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## ***If You Can't Make It to the Lecture***

By JANE L. LEVERE MARCH 19, 2014

JANIS LOEWENGART YERINGTON, an artist from Bolinas, Calif., became a fan of online museum lectures after seeing the touring Vermeer painting, “Girl with a Pearl Earring,” at the de Young Museum in San Francisco.

“I enjoyed it so much when it was at the de Young, I followed its progress across the country,” she said.

She watched a lecture online from the Frick Collection in New York — which recently displayed the Vermeer painting — by Emilie Gordenker, director of the Mauritshuis, the painting’s home in the Netherlands. She has since watched other Frick lectures online, including one on the museum’s Bellini painting, “St. Francis in the Desert.”

“I grew up in New Jersey, was an art history major in college, and the lectures are a way for me to revisit the museum and expand my knowledge of pieces I’m familiar with,” she said.

The Frick two years ago began streaming its lectures live and [archiving them online](#) for viewing anytime — one of many museums that offer such programming to the global public, generally free. Among the first was the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington in 2006. Three years later, it and three other American museums were asked by the Indianapolis Museum of Art to start [ArtBabble](#), a website that aggregated their video programming. ArtBabble now offers videos from 60 museums across the United States and overseas.

Just as the web has evolved, so has museums' online programming, said Nathan Richie, director of the Golden History Museums in Golden, Colo., and chairman of the professional network for museum education of the American Alliance of Museums.

"Museums are trying to make their online presence a distinct experience in and of itself," he said. Their other goals, he added, are "to extend the life and content of fleeting exhibitions" and to "reach audiences they don't normally serve."

Natural history museums are at the forefront of these initiatives.

Last year the Field Museum in Chicago hired Emily Graslie, a 24-year-old studio art major at the University of Montana and creator of "The Brain Scoop," a YouTube series on the school's zoological museum, to create a new version of the series for the Field. Named after a taxidermy tool, "The Brain Scoop" each week offers [behind-the-scenes programming](#) about the Field and now has more than 205,000 subscribers.

Another innovator is the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco. In January it began offering [an online biodiversity course](#), devised for teachers and high school students, and for parents to teach their children, with [Khan Academy](#), a free online schoolhouse that has over 10 million users worldwide each month.

Since 2010, the California Academy of Sciences has posted on iTunes U [free lectures](#) on ecology, sustainability, natural history, biodiversity, astronomy and space science; it also [offers courses there](#), for middle- and high-school science educators, on earthquakes and how science works.

Many art museums also use the Internet for teaching purposes. The [distance learning program](#) of the Cleveland Museum of Art offers what it calls "Steam" courses on architecture, geology and weather. The acronym refers to the courses combining science, technology, engineering, the arts and math, and they are for students in grades four through eight.

Since 2010, the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh has created a series of five one-semester, [for-credit, online courses](#) for high school students across the state. Incorporating works from the museum's collection, these cover videography, game design, fashion, advertising and photography. As of the end of last year, 2,240 students from 73 of the state's 100 counties had taken one of these.

The Museum of Modern Art began offering a series of online [self-guided and instructor-led courses](#) in 2010. Today, these cover everything from color in modern and contemporary art to materials and techniques of postwar abstract painting at fees that start at \$99. The museum also offers hundreds of videos of talks by artists, symposium proceedings and other activities [on its website](#) and on YouTube; since 2006, the YouTube videos have been viewed over seven million times. It even offers a "digital member lounge," where MoMA members can watch videos of gallery tours and special events like a 2012 program with the Rolling Stones.

The Smithsonian American Art Museum [offers about 500 videos](#); it has streamed live and archived its lectures on its website and on YouTube since 2010. Among speakers scheduled to appear this year are Eric Fischl, an artist; Jerry Saltz, an art critic; and Kathleen A. Foster, a scholar in American art.

One of the most unusual online lecture programs was offered by the Metropolitan Museum of Art last October, when it streamed, [and later archived](#), a conference on icons that was licensed by TED, a nonprofit group that sponsors conferences on ideas. Speakers included museum curators, the choreographer Bill T. Jones, the artist Lorna Simpson, and Eric R. Kandel, who in 2000 received the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine.

Limor Tomer, the Met's general manager of concerts and lectures, said that although the auditorium where the conference was held seated only 700 people, over two million people watched it online, live and subsequently.

Museums' online programming is even popular with locals — somewhat surprising since they aren't far from the actual institutions. MoMA said residents of New York and New Jersey make up one-third of all students taking its online courses.

And then there are art aficionados like Harold Levine, a marketing consultant in New York who watches the Frick's lectures online when he cannot attend them in person.

"I love going to the lectures, but there are times when I can't make it up there in time," he said, adding, "If I listen online, I'm not sitting behind anyone, I can hear everything perfectly and see all the slides."

[http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/20/arts/artsspecial/if-you-cant-make-it-to-the-lecture.html?action=click&module=Search&region=searchResults%230&version=&url=http://query.nytimes.com/search/sitesearch/%3Faction%3Dclick%26region%3DMasthead%26pgtype%3DHomepage%26module%3DSearchSubmit%26contentCollection%3DHomepage%26t%3Dqry175%23/museum%252520special%252520section%2525202014/&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/20/arts/artsspecial/if-you-cant-make-it-to-the-lecture.html?action=click&module=Search&region=searchResults%230&version=&url=http://query.nytimes.com/search/sitesearch/%3Faction%3Dclick%26region%3DMasthead%26pgtype%3DHomepage%26module%3DSearchSubmit%26contentCollection%3DHomepage%26t%3Dqry175%23/museum%252520special%252520section%2525202014/&_r=0)