Postdoctoral Fellowship

The Digital Civil Society Lab at the Stanford Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society (Stanford PACS) brings promising new scholars to Stanford for 1-2 year appointments as postdoctoral fellows. The Lab is pleased to welcome applications for 2018-2019.

About the Digital Civil Society Lab

The Digital Civil Society Lab envisions an independent civil society that thrives in the digital age through the safe, ethical and effective use of private digital resources for public benefit. The Lab is an initiative of the Stanford Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society (Stanford PACS).

The Lab is led by Lucy Bernholz, senior research scholar at Stanford PACS, and Rob Reich, professor of Political Science and faculty co-director of Stanford PACS.

The rapid adoption of digital tools for social and political action has resulted in a complicated new sphere we refer to as "digital civil society." Digital civil society encompasses all the ways we voluntarily use private resources for public benefit in the digital age. We see evidence of digital civil society at the intersection of several domains: nonprofits, associations, and philanthropy; market solutions for social good; political action; and digital data and infrastructure. These once-distinct spheres now overlap in ways that require the adoption of a new framework rooted in the unique characteristics of digital resources and the distinctive values of civil society.

Digital tools and infrastructure allow individuals to associate, network, express themselves, and mobilize others at lower cost, larger scale, and greater speed than ever before. Access to digital infrastructure, the creation of new digital tools, and smart use of digital data as a resource expand and strengthen the ways we work together for good.

Civil society organizations are almost everywhere *digitally dependent* on third party providers for the digital tools and platforms they use. The majority of digital tools and network infrastructure are built and maintained by commercial enterprises that are frequently surveilled by governments. These dependencies challenge the democratic ideal of an *independent* civil society – a space apart from the government and the commercial marketplace. Most people cannot have private conversations digitally, associational activity is more easily tracked than ever before, and private spaces online are accessible only to the technologically skilled. Corporations that provide the platforms on which people express themselves and associate with others are now implicated in protecting and enforcing free speech, association, privacy, and safety.

Democratic governments and international declarations of human rights all seek to guarantee the rights of citizens to free expression, association and privacy, even when the precise interpretation of these ideals differ. These basic rights inform our democratic systems and constitute core freedoms for all people. Civil society's digital dependencies profoundly shift how these rights are experienced. The Lab's research draws from the humanities, social sciences, engineering, computer science and the law to understand and advance the principles of civil society and democracies in the digital age.

About the fellowship

We seek to appoint exceptional scholars who are actively engaged in research on topics related to priority research areas, which include:

- The key dimensions of digital infrastructure and data and how they influence the role of independent civil society in democracies;
- Understanding, creating, and expanding access to software, hardware and digital practices that align with the values of civil society in democracies;
- The nature of digital data donations and/or the governance mechanisms, enterprise forms, or legal constructs that such donations require;
- The role of digital infrastructure, data, and connectivity and their influence on relationships between governments, markets, and civil society.

We encourage applications from candidates representing a broad range of disciplines including the social sciences, humanities, law, computer science and engineering.

Each fellow will be affiliated with the Digital Civil Society Lab and potentially a department or school at Stanford University.

The Digital Civil Society Lab is an initiative of the Stanford Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society (Stanford PACS). Stanford PACS is an affiliate of the [Institute for Research in the Social Sciences](#) (IRiSS).

The annual fellowship stipend is $63,000, plus the standard benefits that postdoctoral fellows at Stanford University receive, including health insurance and travel funds. The fellowship program falls under U.S. Immigration J-1 Exchange Visitor Visa activities. The start date of the fellowship will be September 2018, unless otherwise agreed.

How to apply

Application materials should be submitted to the Digital Civil Society Lab via email to hnrobinson@stanford.edu using the subject line "DCSL Postdoctoral Fellowship 2018." **The deadline for applications is January 13, 2018**. Please include the following items and information in your application:

- Cover letter: detailing the reasons for the applicant's interest in the fellowship;
- Curriculum Vitae;
- Fellowship proposal: detailing the research that the applicant would undertake while at Stanford (three page limit, single spaced);
- Writing sample: consisting of either a dissertation chapter or a recent published paper. There are no specific page length or formatting requirements for this sample;
- Graduate transcript: with proof that the applicant has completed all the requirements for the PhD, or a letter from their PhD advisor stating when they will do so;
- Two (or more) Letters of Recommendation.

Please disclose if you have additional funding arrangements.

To assume a postdoctoral fellowship, you must have a PhD in hand by July 1, 2018. We cannot consider applications from scholars who earned a PhD earlier than May 1, 2016.

Questions about the program, application process or requirements should be directed to Heather Noelle Robinson, Program Associate of the Digital Civil Society Lab, at hnrobinson@stanford.edu.