

JAAN ALTOSAAR

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BORN: March 8, 1992 — Ottawa, Canada

LANGUAGES: English (native), Estonian (native), French (professional proficiency)

AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION

Machine Learning • Theoretical Physics • Biophysics • Functional Analysis • Algebra

EDUCATION

- 2013- **Ph.D., Physics**
Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey, United States of America
- 2009-2013 **B.Sc. First Class Honours in Mathematics and Physics**
McGill University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada
Top 10% cumulative GPA, Dean's Honour List, Dean's Multidisciplinary Undergraduate Research List
- 2007-2009 **Ontario Secondary School Diploma**
Hillcrest High School, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. Honours, Co-President of 1200-student body
- 2006-2007 **Higher School Certificate Years 9 & 10**
Randwick Boys High School, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

HONORS & AWARDS

- 2014 [Google Summer of Code](#): Topic modeling LaTeX on the [arXiv](#) (Princeton, \$6,000)
- 2014-2017 [NSERC Doctoral Postgraduate Scholarship](#): ranked 3rd of 204 (Princeton, \$63,000)
- 2013 [Julie Payette NSERC Research Scholarship](#): awarded to the top 24 applicants in the Canada-wide Postgraduate Scholarships M competition (Ottawa, \$25,000)
- 2013-2016 [Commonwealth Scholarship](#), DPhil studies at University of Oxford (*Declined*, £31,875/year)
- 2013 [The Faculty of Science Moyse Travelling Scholarship](#), McGill University (Montreal, \$8,800)
- 2013 [Delta Upsilon Graduate Scholarship](#), McGill University (Montreal, \$5,000)
- 2013 Full funding to attend the [King Abdullah University of Science and Technology WEP Conference](#): international competition, 15 recipients (Jeddah, \$2000)
- 2012 First Prize for best poster, [Canadian Undergraduate Physics Conference](#) (Vancouver)
- 2012 Elected to [Sigma Xi Society](#) (Montreal)
- 2012 Second Prize, [McGill Faculty-wide Undergraduate Research Conference](#) (Montreal, \$150)
- 2012 Third Prize, McGill Department of Physics Poster Conference (Montreal)
- 2012 [NSERC Undergraduate Student Research Award](#) (Waterloo, \$8,400)
- 2011 McGill Award for Canadian Undergraduate Physics Conference (Saskatoon, \$1,000)
- 2011 NSERC Undergraduate Student Research Award (Montreal, \$7,600)
- 2010 [Estonian Foundation of Canada Scholarship](#) (Toronto, \$2,000)
- 2010 NSERC Undergraduate Student Research Award (Montreal, \$5,500)
- 2009 Annette S. Hill McGill Scholarship and Bursary (Montreal, \$5,000)
- 2008 Harry Elton Memorial Award (Shanghai, China, \$2,000)

WORK EXPERIENCE

- 11/2013- **Founder, Useful Science** (<http://usefulscience.org>)
Led team of 46 through concept and launch of a non-profit science outreach website (300k+ hits, 6k+ subscribers). Featured on mainstream tech websites such as Lifehacker and Boing Boing, and syndicated by the Washington Post.
- 10/2013- **Science Media Consultant, Thwacke**
Consulting for game developers on how to create realistic game elements based on science. Literature reviews, communicating science to developers and screenwriters.
- 5/2013-8/2013 **iOS & Android User Interface Designer, Ottawa Hospital Research Institute**
Led user interface design and testing; completed the design of Canada's national vaccinations tracking mobile app and backend released in 2014 ([demo](#)).

