Potential for awesomeness is the promise of the Internet

November 6, 2013

The Internet is a powerful force that's still evolving in unexpected, exciting and cool ways. The promise of the Internet is that "it actually lets us achieve our maximum for awesome," said Alexis Ohanian, co-founder of Reddit, a social news and entertainment website with 81 million unique visitors a month.



Tulane alumnus Erik Martin, right, general manager of Reddit, a wildly successful social news and entertainment website, and Alexis Ohanian, Reddit's co-founder, discuss the advantages of being a humanities major in a tech world. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Ohanian spoke at a Tulane Entrepreneurs Association event on Friday (Nov. 1) as part of a 150-stop bus tour promoting his book *Without Their Permission*.

All links on the World Wide Web are created equal, Ohanian pointed out. "That means that any one of us with our Internet connections and our great ideas can spread them faster and further than ever before. We can use the Internet as an amazing stage and library for knowledge."

Joining Ohanian on stage was the general manager of Reddit, Erik Martin, a 1999 Tulane University graduate.

Ira Solomon, dean of the A. B. Freeman School of Business, introduced Martin — named one of *TIME* magazine's 100 most influential people — as "perhaps Tulane's favorite alum who is at the center of the tech world."

Reddit is a bulletin board, where users post links and original text, called "selfs." It is "an extremely powerful voice for sharing knowledge and for shaping public opinion," said Solomon.

"Subreddits" are postings organized by subject areas. Reddit users vote up or down on postings, determining a posting's ranking and position on the page.

Martin said that his education (he earned a BA in American studies) taught him how to recognize cultural patterns, a skill that comes in handy now as he organizes the intersections of interesting things "to unpack and explore" on Reddit postings.

"I've been lucky enough to do at Reddit [what he did as an American studies major] … to look and see how there's something really interesting going on," Martin said. "Let's see where it can go."

— *Mary Ann Travis*