



DIGITAL STUDIES INSTITUTE

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

The University of Michigan is a center for innovation in key digital technologies that are or will become part of our daily lives. The Digital Studies Institute was established in 2019 to serve as LSA's home for scholarship on digital technologies and culture, and to address the ethical, cultural, social, and aesthetic implications to these rapidly developing technologies from a liberal arts perspective. From its 2014 beginning as a pilot program within the Department of American Culture, the Digital Studies Institute (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's impact area in research and public dialogue focuses on technology and social justice. The DSI addresses 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, in an annual summer institute, and in a diverse range of public programs.

The DSI supports an undergraduate minor and a graduate concentration with offerings that address cryptocurrencies and their underlying technologies, the blockchain, Wikistorming, podcasting, fake news, Instagram rhetoric, as well as creative 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

The DSI is the first in the nation to explicitly foreground digital inequality, social justice, and the role of race, ethnicity, and gender in our digital lives. We provide a unique liberal arts approach to understanding the digital environment that surrounds us. Students apply skills and methods learned from the humanities, social sciences, and media production disciplines to challenge business as usual in the technology industries. Gifts to the Digital Studies Undergraduate Initiative Support Fund provide resources for undergraduates to direct their passions, drive, and desire to use digital platforms in the classroom and to develop projects that prioritize service to the community for social good.

DSI PUBLIC PROGRAMMING OUTREACH FUND

The DSI excels at presenting timely discussions of emergent topics relevant to the field. Support for the DSI Public Outreach Fund would make it possible to bring in leading thinkers, to respond swiftly to important issues, to enhance the Michigan student experience, and to enhance the research culture for all faculty and scholars on campus. These events include popular lecturers, panel discussions, and events that promote cultural understanding for students, the U-M community, and residents of our region. Support at the \$5,000 level could fund a public panel on an emergent topic, while a gift of \$20,000 could bring a special guest to campus for a series of community-wide programming and classroom meetings with students, or \$30,000 could provide the resources needed to hold a conference. Gifts to endow events could be recognized with a naming opportunity.

DSI GAMES FOR CHANGE COLLECTIVE FUND

Gifts of all sizes to this fund will provide scholarships and support public events—interactive exhibitions, presentations, and game-focused programs—for students creating so-called serious games on social justice, the environment, the public good, and racial and gender discrimination. It will also connect them with local and campus gaming organizations in esports (School of Information), development (School of Engineering), and more general student game organizations (WolverineSoft). This fund will build access for those who are underrepresented in the field to become game designers and add new voices and perspectives to gaming culture.





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, lectures, and other regional programming, and will provide flexible funding to address rapidly emerging opportunities.

Endowment of \$5M is needed to support:

- Visiting scholars: *\$50,000 annually / \$1M endowed*
- Conferences: *\$30,000 annually / \$600,000 endowed*
- Special events: *\$20,000 annually / \$450,000 endowed*
- Two graduate fellowships: *\$50,000 annually each / \$1M endowed each*
- Directorship: *\$10,000 annually / \$200,000 endowed*
- Program staffing: *\$35,000 annually / \$750,000 endowed*



DIGITAL STUDIES GRADUATE LABORATORY FOR PUBLIC RESEARCH

Scientific research often occurs in intensive lab settings supervised by experienced faculty researchers. Support for this fund will establish thematic faculty/graduate student seminars 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 how to publish, make public presentations, and otherwise disseminate their research outside the academy. A gift of \$35,000 annually or \$750,000 endowed would support 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 open 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

The DSI will provide undergraduate internships to work with local tech firms 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).

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.

WAYS TO FUND YOUR GIFT

Your gifts of cash, pledges, or appreciated securities change lives. Wills, estate, and planned gifts allow you to create a lasting legacy that will enable the best and brightest minds to experience a liberal arts education, solve problems in a changing world, and yield ideas and innovations that will make a difference in Michigan and around the globe. Your one-time gift of any amount supports our programs and student experiences. We are working together to reimagine the world and create positive, purposeful change.

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“In the age of the nonstop consumption of digital media, we must explore how all of these things are influencing our world, and, specifically, the impact they have on the communities who use them. DSI serves as the training ground for scholars to research how digital cultures interconnect with today's social issues.”

—*Lisa Nakamura, director*