

# Allison McDonald

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## Contact

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## Research Interests

My research interests lie in the intersection of technology and society, particularly in the areas of privacy and security. I am interested in how technology and tech policy exacerbate marginalization and impact digital safety.

**Keywords:** Security; Privacy; Human-Computer Interaction; Digital Inequity

## Affiliations

### Assistant Professor

Faculty of Computing and Data Sciences  
Boston University, Boston, MA

September 2022 – present

### Distinguished Fellow

Center on Privacy and Technology  
Georgetown Law, Washington, DC

September 2022 – August 2023

## Education

**University of Michigan**, Ann Arbor, MI

*PhD, Computer Science*

*Advisors:* J. Alex Halderman & Florian Schaub

*Dissertation Title:* Advancing Digital Safety for High-Risk Communities

2016 – 2022

**Europa-Universität Viadrina**, Frankfurt (Oder), Germany

As part of the Roger M. Jones Fellowship, I spent one year taking courses in an International Human Rights and Humanitarian Law LLM program.

2015 – 2016

**University of Michigan**, Ann Arbor, MI

*Bachelor of Science in Engineering, Computer Science*

*Bachelor of Science, German*

2010 – 2015

## Awards & Honors

### Honorable Mention, 2023

*ACM CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*

Awarded for: “Nudes? Shouldn’t I charge for these”: Motivations of New Sexual Content Creators on OnlyFans

### Distinguished Paper Award, 2021

*USENIX Security Symposium*

Awarded for: “It’s stressful having all these phones”: Investigating Sex Workers’ Safety Goals, Risks, and Practices Online

### Service Award for Excellence in Climate, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, 2020

This award recognizes the recipients’ commitment and action in working to improve the climate of the Computer Science & Engineering division.

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## **Best Student Paper Award, 2020**

*IEEE Symposium on Security and Privacy*

Awarded for: Can Voters Detect Malicious Manipulation of Ballot Marking Devices?

## **Best Paper Award, 2018**

*ACM CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*

Awarded for: Keeping a Low Profile?: Technology, Risk and Privacy among Undocumented Immigrants

## Funding

### **Facebook Fellowship, 2019 – 2021**

Provides two years of funding to computer science doctoral students conducting innovative and relevant research.

### **Rackham Merit Fellowship, 2016**

Provides funding for two years to selected incoming PhD students at U-M.

### **Roger M. Jones Fellowship, 2015**

Provides one year of tuition and living expenses to one graduating engineer at the University of Michigan in order to deepen an engineering education through studying the humanities at a European university.

### **Baden-Württemberg Stipendium, 2012**

Awarded for academic merit to fund international students enrolled in universities in Baden-Württemberg, Germany.

## Publications

*Conferences are the top-tier academic publishing venues in computer science, and involve a rigorous peer-review process. This is where the majority of my research is published.*

### **Peer-Reviewed Conference Publications**

#### **“Delete it and Move On”: Digital Management of Shared Sexual Content after a Breakup**

Kathryn D. Coduto, [Allison McDonald](#)

*ACM CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI)*, May 2024

#### **A Canary in the AI Coal Mine: American Jews May Be Disproportionately Harmed by Intellectual Property Dispossession in Large Language Model Training**

Heila Precel, [Allison McDonald](#), Brent Hecht, Nicholas Vincent

*ACM CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI)*, May 2024

#### **“I feel physically safe but not politically safe”: Understanding the Digital Threats and Safety Practices of OnlyFans Creators**

Ananta Soneji, Vaughn Hamilton, Adam Doupé, [Allison McDonald](#), Elissa M. Redmiles

*33rd USENIX Security Symposium (USENIX Security)*, August 2024

#### **“Nudes? Shouldn’t I charge for these?”: Motivations of New Sexual Content Creators on OnlyFans**

Vaughn Hamilton, Ananta Soneji, [Allison McDonald](#), Elissa M. Redmiles

*ACM CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI)*, May 2023

★ [Honorable Mention](#)

#### **Trauma-Informed Computing: Towards Safer Technology Experiences for All**

Janet X. Chen,\* [Allison McDonald](#),\* Yixin Zou,\* Emily Tseng, Kevin A. Roundy, Acar Tamersoy, Florian Schaub, Thomas Ristenpart, Nicola Dell [\* denotes equal authorship]

