

# LOVE: 2.0

## Ctrl+ (Finding Romance on the Internet)

How a busy metropolitan dweller finds love in a city jam packed with people

By: Felix Quinonez Jr.

Since its inception, the Internet has slowly evolved into the world's largest and most popular matchmaker, bringing together people from all over the world. "I swore that the people sitting around us could see the sparks flying between us. It was amazing knowing and feeling that you have found the 'one'" explained Lisandra Canales as she reminisced about the first time she met her future fiancé. Like more and more people are doing these days, Lisandra found love through online dating.

In fact, this is nothing new. People have been using technology to bridge the gap for centuries. As far back as 1700, barely a decade after the modern newspaper was introduced, people were already using mass media as a gateway for love. It was then the first matrimonial service was created. Countless single men and women used this service as a way to find someone to share their lives with. And this was only a precursor of what might lay ahead.

The matrimonial services introduced in the 1700's can be seen as ancestors to the ever-popular personal ad to printed in newspapers' classifieds centuries later. In this incarnation, people responded to ads via telephone. But as technology progressed, people found new ways to adapt it as a matchmaking tool. The VHS revolution brought in video dating. But all of that pales in comparison to what came next: the Internet. The Internet has had a far-reaching effect on all of us and brought with it a new way for people to connect and search for love — online dating.

From the first day, people saw the dating possibilities the Internet had to offer. Even before the web was introduced, the Internet hosted various dating activities. These were similar to what could be found in newspapers, like their bulletin boards and forums where people posted personal ads. Internet provider services such as America Online and Prodigy offered and advertised features including chat rooms and dating forums.

Currently, there are approximately 1400 singles dating websites in North America alone. Among the most popular sites are eHarmony with around 20 million users and Match.com with 15 million users.

But regardless of this underground popularity, it seems a lot of people still think online dating to be completely different than "old fashioned" dating. But there's not much difference between the old-fashioned dating and online dating, as Lisandra explains, "The only difference was how we met." With previous online dating

experience on sites, such as eHarmony and Match.com, Lisandra continued to say that, not unlike couples meet-



ing in person, in her experience "most of the time the men were the ones who reached out first."

That is where the new form of dating kicks in: From there, they go on to correspond through e-mails, texts or over the phone. But as any first meeting or date might go, it's still hard to get to know someone, as Lisandra well found out. "You really don't open up to a complete stranger. We spoke about our jobs but nothing specific."

After two months of back-and-forth text messaging and phone conversations, they decided to meet in person. For their first "real" date, they went to an Italian restaurant. Originally, they had only planned for dinner, but after eating they decided to play a few games of pool because neither of them wanted the date to end. The chemistry was present from the beginning, Lisandra confesses, "when we met it was love at first sight, which was something I had never experienced before."

Although they shared a very strong connection from the beginning, they took things slow. On their second  
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date, they went for the timeless dinner and a movie. “We were still getting to know each other as you would be doing had you met the person the ‘old fashioned way.’ But I felt more comfortable in that we had plenty to talk about as we had already established a comfort level in our prior communications,” Lisandra explained.

Ultimately, things didn’t work out for Lisandra and her fiancé, but their relationship lasted three years and a proposal. Stories like Lisandra’s are becoming more and more common each day. According to [onlinepersonalstats.com](http://onlinepersonalstats.com), 40 million Americans use online dating services. Although Lisandra’s relationship didn’t work out, it is just as common for online relationships to succeed as an alternatively-formed relationships.

And just as it does with couples who meet in person, love snuck up on Fernando Quinonez. He was in a chat room at [Univision.com](http://Univision.com) when his future wife’s profile name caught his eye. She had the number 10 in her username — like his birthday, July 10 — so he decided to reach out to her. The two began chatting online, then eventually over the phone.

This continue for almost five months before they finally met in person. Fernando, who lived in Long Island, NY, flew out to Arizona. At this point they already had a



*Magaly and Fernando*

close relationship. “By the time we decided to meet I was already in love with her,” Fernando recalls. After Magaly picked him up from the airport, the two of them drove to Las Vegas where they spent the weekend.

Three years later, they’re still together, tied the knot and gave birth to an 18-month-old daughter Sabrina. Looking back, they both agree online dating helped foster their relationship. “I feel that it’s better because before we ever met we already told each other so much, and I already loved her,” Fernando explained. Magaly shares the sentiment and adds, “I was 100 percent real with him, and he was real with me. Because we didn’t know each other we had no reason to lie. So we got to know each other better until we became close friends and eventually fell in love.”

Fernando is still amazed at his decision to move to Arizona. “I never thought I would leave New York and move across the country,” he said before adding “and of course becoming a father and having my precious Sabrina was worth every hard time I had and everyone thinking it would not work.”

But even though the popularity of online dating keeps growing, from May 2009 to May 2010 online dating increased 15% Nationwide, this doesn’t mean the stigma surrounding it has completely disappeared. Lisandra is aware that not everyone has embraced online dating yet explaining that, “My only hesitation was in telling friends and certain family members. I felt they would think there was something wrong with me that I couldn’t find a guy the old fashioned way.” But for her it’s really more of a matter of convenience because she doesn’t drink and is not into the club scene.

But a key difference between online dating and its predecessors is that the people meeting over the Internet are not restricted by their geographic location. This was true in Danielle’s case. She met her husband Justin through [OKCupid.com](http://OKCupid.com), even though he was living in Florida and she in Brooklyn. Justin was searching profiles for women who liked the singer-songwriter Elliott Smith and found Danielle as Smith is a mutual personal favorite for them.

At first the distance seemed like an insurmountable obstacle but Justin sent her a message and the two decided to become pen pals. They enjoyed their exchanges so much that within hours they moved the conversation to e-mail. Within three days, they were sending each other text messages. Danielle recalls how their exchanges were “basically non-stop texting and e-mailing.” They talked about their days and backgrounds.

Their first phone conversation came a week later, and Danielle still remembers it: “I was extremely nervous, but the first conversation couldn’t have gone better.” Two weeks later, Danielle was flying down to Florida to visit him. “I couldn’t move the relationship forward until I actually met him,” she explained.

When they finally met, there was “an immediate pull to each other,” Danielle said. “The minute we saw each other that was it.” Her first visit lasted a week. During her stay they enjoyed Ferris wheel rides, stayed home watching TV and even ventured to talking about marriage. On her second trip to Florida, which came a few weeks later, Justin proposed to her. He eventually moved to New York, where he got a job, and the two of them were married on October 16, 2011, roughly 11 months after their first message on [OKCupid](http://OKCupid.com). That might seem like a short time but it is hardly out of the ordinary. Couples who meet online usually date for 18.5 months before getting married. But for offline couples, this period usually lasts 42 months on average.

The Washington Post reported online dating is the third most frequent method of introduction for married couples, falling under meeting through a mutual acquaintance or meeting at work or school. Although not everyone is ready to embrace online dating, the fact is it’s not going away. [Onlinedatingbook.org](http://Onlinedatingbook.org) stated that 31% of U.S. citizens use dating websites. And according to *Online Dating Magazine*, 280,000 marriages were a result of online dating in 2011.

With the rise of social networking, online dating might evolve into a new form, and with the millions of people on sites like Facebook the stigma is slowly disappearing. Whether a college student sends a friend request to a cute classmate or a girl tells a guy to “Facebook” her, people are engaging in a type of online dating without even realizing it. But then again, the Internet has affected almost all other aspects of our lives, it’s only natural it will be applied to life’s greatest mission. Finding love. Reminding all of us, love truly might be around the corner or across the nation and only a click of the mouse away. ●