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Shayna ([00:08](#)):

Hey, I'm Shayna.

Paige ([00:09](#)):

And I'm Paige.

Shayna ([00:10](#)):

And this is BCC

Paige ([00:11](#)):

...where we copy you in ...

Shayna ([00:13](#)):

... on internet stories ...

Paige ([00:14](#)):

... from around the world.

Shayna ([00:22](#)):

Hey Paige.

Paige ([00:23](#)):

Hi Shayna.

Shayna ([00:25](#)):

This may sound a little different.

Paige ([00:27](#)):

It does.

Shayna ([00:28](#)):

Why is it sounding different?

Paige ([00:29](#)):

Because we're in the same room.

Shayna ([00:29](#)):

Paige ([00:34](#)):

We are in the same room, y'all.

Shayna ([00:37](#)):

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Where are we?

Paige ([00:37](#)):

We are in Bogota, Columbia, overlooking a beautiful city.

Shayna ([00:42](#)):

A beautiful city. Such beautiful people, wonderful food.

Paige ([00:47](#)):

The food is amazing. It's been great. It's been a great time here.

Shayna ([00:49](#)):

It really has been.

Paige ([00:50](#)):

Meeting our grantees. It's been amazing.

Shayna ([00:53](#)):

Yes. So, a little later we're going to get into a conversation with one of our grantees.

Paige ([00:58](#)):

Yes.

Shayna ([00:59](#)):

But before we do that, let's cover a hot topic.

Paige ([01:01](#)):

A hot topic. What's the hot topic?

Shayna ([01:04](#)):

Well, the hot topic came about because there was a special day that passed shortly after we arrived here in Bogota. What day was that?

Paige ([01:13](#)):

Yes, it was. It was b-day, the most important b-day. It was Beyonce's birthday.

Shayna ([01:20](#)):

Do you remember why?

Paige ([01:22](#)):

Pow, pow. Yes, it was B-day.

Shayna ([01:23](#)):

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Anyway, so we had a moment about Bday.

Paige ([01:27](#)):

Yes, we did.

Shayna ([01:27](#)):

And then later that night, or maybe the next morning, I was listening to B-day, the album, and one of the songs that I had never heard before...

Paige ([01:37](#)):

I'd never heard it either.

Shayna ([01:39](#)):

I don't recall it at all, but it was called World Wide Woman.

Paige ([01:43](#)):

Yes.

Shayna ([01:44](#)):

WWW

Paige ([01:45](#)):

Beyonce made a song about the internet.

Shayna ([01:48](#)):

She did it!

Paige ([01:49](#)):

It feels magical that we found it at this moment and can talk about it at this moment. There's several references to the internet, mac, click right. I encourage all of you to listen to World Wide Women by Beyonce.

Shayna ([02:03](#)):

Please do, and read the lyrics as you go on. This album came out in what year?

Paige ([02:08](#)):

2006, I think. Beyonce fans don't attack me. I think that's when B-day came out.

Shayna ([02:13](#)):

2006. We have not yet found Twitter. Had we gotten Twitter in 2006.

Paige ([02:20](#)):

No, still early Facebook.

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Shayna ([02:22](#)):

Early Facebook, 2006. So, this is Beyonce ahead of her time.

Paige ([02:26](#)):

A visionary.

Shayna ([02:27](#)):

Singing about embodying her embodying the internet.

Paige ([02:32](#)):

As the World Wide Woman.

Shayna ([02:35](#)):

How phenomenal was that?

Paige ([02:36](#)):

It feels destined to be that we found that song. I swear, I feel like I've listened to that album several times and never really picked up on it.

Shayna ([02:43](#)):

And I wonder why. I think she was ahead of her time and we weren't really thinking about the internet in that kind of way. That's amazing that she literally made a song about embodying the internet and moving through the world as the internet.

Paige ([03:00](#)):

An internet anthem, a feminist anthem.

Shayna ([03:06](#)):

A feminist...

Paige ([03:06](#)):

The World Wide Woman.

Shayna ([03:07](#)):

Yes, the World Wide Woman.

Paige ([03:07](#)):

We love it.

Shayna ([03:07](#)):

We love it. We love you Beyonce.