*ACM CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI)*, May 2022

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## **“It’s stressful having all these phones”: Investigating Sex Workers’ Safety Goals, Risks, and Practices Online**

Allison McDonald, Catherine Barwulor, Michelle L. Mazurek, Florian Schaub, Elissa M. Redmiles  
*30th USENIX Security Symposium (USENIX Security)*, August 2021

★ [Distinguished Paper Award](#)

## **The Role of Computer Security Customer Support in Helping Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence**

Yixin Zou, Allison McDonald, Julia Narakornpichit, Nicola Dell, Thomas Ristenpart, Kevin Roundy, Florian Schaub, Acar Tamersoy

*30th USENIX Security Symposium (USENIX Security)*, August 2021

## **The Annoying, the Disturbing, and the Weird: Challenges with Phone Numbers as Identifiers and Phone Number Recycling**

Allison McDonald, Carlo Sugatan, Tamy Guberek, Florian Schaub

*ACM CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI)*, May 2021

## **“Disadvantaged in the American-dominated internet”: Sex, Work, and Technology**

Catherine Barwulor, Allison McDonald, Eszter Hargittai, Elissa M. Redmiles

*ACM CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI)*, May 2021

## **Can Voters Detect Malicious Manipulation of Ballot Marking Devices?**

Matthew Bernhard, Allison McDonald, Henry Meng, Jensen Hwa, Nakul Bajaj, Kevin Chang, J. Alex Halderman  
*41st IEEE Symposium on Security and Privacy (Oakland)*, May 2020

★ [Best Student Paper Award](#)

## **403 Forbidden: A Global View of CDN Geoblocking**

Allison McDonald, Matt Bernhard, Luke Valenta, Benjamin VanderSloot, Will Scott, Nick Sullivan, J. Alex Halderman, Roya Ensafi

*ACM Internet Measurement Conference (IMC)*, October 2018

## **Quack: Scalable Remote Measurement of Application-Layer Censorship**

Benjamin VanderSloot, Allison McDonald, Will Scott, J. Alex Halderman, Roya Ensafi

*27th USENIX Security Symposium (USENIX Security)*, August 2018

## **Keeping a Low Profile? Technology, Risk and Privacy among Undocumented Immigrants**

Tamy Guberek, Allison McDonald, Sylvia Simioni, Abraham H. Mhaidli, Kentaro Toyama, Florian Schaub

*ACM CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI)*, April 2018

★ [Best Paper Award](#)

## **Refereed Workshop Publications**

### **Ethical Practices for Security Research with At-Risk Populations**

Rasika Bhalerao, Vaughn Hamilton, Allison McDonald, Elissa M. Redmiles, Angelika Strohmayer

*Workshop on Ethics in Computer Security (EthiCS)*, June 2022.

### **Designing Digital Literacy and Security Trainings for Latinx Immigrants in the United States**

Sylvia Simioni, Allan Martell, Allison McDonald, Abraham H. Mhaidli, Tamy Guberek, Kentaro Toyama, Florian Schaub

*3rd SOUPS Workshop on Inclusive Privacy and Security (WIPS)*, August 2018.

### **An ISP-Scale Deployment of TapDance**

Sergey Frolov, Fred Douglas, Will Scott, Allison McDonald, Benjamin VanderSloot, Rod Hynes, Adam Kruger, Michalis Kallitsis, David G. Robinson, Nikita Borisov, J. A. Halderman, Eric Wustrow

*Proc. 7th USENIX Workshop on Free and Open Communications on the Internet (FOCI)*, August 2017

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## Magazine Articles

### **Safer Digital Intimacy for Sex Workers and Beyond: A Technical Research Agenda**

Vaughn Hamilton, Gabriel Kapchuk, [Allison McDonald](#), Elissa M. Redmiles

*IEEE Security & Privacy Magazine*, 2024

## Reports

### **American Dragnet: Data-Driven Deportation in the 21st Century**

Nina Wang, Allison McDonald, Daniel Bateyko, Emily Tucker

Center on Privacy & Technology at Georgetown Law ([link](#))

### **APIs and Your Privacy**

N. Cameron Russell, Florian Schaub, [Allison McDonald](#), William Sierra-Rocafort

February 14, 2019, Available on SSRN ([link](#))

## Other Writing

### **There is no prohibition on face surveillance in Detroit**

Allison McDonald

July 29, 2019, *The Center on Privacy & Technology* on Medium ([link](#))

### **The web really isn't worldwide—every country has different access**

Allison McDonald

December 8, 2018, *The Conversation* ([link](#))

## Talks

### **Investigating Sex Workers' Safety Goals, Risks, and Practices Online**

Guest lecture in the Cornell Security Seminar. November 23, 2021.

