander Distal Myopathy — also described as the weakness and degeneration of muscles in the hands in fingers — making it incredibly difficult to complete cooking-related tasks. Teams were set to design a kitchen gadget that follows requirements for the case study, such as making it easy to cut vegetables, protecting fingers, and stability based on vegetable cutting products: rocking knife, pull string chopper, veggie slicer, and mandolin.

After a quick presentation by both CAFE’s president Muskan Malek and members Jamie Spafford and Ben Ebbrell from SORTED, students set out to create a 2-minute pitch for their solution to the case study. Ben and Jamie shared their passion about exploring the cooking community through the Internet, learning about different cultures, trying new foods in the kitchen, and their experiences testing new kitchen gadgets. While teams worked on their designs, I had the pleasure to learn about SORTED and speak directly with Jamie and Ben — who are both incredibly passionate and genuine individuals about their stories and their reactions to this design competition. Jamie and Ben expressed their excitement to see what students would be able to come up with in just one hour, sharing that early-stage designs are exciting and discussing how ideas can be developed into real products. Designers, especially young and enthusiastic minds, share different experiences and perspectives. For them, their friendship with the SORTED team is so strong that they can almost finish each other’s sentences. That’s why tapping into a wider community to see what people want to say is so important to see how ideas can be put into tools that can help others and future generations.

In terms of cooking, both amateurs and professional chefs approach challenges differently. In SORTED’s case, three of the members come from an amateur background and two are professionally trained chefs, allowing them to approach cooking challenges differently. Likewise, they’ve noticed that the younger generation cares about different aspects of food, especially more about where it comes from, fair trade, usage of packaging, and other sustainability and human rights issues that go into eating.

As a community, they have been able to learn that food is more than what we eat. “Food should be a conversation,” they say, in relation to understanding the culture that goes within food that we eat. Throughout their time as cooks, they have learned more about the challenges that cultures face with oppression and appropriation. That’s why they strive to do more comprehensive research with their projects, collaborate with the community, and be as transparent as possible.

We concluded our insightful conversation by discussing how to get people engaged with trying new things. From their experiences, they noticed that preaching and telling people what to do often doesn’t go well, but sharing your genuine experiences and reactions can positively encourage people to try! Have fun with trying new foods and pass on that experience! As we finished our conversation on a motivational end, teams were about to present their design pitches. Six teams were up to present their ways of making kitchen gadgets more accessible.

I was genuinely intrigued at the designs presented. Some teams presented force analyses, CAD models, ways their designs could be easily cleaned, multipurpose designs, and much more. Jamie and Ben, the judges for this competition, described their genuine appreciation for the level of quality of ideas and presentations. After a quick deliberation, Jamie and Ben judged contestants based on professionalism, confidence, and creativity.

The winning team — consisting of Emily Dawe, Alyssa Nodello, Olevia Pal, and Mariel Stanco — proposed a sliding handle for a dual action mandolin that doesn’t require the usage of fingers and simple-to-attach cutting board. Their focus on versatility, ease of cleaning and material selection and their confident delivery was what earned them the top prize: a one year membership with SORTEDclub and a cookbook each! All participants also received a three month subscription to SORTEDclub. I have to admit, I totally would buy that product if it was on the market.

In the end though, all of the teams presented wonderful pitches for innovative kitchen gadgets. For a virtual event, it was incredibly satisfying to see online collaboration and partnerships being done with people across the world. The world of cooking is ever-evolving and I can’t wait to see how much easier it’ll be to make food!