Paige ([03:08](#)):

We love you. I hope she hears this.

Shayna ([03:13](#)):

Anyway, so that was our hot topic that's been on our minds and we're going to chat later to...

Paige ([03:19](#)):

Our grantee Sanjay, our BOLT grantee, Sanjay, who is here in Columbia as well. So, that would be the next thing you hear.

Shayna ([03:28](#)):

Great. See you.

Paige ([03:36](#)):

Hello everyone. I am here with our BOLT grantee. Our BOLT program is Building Opportunities Leveraging Technologies, and our grantee is SOLE Columbia. I'm here with Sanjay. You can introduce yourself.

Sanjay ([03:51](#)):

Thank you. So, my name is Sanjay, I am Colombian, but of foreign parents, and I am the founder and director of SOLE Columbia.

Paige ([03:59](#)):

Thank you. Can you just talk a bit about the project that you have under our BOLT program?

Sanjay ([04:06](#)):

Yeah. So, basically the story starts with what we do as an organization. Our name is SOLE Columbia because Sole stands for Self-organized Learning Environment. Basically, a SOLE is a physical place where you have people, less computers than people, almost one computer, every four or five people. Those computers have connection to the internet and they have big questions, and we call them big questions because they're interesting questions, engaging questions, tough questions, not something that interests everybody. What happens in a self-organized learning environment is the people self-organize to find the answers to the questions without the need for a teacher. Nobody's teaching them, they're just learning amongst themselves together. So, we started doing this many years ago here in Columbia because the government had spent tons of money putting computers and internet in a lot of public spaces, but people weren't using them.

([04:54](#)):

So, we convinced the government to show the owner of the computer room key how to turn that into a SOLE, basically. That was how we started off. It's interesting because this methodology is invented by an Indian guy called Sugata Mitra. He got a TED prize back in 2013 because he realized that kids can learn almost anything without the need for adults, if they're some conditions. The conditions are that they use shared devices, large screen devices to make the use of the internet safe, and they have questions to guide their learning adventure, basically. So, what we did was we started doing that here, and we convinced the government to show the people of these public spaces how to use it, public schools,

public libraries, public internet kiosks. We realized that these were learning opportunities for people in conditions which normally wouldn't have this kind of opportunity.

[\(05:49\)](#):

If you have a good teacher in your life, you're cool, but if you don't have a good teacher, you always have the internet, basically, and having each other is a great way of learning together. So, what we promote is people using the internet together, in groups, which is very different than the individualized use of the cellphone.

Paige [\(06:04\)](#):

The internet.

Sanjay [\(06:04\)](#):

So, our BOLT project, we started thinking about this back in 2016 because we realized that there were many places which actually didn't have that public space, and didn't have that space, where people could come together to use the internet together. So we thought, wouldn't it be cool instead of the government spending tons of money building schools which have desks all set in line, super boring, the classroom in front. If you had this space where you would go in and you wouldn't have to do anything, that you would have nothing there, you just have everything because you'd have the internet. It would be the biggest library in the world and it's right there for you.

[\(06:44\)](#):

We started thinking about that because in many communities, the schooling system is not there for everybody, and instead, libraries are there for everybody. The schools are for kids and well, when school finishes they lock down the school and bye bye, and instead the library, kids go with their parents and their grandparents, with everybody. So, what we realized is really, we need new spaces for people to come together, public spaces where people can come together and use the internet together. We know that this develops all the skills which we say we need in the 21st century, we need to learn how to collaborate, we need to learn how to communicate better. You need to learn to self direct yourself and how to have critical thinking because there's a lot of garbage on the internet also and how to have tech fluency, but what is cool is that we don't teach anybody how to use a computer or how to use the internet. They just end up using it because there's a reason to use it, and this case, the initial reason, the most important one is curiosity, to learn to answer a big question.