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

- 4/2014- **Advisor: David Blei**
Princeton University, Department of Computer Science
Columbia University, Departments of Computer Science and Statistics
Google Summer of Code award
Topic modeling \LaTeX equations on the [arXiv](#): applying machine learning techniques to the arXiv corpus to analyze patterns in science and improve recommendation systems.
- 9/2013-4/2014 **Advisor: Iain Couzin**
Princeton University, Departments of Physics, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology
Julie Payette NSERC Research Scholarship
Applied stochastic neighbor embedding techniques to analyze rainforest health via audio recordings, and realtime computer vision techniques to study collective behavior. Completed 3-week field study in Costa Rica to collect rainforest audio.
- 9/2012-7/2013 **Advisors: Jürgen Sygusch & Anmar Khadra**
Université de Montréal, Department of Biochemistry
McGill University, Department of Mathematics and Statistics, Honours Research Project
Theoretical biophysics: developed a physical foundation for the Resonant Recognition Model as a viable theory of biomolecular recognition via transition dipole coupling. This project received full funding for the KAUST 2013 Undergraduate Poster Competition.
- 5/2012-8/2012 **Advisor: Michel Gingras**
University of Waterloo, Department of Physics and Astronomy
NSERC Undergraduate Student Research Award
Condensed matter theory: studies of the generalized dipolar spin ice model of dysprosium titanate via [cumulant expansion methods](#) implemented within Monte Carlo simulations, and crystal field calculations with Stevens operator methods. This project won awards at departmental, faculty-wide, and national conferences.

- 5/2011-4/2012 **Advisors: Moshe Szyf & Walter Reisner**
McGill University, Department of Physics
McGill University, Department of Pharmacology & Therapeutics
 NSERC Undergraduate Student Research Award, McGill Honours Research Thesis
 Biophysics: single molecule DNA methylation mapping in nanochannels. Experienced with Matlab, protein purification and binding assays, and TIRF microscopy.
- 5/2010-8/2010 **Advisor: Jürgen Sygusch**
Université de Montréal, Department of Biochemistry
 NSERC Undergraduate Student Research Award
 Bioinformatics: virtual high throughput screening of potential *Magnaporthe grisea* aldolase II pesticides through simulation of molecular docking. 3D conformational modeling of various aldolases.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- Spring 2014 Taught four mini-courses to local high school students through Princeton Splash
 Winter 2013 Teaching Assistant: Math 270, Applied Linear Algebra (Professor Adam Oberman)
 Winter 2012 Teaching Assistant: Math 249, Honours Complex Variables (Professor Robert Seiringer)
 Fall 2011 Supervised a graduate student in the Szyf Lab at McGill

ORAL PRESENTATIONS

- 2014 Experimental project final oral presentation, *Princeton University*
 2013 Montreal Startup Club presentation on the Immunize Canada app, *Rho Canada Ventures*
 2013 Faculty of Science presentation on research opportunities, *McGill University*
 2012 Department of Mathematics Honours Project Oral Component, *McGill University*
 2012 Department of Physics Undergraduate Student Symposium, *McGill University*
 2012 Canadian Undergraduate Physics Conference, *University of British Columbia*
 2012 Department of Physics Honours Research Thesis Defense, *McGill University*

PROGRAMMING SKILLS

Version control systems: Git
 Systems administration: AWS, LE(A)MP stacks on Ubuntu & Debian
 Systems languages: C
 Scripting languages: Python, Shell Script
 Web development: D3.js, HTML5, CSS, Flask, MySQL
 Data analysis: Mathematica, Matlab

PUBLICATIONS

- 2013 J. Sygusch and J. Altosaar. The Resonant Recognition Model: long-range protein interaction via transition dipole couplings. *McGill Honours Research Project*.
 2013 T. Lin, J. Altosaar, P. Henelius, and M. J. P. Gingras. Numerical study of perturbations in dipolar spin ice. *The American Physical Society March Meeting 2013*.
 2012 J. Altosaar. Detecting methylation of single molecules of DNA using a methyl binding domain GFP fusion protein. *McGill Honours Research Thesis*.

