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The plugged-in minds behind Brain Pickings and Colossal have selected must-reads from among their online peers. Here are a few to fill those spare minutes between TPS reports.

brainpickings.org
thisiscoossal.com

Culture

openculture.com

Design

mymodernmet.com

coudal.com

swiss-miss.com

Art

booooooom.com

thisisthehappiness.com

Virtual Curators

by Kelsey Keith

Illustration by Maxwell Holyoke-Hirsch

If you've been anywhere near Twitter in the past year, you've probably gathered some essential nuggets from @Brainpicker (a savant named Maria Popova, a "curiosity architect" for a social networking firm in New York). Likewise, if you've clicked on a piece of art, previously unknown to you but resonant just the same, there's a strong chance it's already crossed the pages of @itscolossal, a visual diary run by Chicagoan Christopher Jobson. These two represent a growing force of online content curators, educators for the 21st century who go light on thesis-length explications and heavy on digestible factoids—Popova is known for tweeting tidbits every 15 minutes. We talked to the two supercurators about how people best obtain intel and how to retain it.

Be astute; attribute!

Brainpicker's latest campaign is called the Curator's Code: an "actionable code of ethics" that provides browser bookmarks for properly sourcing information found online, represented by two universal symbols.

S Via:
Indicates a link of direct discovery

H Hat Tip:
Signifies a link modified with further commentary

Maria Popova and Christopher Jobson use their voracious appetites for social media to educate the masses on art, design, and culture.

What do you hope to achieve?

Maria Popova: To introduce people to things they didn't know they were interested in—and, in the process, help connect dots across disciplines to reveal the cross-pollination of ideas that underpins creative culture.

Christopher Jobson: Colossal started in 2010 as a way for me to catalog the design projects I found. Over time it's morphed into an art-focused site with roughly 30 posts each week. I get comments from regular readers who tell me they've never been interested in an art blog before, which thrills me to no end.

How do you stay connected to people in real life?

MP: I don't see my time online as any less real. The two constantly feed into each other in a kind of osmotic balance.

CJ: I work a full-time job as a Web designer and spend a lot of time with my family, so I sometimes sacrifice treasured real-life social interactions outside that realm just to keep the blog going. It's one of

the most rewarding things I've ever done and, without a doubt, the most grueling.

How can readers absorb knowledge in a world of buzzword-heavy news?

MP: Read an old book about the history of the tea trade. Subscribe to an obscure art journal. Grab the RSS feed of a niche quantum physics blog. They're just entries to rabbit holes of discovery.

CJ: As humans, we're hardwired to fit in socially—we like to wear the same clothes, speak the same way, and relate to the same stories. This extends itself to curation, where you're often tempted to write about what you see all around you. But often, the very best stuff comes from where absolutely nobody is looking.

How do you hold on to the information you consume?

MP: Pattern recognition. And when you write about something, as opposed to just reading about it, it stays with you in a different, deeper way. ■