[\(07:41\)](#):

So having said that, we started thinking of this space as a SOLE lab and we started prototyping it and thinking, "what if we did acupuncture, territorial acupuncture, by setting these SOLE labs up here as spaces where people could go and do that," and we started testing. We became the social responsibility of an organization, like a big tech, not a tech company, a telecom company. They're the owners of the towers for cell phone antennas. It's called American Tower Corporation. So, it sounds like big and evil, and what they wanted to do was their social responsibility, their SRI program with us, and we said, "well why don't you set up these public spaces where you have an antenna because surely there, there'll be internet because you're right there, under, and all these people who are around your antenna, who hate having the antenna next to them, they will be happy to have a public space where they can access the internet."

[\(08:36\)](#):

Then, we started and we did a pilot of it, here in Bogota, and it was very interesting, because we realized that people in Bogota, don't trust each other. They don't trust their neighbors and all that, so it was a tough project to keep going because people were very distrusting of each other, but in rural areas, people, they live closer together. It's a smaller community because Bogota is such a...

Paige ([08:57](#)):

More inter connected.

Sanjay ([08:59](#)):

Yeah, and Bogota is such a huge city that it's scary and stuff like that. Instead, in rural areas or in smaller towns, there's a much more, a bigger sense of community, and so people would use their cell. So, when we came up with this idea of the SOLE lab, then pandemic came in.

Paige ([09:15](#)):

Yes.

Sanjay ([09:16](#)):

We had tested one and we had seen that it was very interesting, what was happening there, but it was difficult for people to self-manage it. Then, we decided, "okay, how can we help people during that pandemic?" We realized that what we knew how to do was very useful because teachers didn't know how to give their classes, teachers are now online. Communities didn't know how to keep working if they were all in lockdown and so on and so forth, and that's where we realized that half of the community with which we worked with, didn't have internet connection. So we thought, "okay, now one of the big issues is how we solve people's internet connection." We asked them, "what's your biggest challenge?"

([09:51](#)):

For some, the problem is that there is no signal where they are. Now, like they're really in remote areas and it's like there is no...

Paige ([09:57](#)):

Just unconnected.

Sanjay ([09:59](#)):

Unconnected, but in other places there is connection, and the problem is people don't have the money to pay for the connection. Then, we also realized there are places where you do have connection, people do have the money, but the connection sucks. It's like poor quality. You don't have enough bandwidth. Geographic conditions in Columbia is super complex. You have mountains, jungles, deserts and all that, so it's tough to cover the whole territory, but then we realized there was one more big reason of why people didn't use the internet. It's just basically because people don't know what the internet is for.

Paige ([10:27](#)):

They just didn't know what to do with it.

Sanjay ([10:29](#)):

So, people pay their cable TV thing, they're willing to pay a monthly subscription to cable TV, but they're not willing to pay for the internet because they don't know what to use it for. They don't know that there is an opportunity there. So, that's where we thought, "well it's cool because SOLE, self-organized learning environments is a good excuse to learn to use the internet because there's something useful there." We ask people, every time we meet them for the first time, we ask them, "which are three questions you've always had and never been able to answer?" When people start thinking about that, for kids it's super quick. Now they have their three questions in two seconds. When you ask adults, it's like, "hmm, I don't know." Now, we take much longer, but in the end everybody has a question, and what's interesting is that if the question is interesting enough for a group, then the SOLE works very well. So we thought, "okay, this is the way we're going to get people to use the internet to start."

([11:23](#)):

So that was our idea, and that's when we came up with this BOLT proposal that we had, which was, we're going to prototype a SOLE lab, thinking of it as if it was something that communities could build on their own. We were thinking of a kind of toolkit and imagine you got a box and it's like now, "build your own SOLE lab, set it up, and now you can connect it to the internet and there, you can use it and it's yours."

([11:49](#)):

That was the initial idea behind that, so that's why we suggested to ISOP to try and set up a SOLE lab for a community with which we had been working for several years. This was this indigenous Wayuu community, northern part of Columbia in a place called La Guajira and a province called La Guajira in a specific place, which is a sanctuary for birds. Very beautiful place where these people used to have one of these public internet kiosks back in 2018, 2016, but with the change of government, they closed down the kiosk. So, they ended up without a place to be able to...

Paige ([12:28](#)):

Access it.

