



DIGITAL STUDIES INSTITUTE

Bringing a humanities-centered approach to the power and problems of the digital worlds

The University of Michigan's Digital Studies Institute (DSI) was established in 2019 to serve as LSA's home for innovative scholarship on digital technologies and culture, and to address the ethical, cultural, social, and aesthetic implications of these rapidly developing technologies from a liberal arts perspective. From its 2014 beginning as a pilot program within the Department of American Culture, DSI has grown into the largest, most comprehensive initiative for digital scholarship in higher education and is well-positioned to be the nation's leader in the study of digital culture.

DSI is a center for research and dialogue where faculty, students, and visitors focus their inquiry on technology, digital culture, and social justice. We seek to address the impact of transformations in personal identity, instances of marginalization and unequal access, and the proliferating ethical challenges of digital spaces. Questions concerning the impacts of technology on race, disability, gender, sexuality, class, power, and identity are foregrounded in courses for undergraduates and graduate students, an annual summer institute, and a diverse range of public programs.

The Digital Studies Institute supports an undergraduate minor and a graduate certificate with a diverse range of course offerings. Course topics range from the history of the internet, to the rise of artificial intelligence, to digital technologies as tools for surveillance, the study of Instagram rhetoric, or the intersection of race and video games, and critical practices in digital culture, accessible design, and social media activism. Students have the opportunity to experience virtual reality authoring by both making and critiquing digital content, and learn to design digital and physical gaming components, as well as to explore the social and economic impact of their favorite genres. Courses prepare students to be informed users of technology and astute and pragmatic critics of our digital present and future.

DSI UNDERGRADUATE INITIATIVE SUPPORT FUND

DSI provides an innovative liberal arts approach to understanding the human side of technology and the digital environment that surrounds us. Students apply skills and methods learned from the humanities, social sciences, and creative and media production disciplines to build a more equitable technological world. Gifts from \$5,000 - \$20,000 to the DSI Undergraduate Initiative Support Fund will enable undergraduates to study the intersection of technology and social justice and to develop broadly applicable skills they'll use to build a more equitable future.

DSI PUBLIC PROGRAMMING OUTREACH FUND

Support for the DSI Public Programming Outreach Fund makes it possible to bring leading scholars, technologists, policymakers, and artists to campus to raise awareness about timely and emerging technological issues. These campus visits enhance the research culture for all students and faculty on campus. These events include lecturers, symposia, classroom and lab visits, as well as technical workshops. Recent events have included a two-day symposium on the international rise of E-sports, hosting social media student-influencers who use TikTok to raise awareness of racism on college campuses, and a two-week institute on the impact of digital technologies on climate change. Support at the \$5,000 level funds a public panel on an emergent topic; a gift of \$20,000 brings a special guest to campus for a series of community-wide programming and classroom meetings with students; and \$30,000 provides the resources needed to hold a conference. Gifts to endow events can be recognized with a naming opportunity.

DIGITAL STUDIES INSTITUTE STRATEGIC FUND

The strategic fund is critical to the Institute's ability to pursue new opportunities and supplement whenever gaps appear. Contributions of all sizes to the DSI Strategic Fund will help to support crucial activities such as undergraduate and graduate needs; new technology; activities that enrich our curriculum; faculty recruitment and research; public programming bringing speakers to Ann Arbor and distributing U-M research beyond the campus walls; and other initiatives that support our academic mission.



“Digital Studies has been my main interest for some time now, though I could never put a name to it. It’s a happy marriage of a myriad of different computer science and humanities-adjacent topics. It’s often said that Digital Studies is hard to narrowly define because of this—but that’s exactly why I find it so fascinating.”

**—*Kerri Graham,*
*Digital Studies student***

DIGITAL STUDIES NAMED ENDOWED CENTER

An endowment will ensure the Digital Studies Institute's ability to expand and solidify a wide variety of programs in perpetuity. Funds will support student access to innovative technology in a central campus open laboratory setting accessible to all, innovative courses, public-facing programming and outreach, and will provide flexible funding to address rapidly emerging opportunities.

Endowment of \$5M is needed to support:

- Visiting scholars
- Conferences
- Special events
- Two graduate fellowships
- Directorship
- Program staffing



DIGITAL STUDIES GRADUATE LABORATORY FOR PUBLIC RESEARCH

Scholarly research often occurs in intensive lab settings supervised by experienced faculty researchers. The Digital Studies Institute is currently home to five research labs: the Just XR Futures Lab, the Digital Accessible Futures Lab, the Cyberfeminism Worldbuilding Lab, the Urban Tech Collective, and the Digital Inequality Lab. Gifts to this fund will support students and faculty to collaboratively share works in progress and create graduate student research assistantships. These funded research opportunities for graduate students are a supportive space for young researchers to learn practical skills such as how to publish, make public presentations, engage in creative practice, engage in public outreach, and otherwise disseminate their research outside the academy. A gift of \$35,000 annually or \$750,000 endowed supports three different thematic seminars and five graduate students with year-long research assistantships to be able to participate in these seminars, workshops, and faculty projects.

DIGITAL STUDIES OPEN LAB FOR STUDENTS

What if Michigan's liberal arts students had access seven days-a-week to the most cutting-edge digital equipment in the field of games, expressive arts, video editing, and digital tinkering? While the university offers access to desktop computers and wi-fi in common areas on central campus, we lack an inviting and staffed physical space for digital creation. An endowed gift of \$1M could provide DSI students with a supportive lab to work on both class and personal projects, forefronting socially-engaged thinking, writing, and making.

MICHIGAN DIGITAL JUSTICE INTERNSHIPS

DSI will provide undergraduate internships to work with local tech firms and nonprofits to bring insights from ethnic, race, feminist and disability studies into digital practice. Students can earn credit for this internship through the DSI program under guidance of DSI faculty, but funding is necessary to make these opportunities open to all students regardless of their financial situation. A gift of \$3,000 will fund one student's summer internship experience.

DIGITAL STUDIES GRADUATE FELLOWSHIP

This fellowship will provide tuition and living expenses for a doctoral student working on a digital studies dissertation project. It will also provide funding for research travel and equipment expenses. Support will enhance junior scholars' dissertation work and build the University of Michigan's profile as an outstanding place for digital studies research. A gift of \$1M would endow a named graduate fellowship in perpetuity, while a gift of \$55,000 would fully support a graduate student for one year (stipend, tuition, benefits, research fund).

WAYS TO FUND YOUR GIFT

Your partnership connects the college's rich past to a boundless and bright future. You can change lives with gifts of cash, pledges, or appreciated securities, and create a meaningful legacy through your bequest, trusts, gift annuities, and other planned gifts. Your generosity makes an impact on what's next, for a better tomorrow.

for what's next ▶

Look to Michigan

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