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WIDER WORLD WEB

'My life would practically grind to a halt without it...'



Tony Hall, 57, is chief executive of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. Previously, he was director of news at the BBC

How much time do you spend on the internet every day?

It varies enormously and depends on what I'm trying to research. At weekends it's more, because I use it more for research and for shopping. But I also tend to listen to internet radio a lot. I'm learning Italian at the moment, so I listen to a radio station from Puglia called Radio Subasio (www.radio.subasio.it). I have to confess it's full of pretty grotty music but I like to hear Italian being spoken.

How would having no internet access affect your daily life?

It's unimaginable really, especially in terms of how it would affect the speed with which I can research a subject. When the art historian Michael Baxandall died last month, I was able to immediately go online and order his last book, *Words for Pictures*, a collection of essays including a long piece on Piero della Francesca's "Resurrection". The essence of its effect is really a speed thing.

Which podcasts do you subscribe to and where do you listen to them? Time-shifted radio is great. I commute, so podcasts are wonderful for

listening to stuff on the hoof. It's mainly Radio 4 that I download (www.bbc.co.uk/radio4). I love *In Our Time*, *Analysis* and *Front Row* podcasts. Also, I enjoy listening to Andrew Marr's *Start the Week* on the way home in the evening. It makes the commute time well spent. At the moment I'm also reading *The Rest is Noise*, a book by Alex Ross about 20th-century music, and he has a website (www.therestisnoise.com) which has both musical bites and leads

you off to more obscure recordings. It's wonderful and you really do need it for the lesser-known pieces.

How do you surf? I like to think I'm incredibly disciplined, but then suddenly find myself having wandered off into an area that I hadn't thought about at all. You see a link and think "I'll just go there", and before you know an hour has past. It's wonderful for serendipity.

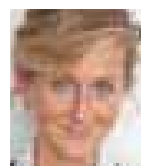
Where do you shop online and what do you buy? Second-hand book are particularly good places to buy online. I also buy most music online. I bought some wonderful sitar music and Rajasthani folk music online from an Indian website. I couldn't walk into any music store in Britain and have bought that, but there it was.

Is surfing a 'work' or 'leisure' activity? It's both. It is pleasurable of course, but also it's a great practical tool for all

the boring stuff like keeping track of your expenditure.

What did you do on the internet today? I've just been looking at the McCain story and the appointment of Sarah Palin as his running mate. BBC News is pretty much up on the screen all the time. I like the video and audio options they have.

I've also been looking up an artist, to find out when they're next doing something that I can go and see. That's hopefully for a future project at the ROH, so unfortunately I can't tell you who that is. I also fixed up lunch with somebody.



Martha Lane Fox, 35, founded Lastminute.com in 1998. In 2005 she launched Lucky Voice Private Karaoke

How much time do you spend on the internet every day?

So much that I feel like Keanu Reeves in *The Matrix*!

Does this change when you're not working?

It doesn't change dramatically – I think that the traditional boundaries between work and play are shifting, for some people the web gives enormous freedom in how you spend time.

How would having no internet access affect your daily life?

I feel as though my life would practically grind to a halt. I

think I would be a less-organised, less well-informed and less inspired person.

How do you surf? I swing between being higgledy-piggledy and just following the thread of a debate or search and totally ruthless, depending on what I'm looking for. That's the beauty of the web – you can get to a specific point more quickly than ever before or you can just drift.

Which podcasts do you subscribe to and where do you listen to them? I get the Guardian technology podcast (www.guardian.co.uk/technology) and a couple of political ones – I spend ages downloading music and novels, which I listen to while I do my daily physio routine.

Where do you shop online, and what do you buy? I buy *everything* online. If I can't find something then I am tempted to get in touch with the retailer to encourage them to build a website! Styleshake does fantastic made-to-measure dresses (www.styleshake.com). I go to Net-a-Porter for fashion (www.net-a-porter.com) and Mydeco for homeware (mydeco.com).

Do you consider surfing a 'leisure' activity? It depends. Yes, when I'm reading news, or watching the latest Obama

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What did you do on the internet today?

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campaign videos or slipping in some cheeky shopping.

What did you do on the internet today? I read an excellent political blog on opendemocracy.net about Georgia. I looked at TrueTube to view films that ex-offenders had made (www.truecube.co.uk). I worked on the developments I want for my foundation's site (www.antigone.org.uk). I watched Hillary Clinton's Denver convention speech. I created a playlist for my first sing at our new karaoke bar – Lucky Voice in Islington.