Sanjay ([12:28](#)):

Access the internet, and not only that, but without a place to do SOLES, to have a self-organized learning environment. We had spoken with them about the possibility of doing this years ago, but now it was like, "okay, we found this option, are you still interested?" The first part of it was where we need to build trust, like do you trust that we're going to bring you this stuff and then we trust you to do whatever you think is necessary to make this place. That's how we started off the project. The second part of our proposal was let's try and research about what kind of solutions people could self-manage and make their internet connectivity possible, no matter what their context is.

([13:11](#)):

So, we had solutions for people, we started researching on solutions where people don't have an internet, for people who don't have money to pay the internet, for people who have bad quality in the internet. Then, we also started realizing that the big thing is how people get to know what the internet is for. SOLE is good for that one because just asking questions and saying, "okay, the most basic use of internet is you want to know something, you write it, you can you Google it, and that's it."

Paige ([13:38](#)):



Exactly.

Sanjay ([13:38](#)):

And that would be the best way, and so in that process, we thought this would be a very good complement because then the problem is not only having internet, but having the space to come together to use it together. To use...

Paige ([13:50](#)):

To use it, yeah, you're right.

Sanjay ([13:50](#)):

So, yeah.

Paige ([13:52](#)):

Can you talk a bit more about the community that you're serving? Who are these people? I know you mentioned where in Columbia they are, but just who are these people, and maybe if you have a connection to the community, talk about that, just a more about the community that you're serving?

Sanjay ([14:11](#)):

Okay. So, we've been scaling this SOLE methodology throughout the country for the last eight years. So, we've worked with teachers, we've worked with librarians. SOLE is a program that is in 1,500 public libraries throughout the country.

Paige ([14:26](#)):

Wow.

Sanjay ([14:26](#)):

We worked with these internet kiosk administrators who are kids who, this is their first job out of school, now they have a three month internship thing, and we call these people our SOLE ambassadors

Paige ([14:41](#)):

Sole ambassadors.

Sanjay ([14:42](#)):

And the reason why we call them our SOLE ambassadors because their role is not to teach, the role is to bring people together...

Paige ([14:48](#)):

Facilitate.

Sanjay ([14:50](#)):

...and let people ask the questions they want to ask, and let them go and solve them on their own, not solve the questions, so give them the answers. What's interesting about this is that our SOLE communities, very widespread because we've been able to work with government, we've been able to

work with other NGOs or other companies, and in the end, these are people who are part of our community voluntarily. We don't pay anybody to do this. It's just, we show them and we become friends, we create a relationship. So, our big community, we call it our SOLE Columbia community, which are all these SOLE ambassadors, they're all over the country. Some are in urban areas, and we have teachers, we have people who are very interested in education, others who are very interested in technology.

[\(15:34\)](#):

Then, we also have a bunch of people who are farmers. We have people who are mothers, this is really a very broad inclusive community. So, doesn't mean you have to be an expert, then we have kids who are also Sole ambassadors, so it's very cool because it's really a very diverse community. Now, for example, this year we've been working a lot with communities in the areas most affected by armed conflict. That's the actual name of these areas because through the peace agreement it was said in these areas, we have to invest more and so on, and we have to solve problems. So, these are communities of people, most of them are rural communities.

[\(16:17\)](#):

They're rural communities of farmers or people who have very unstable jobs, nothing very sophisticated. They're very poor, in some sense, although land in Columbia is very rich, so it's a different kind of poverty. It's people who probably have not finished schooling, it's people who maybe, they haven't even completed primary schooling, but you also have people who are very self made, who are very entrepreneurial. It's very interesting. That's our Sole Columbia community, and with them, we're working with our solutions for internet connectivity. There, we also have people who work in organizations, who serve other people. So, we don't only work with the final user, but also with organizations who are working with others. Those are also our Sole ambassadors and they also work, and they also show other people how to do Soles, and so for them, it's also interesting what we're doing because it's like with this, we can go and help another community to go and work better.

[\(17:22\)](#):

Specifically, for the SOLE lab, we're working with this Wayuu indigenous community from the northern part of Columbia. To give you a spectrum, this is a community of six hundred people.

Paige [\(17:34\)](#):

Wow, 600 people?