### **Investigating Sex Workers' Safety Goals, Risks, and Practices Online**

Guest lecture in the Information Security Group at Royal Holloway University of London. October 21, 2021.

### **Investigating Sex Workers' Safety Goals, Risks, and Practices Online**

Guest lecture in Privacy Engineering course, Northeastern University. August 18, 2021.

### **Spyware and Digital Intimate Partner Abuse**

Invited speaker (w/ Yixin Zou) for the Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center, University of Michigan. March 2021.

### **Uncertain Concern: How Undocumented Immigrants in the US Navigate Technology**

Guest lecture in "Information Privacy, Surveillance and Exposure," University of Michigan. February 11, 2020.

### **Keeping a Low Profile?: Technology, Risk and Privacy among Undocumented Immigrants**

Invited speaker at SUMIT 2018 Cyber Security Conference, Ann Arbor, USA. October 25, 2018.

### **Uncertain Concern: How Undocumented Immigrants in the US Navigate Technology**

34th Chaos Communications Congress (34C3), Leipzig, Germany. December 30, 2017.

## Teaching

### **DS 587: Data Science in Human Contexts**

Computing & Data Sciences, Boston University

Fall 2023

### **DS 121: Foundations of Data Science II**

Computing & Data Sciences, Boston University

Spring 2023, Spring 2024

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**EECS 388: Introduction to Computer Security**

Fall 2018, Winter 2019

University of Michigan

*Graduate Student Instructor***EECS 388: Introduction to Computer Security**

Winter 2019, Fall 2019

University of Michigan

*Guest Lecturer on Control Flow Hijacking***Online Self-Defense: How to protect your privacy, identity and security when using technology** Fall 2020

Co-instructor for a digital security class through the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at the University of Michigan, an organization providing education for adult learners ages 50+.

**Community Computer Security Workshops**

2016 – present

I design and lead computer security workshops, primarily for journalists, lawyers, activists, and community groups.

- Saline Area Senior Center, November 2021
- Knight-Wallace Fellows, February 2020
- Latinx community workshops, July 2018
- Latinx community workshops, November 2017
- Knight-Wallace Fellows, October & November 2017
- Clean Water Action, May 2017
- Knight-Wallace Fellows, April 2017
- Privacy and Technology Law Association, January 2017
- International Human Rights Law Master's Program, April 2016

## Work Experience

**Center on Privacy and Technology at Georgetown Law, Washington, DC**

August 2019 – August 2022

*Research Fellow***Center on Privacy and Technology at Georgetown Law, Washington, DC**

May 2019 – August 2019

*Summer Fellow***Expedia, Inc., Bellevue, WA**

May 2014 – August 2014

*Software Intern***University of Michigan, College of Engineering, Ann Arbor, MI**

January 2011 – May 2015

*Computing Consultant*

## Service

**Program Committee Member**

USENIX Security Symposium

2023, 2024

ACM Computer and Communications Security (CCS)

2024

IEEE Symposium on Security and Privacy (IEEE S&amp;P)

2023, 2024

Workshop on Security for Harassment Online, Protections, and Empowerment (SecHOPE)

2023

Workshop on Technology and Consumer Protection (ConPro)

2022

**External Reviewer**

ACM Conference on Human Factors in Computing System (CHI)

2018, 2020, 2021, 2023, 2024

Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction (CSCW)

2020, 2021, 2022

Proceedings on Privacy Enhancing Technologies (PETS)

2020, 2021

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## **Dissonance Event Series**

*Organizing Member*

2016 – 2022

Dissonance explores topics of security, privacy, law, and ethics by bringing together speakers from many disciplines and facilitating challenging discussions.

## **ECSEL+**

*Co-Chair*

June 2019 – May 2021

*Treasurer*

June 2018 – May 2019

ECSEL+ is a group to support gender minorities in the Computer Science graduate program at the University of Michigan.

## **Computer Science Graduate Student Organization**

*Vice President and Treasurer*

May 2017 – May 2018

CSEG is the graduate student organization representing graduate computer science students at the University of Michigan.