Luke Johnson, 46, is chairman of Channel 4, runs the private-equity firm Risk Capital Partners, and writes a column for the FT

How much time do you spend on the internet every day? Two or three hours – largely e-mail and research.

How does this change when you're not working? Less at weekends – perhaps an hour a day.

How would having no internet access affect your daily life? It would force me to speak to people more, which might be a good thing! But investigating companies, people, industries and learning about the world would be much harder.

Are you a disciplined surfer? At work yes; at home less so.

Where do you shop online and what do you buy? Travel at Opodo (www.opodo.co.uk); insurance; books, DVDs at Borders.co.uk; presents.

Do you consider surfing a 'leisure' activity? Yes, unless you are disciplined.

What did you do on the internet today? Legal documents transmitted; many dozens of e-mails; this interview; researched my FT article.



Baroness Greenfield, 57, is professor of synaptic pharmacology at Oxford University, and a director of the Royal Institution

How much time do you spend online every day? Apart from e-mails, I try to spend as little time as possible online, because if I do go on, for example to do shopping, I find it hugely time-consuming and addictive.

How does this change when you're not working? It tends to be more domestic things at weekends. Recently I've been redecorating my bedroom so I've been using the internet a lot for looking for different type of bedroom furniture.

How would having no internet access affect your daily life? It wouldn't upset me, but not having e-mail access in a world where everyone else does would make me panic after about 24 hours.

How do you surf? I don't go off at tangents but I'm not that sort of person anyway, and it's something that I'm aware of in myself and get irritated about in others. I tend to be very methodical and focused. Because I do so many things in my life I have to be like that.

Which podcasts do you subscribe to? I don't tend to listen to them. I have an iPod but use it mainly for themed music for parties. My parents recently celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary and so we put the iPod on and played lots of music from the 1930s and 1940s – not the sort of thing you can just go out and buy – which I had to download. Well, my brother had to actually.

Where do you shop online and what do you buy? Certainly not personal things, like clothes.

Shopping is a much more intimate experience on the high street because you get to interact and hold things up against you, which is much more pleasurable. I tend to buy practical things more: for example, I recently bought some floorlights and shopping online for those gave me a fantastic sense of choice and much wider options than if I was shopping on the high street.

What did you do on the internet today? Only e-mails today. But yesterday I bought a wonderful chest for the end of my bed – to put bed linen in and sit on. I've always wanted one.



David Willetts, 52, is Conservative MP for Havant, and shadow secretary of state for innovation, universities and skills

How much time do you spend on the internet every day? Roughly two hours, including e-mails. I have a wonderful laptop, a MacBook Air, which is so light I can take it everywhere.

Does this change at weekends? Not usually. I try to deal with the bulk of work-related e-mails mainly during the week and more domestic and personal things at the weekend. Although the nature of politics generally means that the two tend to converge.

Do you consider surfing a 'leisure' activity? No, I don't. I don't really do that much "surfing" because I find it rather frustrating. I definitely don't "free-fall" when I'm online. I think that it can become incredibly addictive and actually begin to take over your life. If I'm looking for something, like a quote, I try to be as efficient as possible.

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podcasts? No I don't. But what I am interested by are iTunes U – university lectures which can be downloaded by students. My son has introduced me to some fantastic American science lectures, in particular TED Talks (www.ted.com). They seem to be much more widespread in the US than here, although UCL and the Open University use them; I think we need to start catching up over here.

How would having no internet access affect your daily life? I would have to make more phone calls for minor organisational matters. The e-mail has basically replaced the phone call, so that the phone call has become a much more significant form of contact.

Where do you shop online and what do you buy? I buy lots of books online, mainly second-hand through AbeBooks (www.abebooks.com). Although I still do go into second-hand bookshops, I buy many more second-hand books now than I use to. Also, although it isn't strictly speaking shopping (because I haven't booked anything with them yet), a site I often look at is SwimTrek.com. I'm a very keen long-distance and outdoor swimmer and I find looking at it very encouraging.

What did you do on the internet today? A bit of shopping on emusic.com. I bought some Mozart, and downloaded some songs from the film *Shrek* which I'm keen on, and also a really wonderful song by Ryan Adams called "Amy". I did some research about Birmingham for a pamphlet I'm writing for the forthcoming Conservative party conference. I tracked down a Sidney Webb essay, which I needed a quote from, and looked at the Tolkien website because, like me, he was brought up in Birmingham.

Interviews by Elizabeth Kirkwood