Sanjay [\(17:36\)](#):

600 people, these 600 people live in a specific place, that's why it's 600, and we know it's 600 because they live in... The village is called Boca de Camarones. Boca de Camarones is 25 minutes away from the capital of the province. So, it's not so isolated, and it's within a national reserve, a sanctuary for birds. It's very particular because it has restrictions. No, you can't exploit it in different ways, so it's communities which are very strong culturally, and where everybody's family. So for example, of the 600, it's like five big families.

Paige [\(18:16\)](#):

Oh wow.

Sanjay [\(18:17\)](#):

Because they keep together with each other. Wayuu traditions and culture are very sort of like... You marry Wayuu woman and kind of...

Paige ([18:27](#)):

Stay within the community.

Sanjay ([18:30](#)):

Exactly. Maybe it's not compulsory, but I understand it's a very common trait.

Paige ([18:35](#)):

Like a social understanding.

Sanjay ([18:36](#)):

Yeah. So, it's a very strong community in the sense of social bonds, and they are very sort of entrepreneur. They're trying to figure out how to make a living. So for example, they've set up eco tourism entrepreneur ships, but in general it's like they're striving to keep their culture going without being so permeated by Western culture. That's a little bit of what they're trying to do, but they're very interested in technology, which is very cool, also because their interest in technology is because as they have these, they want to do an eco tourism thing.

([19:12](#)):

It's like how do we get people to know about us? We write on the internet, we invite them over and that's what they use it for. So for them, the SOLE, their SOLE has been a place in which kids... So, northern part of Columbia has a lot of contraband and drug dealing because it's the way out to take those out, and it's also the way to bring stuff in. So, easy money is very common in those areas. Easy money means illicit...

Paige ([19:39](#)):

Activities.

Sanjay ([19:40](#)):

Activities. So, kids are very interested in getting there because it's quick, easy money, and so Aline Neva, our SOLE ambassador there, he's done a very amazing job of getting kids involved with the interests of the Wayuu community. When we showed him how to do SOLE, imagine he was 21 years old, and now he's 29 and he's a community leader who's important. It's interesting because he's the technology guy in the community, so it's very cool. What's interesting is that he just started off by asking the kids what are their interests? He said, this kid said, "no, we love video games, we love videos and we like animation. So, he said, "well, why don't you learn how to make your own?" So, "how do we do that?" "Sole session." "How do you make a video game?" "Google it."

([20:30](#)):

In that process, the kids discovered that they needed to have a story to make a video, to make a video engineer, and so they went to Aline and said, "hey, now we need to find stories." So, he just threw the question back at them, "where can you find stories?" They were like, "Ah, we could talk to the elders."

Paige ([20:48](#)):

Oh, that's amazing.

Sanjay ([20:49](#)):

So, that's how he got them to go and talk to the elders, and they started creating these videos and animations with the stories of the Wayuu community. So, the kids started to get engaged and it's been a super strong social bond that's been created around the SOLE.

Paige ([21:01](#)):

That's amazing. I can imagine how beneficial it would be to those communities. Those kids are looking for options and just different things to do in life and this provides them with another option where there might not be that many.

Sanjay ([21:16](#)):

Absolutely.

Paige ([21:17](#)):

One of the objectives of our BOLT program is to promote responsible innovation. Can you talk about how your SOLE lab, that's the most innovative thing heard of, I remember reading the application and thinking, this is amazing and I can't wait to see what this looks like, so can you just speak to how your project is promoting responsible innovation?

Sanjay ([21:44](#)):

I think it's in the core of what we do. I love the internet, but I hate who holds the keys to the internet. I think the internet is a lovely idea of what makes us human, which is this possibility of being connected.

Paige ([21:54](#)):

Yes

Sanjay ([21:55](#)):

I think some people, and some people through their organizations, have done this thing of realizing how they can make tons of money and it's really destroying a lot of our essence of what it is being human, which is being together. Now, you see the internet full of fake news, you see the internet full of porn, and it's all these things which you see, but I know it works, for that, but it works for so many other beautiful things.

([22:21](#)):

So, in the center of what we are doing, and that's why we believe so much in self-organized learning, is this thing of, people are really capable of many things, much more than you think they're capable and much more than what they normally think they're capable of, as well. What we do is we try to find which are the minimal conditions for people to be capable of what they want to do, and we realize that really using the internet in groups, in small groups, is a safe way of using internet. It's a very powerful way because it's like kids are not going to sit down and watch porn in a group. It's a bit shy, it makes you feel shy.