CONFERENCES, WORKSHOPS & POSTERS

- 2015 [Workshop on Big Data and Statistical Machine Learning](#), University of Toronto
- 2014 [Y Combinator Startup School](#), New York City
- 2014 [ComSciCon](#): Communicating Science, Harvard University: ranked top 50 of 870 applicants
- 2013 Reinforcement Learning and Decision Making, Princeton University
- 2013 John von Neumann Symposium: Towards Quantitative Biology, Rockefeller University
- 2013 HackMIT; developed [Android app](#) to track sitting, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
- 2013 ³WEP Poster Competition, King Abdullah University of Science and Technology
- 2012 ²Canadian Undergraduate Physics Conference, University of British Columbia
First Prize for best poster
- 2012 ²Faculty of Science Undergraduate Research Conference, McGill University
Second Prize: induction to Sigma Xi Society
- 2012 ²Department of Physics Poster Conference, McGill University
Third Prize: nomination and award for Canadian Undergraduate Physics Conference
- 2012 Highly Frustrated Magnetism, McMaster University
- 2012 Friday Condensed Matter Seminars, Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics
- 2012 Southwest Ontario Condensed Matter Symposium, Perimeter Institute
- 2012 ¹Groupe de Recherche Axé sur la Structure des Protéines Symposium, McGill University
- 2011 ¹Canadian Undergraduate Physics Conference, University of Saskatchewan
- 2011 ¹Department of Physics Poster Conference, McGill University
Hon. Mention: nomination and award for Canadian Undergraduate Physics Conference
- 2011 ¹Department of Engineering Poster Conference, McGill University
- 2010 Gordon Research Conference: Enzymes & Metabolic Pathways, New Hampshire
³Poster: Protein interaction through transition dipole couplings: Resonant Recognition
²Poster: How stuffing leads to novel behaviour in spin ice
¹Poster: DNA methylation mapping in nanochannels

SCIENCE OUTREACH

- 2014 Hopewell Elementary School science fair judge
- 2014 Princeton Physics Open House Committee

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Member: Association for Computing Machinery, Canadian Association of Physicists, Institute of Physics, Sigma Xi Scientific Society (nominated), American Association for the Advancement of Science (nominated), Institute of Mathematical Statistics

ACTIVITIES & INTERESTS

- 2014-2015 Resident Graduate Student, Wilson College, Princeton University
- 2009- Meditation (Enpuku-ji Zen Center, Abbess: Zengetsu Myokyo)
- 1996- Classical and jazz piano
- 2012 University of Waterloo Choir (Director: Professor Gerard Yun)
- 2012 University of Waterloo Intramural Beach Volleyball (placed second out of 54 teams)
- 2011 Milton Park Recreation Association Beach Volleyball
- 2010 Mentor with McGill University Mentorship Program for First-Year Students
- 2010 Montreal Estonian Society Kindergarten Teacher
- 2009 McGill Choral Society (Director: Mary-Jane Puiiu)

SELECTED PRESS

- 2014 [Boing Boing](#), "Useful Science, accessible by all"
- 2014 [Lifehacker](#), "Excel shortcuts, article summaries, and web notes"
- 2014 [New Zealand Herald](#), "10 top sites to visit this weekend"
- 2014 [AweSci](#), "A chat with Jaan Altosaar from Useful Science"
- 2014 [Computerworld.nl](#), "Het leven van een IT'er is dodelijk!"
- 2014 [McGill Reporter](#), "Simplifying science without dumbing it down"
- 2014 [IT World](#), "Useful Science headlines that apply to your weird little computer life"
- 2014 [McGill Tribune](#), "Useful Science bridges communication gap in research"
- 2014 [McGill News](#), Alumni Magazine, "Better living through science"
- 2014 [MSURJ](#), "Scientifically proven* to improve your life - an interview with Useful Science"
- 2014 [Betakit](#), "McGill grad launches curated list of science articles"
- 2014 [uOttawa Gazette](#), "Useful Science... in 5 seconds or less"
- 2014 Art of Change [podcast](#), "The secret to making your ideas a reality"
- 2014 CBC Radio, Spark [episode](#) on Sciencescape
- 2013 [The Bull & Bear](#), "Undergraduate Innovation - A Campus-wide Opportunity"
- 2013 [McGill Office for Undergraduate Research in Science](#)