Paige ([22:59](#)):

Being in a group promotes a bit more social responsibility because now there's someone watching you and there are other people.

Sanjay ([23:04](#)):

If you're in a public space, it's a safe way of using the internet. It's not like you're being at home and on your computer and you can do whatever, and somebody can come and trick you. It's tougher to trick a bunch of four people in front of a computer. It's tougher to trick them because it's like, "who am I talking to?" It's tougher to track people when there are four people in front of a computer. So, Facebook, Google, Google, Amazon, they can't track four people in front of a computer. They don't know who they're talking to. "Who is this hydra which has four heads, how do I know what to sell to them?" Because they're not the same person. I think the other thing which is very powerful of what we're doing is, we want the people who we're working with to be involved in co-creating what we're doing.

([23:48](#)):

So, doesn't make sense for me from Bogota to think I have the solution for somebody from La Guajira they know how to solve their problems. All I can do is be a helper, I don't know, a facilitator or something, I don't know, or something. Something, you're just there and say, "I don't know how to solve your problem, but I'm sure you can do it." That's what we do.

Paige ([24:07](#)):

I can give you the resources to help you do it.

Sanjay ([24:10](#)):

Many times they don't even need the resources, they just need somebody to listen to them. That's very powerful of what we're doing, because what we do is we say, "hey, you can do it. You're not alone." So, together with the SOLE concept, there is another very beautiful concept, which is the granny cloud. The guy who invented SOLE, which is this Indian guy, Sugata Mitra, he realized in his research, over 20 years of research, he realized that it's more important to have somebody motivating in the learning process than somebody who's an expert because somebody who's motivating, accelerates learning process is dramatic.

([24:42](#)):

So, he invented this idea of the prototypical stereotypical granny, which is somebody who says, "Sanjay, we don't understand that what you do, but tell me more." Oh, that's so awesome. How do you do that? So he invented this thing, which is called the granny cloud. And the granny cloud is just a network of volunteers, men and women of all ages. I'm also a granny. Our role is to connect through a video call with the Soles. Our role is not to teach, it's to listen and to be a granny, to say, "what are you guys finding out, that's so cool, and how did you do that, and well, tell me more?"

([25:17](#)):

Grannies are there to ask more questions than to give answers, and they're there to listen and to give warmth and encouragement and say, "I don't know how to do that, but I'm sure you can figure it out. You can do it." Those things are very powerful and people need that. So, our responsible innovation has to do with understanding that people need to be heard, one. Two, that people are capable of amazing things. What they need to do is they need to be together, and so that's why we're not aiming for everybody to have internet connection, we're aiming for people to come together, to use it together

because that's what makes us think that those people who come together, they are going to shape how the internet is going to look.

(25:59):

Right now the internet looks like what big companies want us to make it feel like, but imagine when we are all coming together in groups, doesn't make sense anymore to have algorithms who are profiling you and who are doing surveillance on you because they can't find you.

Paige (26:15):

Exactly.

Sanjay (26:16):

So in the end, really what I worry every day, because I bring people who've never been on the internet onto the internet, and I worry because there's a lot of crap on the internet. You feel sense of responsibility.

(26:26):

I feel great sense of responsibility because at the same time I show them this and then I see polarization. I see fake news. I see how governments use this to manipulate people. I see how corporations use this to manipulate people and to create not nice ways of living, but at the same time, I feel I'm also giving people the opportunity for them to choose options which they would've not had before, because now when you are small, you ask your parents a question. If they say no or I don't know, you're stuck.

Paige (26:57):

Exactly.

Sanjay (26:59):

Maybe, if you go to school, you have your teacher and your teacher says, "no, we're not going to talk about that. You have to be quiet," and if you are asking questions, you might get stuck, but when you have the internet, you don't get stuck. You can ask any question and any question can take you many places. More important than the answers is that new questions will always rise, so you can keep iterating this, indefinitely. So, I feel like our innovation aims always to take care of people and take care of nature and take care of the environment and what we do.

(27:30):

Our SOLE lab is made out of recycled stuff, and it's made out of bamboo, which is a special bamboo, which there is here, which is guadua, which is like this natural steel, and so we're trying not to make a mess, one. Two, we're trying to have people build it together so that they feel like it's theirs, because it is theirs, and then let them understand that, "look, we trust you. You can do whatever you want with this space, but I'm giving you the tools to do it. So I'm giving you a methodology, I'm giving you a granny cloud to accompany you. I'm giving you these minimal things, which then you can show me how far you can go, and then you can teach others how to do that." That's the point.

Paige (28:10):

No, that's amazing. Thank you so much. Thank you. Thank you. I've enjoyed meeting you and hearing more about your project. It's been a phenomenal time.

Sanjay ([28:21](#)):

Thank you very much. It's a pleasure.

Paige ([28:37](#)):

Hey Shayna

Shayna ([28:39](#)):

Hey Paige.

Paige ([28:43](#)):

Just off of that recording, I guess we can start by talking about our recent trip to Columbia to see all of our grantees. For me, the first time meeting grantees and what that was like.

Shayna ([28:57](#)):

Yeah, it was a pretty phenomenal trip, and it was very exciting also to meet up with our team, in person or internet society foundation family. That was very nice.

Paige ([29:09](#)):

No, yeah, it was amazing, and there's a bit where all of our grantees got to present the work to us and it was just really nice to see the images and the beneficiaries and just connect everything we do on a day to day basis to the people who are actually benefiting from it, and that was amazing.

Shayna ([29:27](#)):

It was, and I think it was a nice reminder. We grind day in and day out and we have lots of challenges and obstacles and hurdles that we have to overcome in our day to day work life, but it's nice to take a break and just reconnect, in a really human way, with folks whose projects we support and to be inspired by them. I think I was inspired by them and all of the great work that they're doing down in Columbia. These were grantees from various programs across the foundation's portfolio, but all of those that were located in Columbia, we brought together, to meet with them and to hear about the great work that they're doing and to further build relationships. It was really nice. I really appreciated it.

Paige ([30:10](#)):

It was amazing. We got to meet Sanjay and his team from SOLE Columbia, and you all would've listened to the previous conversation I had with him, about the work that they're doing. What are your thoughts, do you know?

Shayna ([30:27](#)):

I'm a fan of Sanjay and I'm a fan of SOLE Columbia, mostly because, what I find really innovative about their project, is so simple and so graceful and elegant. They're not looking at just building an access point or building some infrastructure or hard point or something somewhere, but they're really looking at why do people use or not use the internet. As he was talking about and giving the history of these other projects that had happened in Bogota, in Columbia, and that were sponsored by the government, and people weren't using it, people weren't accessing it. It was like, "well, why is that?" Their whole approach to these self-organized learning environments of saying, "actually, let's use the internet

collectively." I think that's such a difference from how I myself use the internet. I have my computer, I have my laptop. I'm doing, it is a completely individual endeavor and activity, but to flip the script a little bit and say, "well actually, why don't we do this as a group?" And what outcomes are possible then, I think is really interesting.

(31:42):

Obviously, Sanjay has lots of energy and passion for the project and really supports, and really as a champion of that methodology and that approach, but I think there's something really interesting to be learned from that, and I'm really curious to see how it goes in that community. I know we had some other folks who went to that community to go and hang out and see how things are going. Yeah, I mean, think it's a different approach. I find that to be really innovative even though it's not a shiny, fancy thing, but it actually is getting to some of the root causes of why folks aren't taking advantage of these connections or the access that they do have.

Paige (32:23):

Yeah. One of the things that you and I spoke about was how it fosters community, how people can build community in these self-organized learning environments. You go and you're tackling a question with somebody else and you're getting to know this person in the process. I think that one of the things we spoke about was that the internet has made us all so connected, but then there's still this very hyper individualized way of living that people are still very tied to. This is one of those spaces where both of those things can come together, so you can be connected to the people beyond the computer, outside of the space you're in, and also connected to the people in the space that you're in.

(33:10):

I guess, getting more information about it, I really hope that this becomes the way people learn, and possibly the way teachers choose to teach, because it just seems way more engaging to come to a space and present a question you're interested in, maybe guided through whatever means, and then you work through to finding that answer. This seems like the revolution that teaching needs. Has anybody told educators about this?

Shayna (33:45):

Yeah, I mean, think there are some models. Obviously, you have to have some fundamental literacy skills to be able to even access that. If you cannot read or if you're not literate, it is going to be pretty difficult for you to do that. Although, screen readers and all of this new accessibility technology is upcoming, but I think the experience of the internet is drastically different based on your ability to read and to understand and comprehend language and often times English language, but that's a conversation for another...

Paige (34:26):

Another podcast.

Shayna (34:27):

Yes. What really struck me in thinking about this project, it took me back to myself and my first experience of the internet, when I was a kid, and we had internet at home. We had one computer and there were four people living in my house and so we all had to share and to figure out how to do that together. I remember sitting with my brother for hours where he would show me how to do it. Where do you type the words if you're searching a thing or where do you put the disc in the thing?



(35:02):

It was a collective family journey of all of us learning together this new technology and how it works, but what quickly happened is once we figured that out, then we started fighting for time because it's like, "okay, now I know how to use this, now I want to use it all the time, and now you can't use it because I'm using it." I'm curious, and these are questions that we can ask Sanjay at a later day, but how, as folks are learning and they're becoming more savvy and they're understanding the benefit of the internet, does that create more demand for the internet, more devices and things like that? I don't know and is that a problem, maybe?

Paige (35:44):

Yeah, I guess for me it took me back to a different time. A lot of my experience with the internet was by myself, largely, because I had a laptop, but when I was using the internet at school, I'd be in the library similarly, one computer, two to three students to a computer. Now that I'm thinking about, it was essentially self-organized learning. The teacher would give us something to look at and it would be a group of three or four of us looking at stuff together, learning together, bringing our personal experience to it, different ideas and stuff like that. That was the memory for me that came back like, "Oh yes, this was a thing." Because of the expensiveness of it and it wasn't one person to a computer always, it was a shared activity in the beginning, that was the memory that it channeled for me.

Shayna (36:41):

Yeah. Well, I think later on we're going to hear from some of our other teammates about their first memories of the internet and getting online.

Paige (36:49):

Yes, we are.

Shayna (36:52):

That should be fun. I wonder if anyone else wants to share their story of their first time experiencing the internet or their first encounter with the internet, to send it to us at [foundation@isacfoundation.org](mailto:foundation@isacfoundation.org).

Paige (37:06):

Yes, please do send it to us. We will read and reply.

Shayna (37:10):

Awesome. Well thanks, Paige. This has been great.

Paige (37:14):

As always, thank you.

Shayna (37:17):

I'll catch up to you soon.

Paige (37:18):

Alrighty.

Mabel ([37:29](#)):

The earliest memory I have of the internet dates back to high school, and I remember doing research for my papers and being completely amazed that I could just type in whatever subject I was researching on aol.com and get all the information I needed without having to go to the library and check out books. So, that was just a wow moment for me. Then, I also remember being frustrated trying to log on, again on america online, and having my dad mess up my flow because he wanted to use the phone, because back then you couldn't talk on the phone and use the internet at the same time.

Heidi ([38:07](#)):

I think my earliest memory of the internet would be in 2002 when I was in second grade. My family had a computer room with the big clunky desktop computer that we all shared, given I was in second grade, I played computer games that were on CDs usually, and then we finally got internet, which was of course the dial up. I remember sitting in the room with my parents listening to those loud noises from the modem and waiting for it to connect. I couldn't tell you what I actually did once we did have internet, given I was so young and probably didn't have a reason to be on the computer that much, but that is definitely my earliest memory.

Sophie ([38:47](#)):

Hello, this is Sophie Rodriguez. I'm a monitor and evaluation and learning specialist at the Internet Society Foundation. If I think back to my earliest memory of the internet, I guess it has to be the dial up sound, when you were trying to connect to the internet via the phone landline and that little beeping sound was how I knew or recognize that there was something going on and we were about to be able to connect to the internet.

Shayna ([39:22](#)):

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