

Laura Kurek

Ph.D. Candidate | School of Information | University of Michigan

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My research examines how state actors, particularly Russia, attempt to manipulate online information environments. I employ both quantitative and qualitative methods, and have worked with data from social media platforms (X/Twitter, Rumble, Telegram) as well as peer-production knowledge sites (Wikipedia). Prior to my Ph.D., I was a data science specialist researching disinformation and inauthentic online activity for the U.S. Department of State.

Education

Ph.D., University of Michigan

School of Information
GPA: 4.0, Research areas: Social Computing, Computational Social Science
Advisors: Dr. Ceren Budak and Dr. Eric Gilbert

Expected May 2027
Ann Arbor, MI

B.S., Georgetown University

Walsh School of Foreign Service
Major: Science, Technology & International Affairs
GPA: 3.86, Magna Cum Laude. Concentration: Security
Certificate: Russian, Eurasian, and Eastern European Studies

May 2016
Washington, DC

Semester Abroad, Moscow International University

American Councils Advanced Russian Language and Area Studies Program (RLASP)

Fall 2014
Moscow, Russia

Publications

2025 Laura Kurek, Ceren Budak, and Eric Gilbert. 2025. Wikipedia in Wartime: Experiences of Wikipedians Maintaining Articles About the Russia-Ukraine War. Proc. ACM Hum.-Comput. Interact. 9, 2, Article CSCW209 (April 2025), 27 pages. <https://dl.acm.org/doi/10.1145/3711107>

2025 Laura Kurek, Kevin Zheng, Eric Gilbert, and Ceren Budak. 2025. Outsourcing an Information Operation: A Complete Dataset of Tenet Media's Podcasts on Rumble. arXiv preprint [arXiv:2503.19802](https://arxiv.org/abs/2503.19802)

2025 Joshua Ashkinaze, Ruijia Guan, Laura Kurek, Eytan Adar, Ceren Budak, Eric Gilbert. 2025. Seeing Like an AI: How LLMs Apply (and Misapply) Wikipedia Neutrality Norms. arXiv preprint [arXiv:2407.04183](https://arxiv.org/abs/2407.04183)

Other writings:

2024 Laura Kurek, Tim Harper, Aliya Bhatia, & Nathalie Marechal. 2024. Rules of the Road: Political Advertising on Social Media in the 2024 U.S. Election. Center for Democracy & Technology.
<https://cdt.org/insights/report-rules-of-the-road-political-advertising-on-social-media-in-the-2024-u-s-election/>

Industry Experience

Center for Democracy and Technology

May 2024-Aug. 2024
Washington, DC

Technology Policy Intern | Elections & Democracy

- Co-led the production of a 40-page report on social media platforms' political advertising policies
- Conducted interviews with 7 social media companies and 5 generative AI companies
- Presented report findings to civil society groups, legislators, and industry representatives

Accenture Federal Services

Sept. 2017-July 2022
Washington, DC

Data Science Associate Manager

- Managed research production, interfacing between client and internal data science teams. Defined research objectives and developed analytical methods to assess online disinformation.
- Collaborated on joint reports with allied governments. Presented findings to technical and non-technical client audiences. Published over 30 reports.

Dec. 2021-July 2022

Data Science Specialist

- Co-led a 9-person research team: negotiated report priorities, trained 3 new members, resolved data access issues. Published over 50 reports.
- Developed network- and account-level methods to identify and describe information campaigns.

Dec. 2020-Nov. 2021

- Led a 4-part series into a state-aligned network, assessing campaign scope and tactics.
- Technology Delivery Senior Analyst** Dec. 2018-Nov.2020
- Authored social media and network analysis reports. Identified three COVID-19 disinformation campaigns. Developed a hashtag network script, advanced network visualizations, and a Django web app for topic modeling.
 - Led a change management software implementation for 10 teams within a federal IT department.
- Technology Delivery Analyst** Sept. 2017-Nov.2018
- Facilitated two simultaneous agency-wide software implementations using Agile development
 - Managed relationships with over 40 stakeholders to standardize over 200 software requirements.
 - Led 7 software training sessions for over 150 users and supported 300-person user testing.

The Fulbright U.S. Student Program June 2016-June 2017 Perm, Russia

Fulbright English Teaching Assistant

- Led eight English-language classes weekly of 8-15 students at Perm National Research Polytechnic University, Linguistics Department.
- Taught intermediate Russian language classes to first-year international students.
- Organized a bi-monthly English conversation club. Provide faculty support translating academic papers and administrative documents from Russian to English.

Conference Presentations and Invited Talks

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|------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2025 | <i>Follow Nudges: Targeting Inaccurate Health Information Networks via a Large-Scale Online Field Experiment</i>
IC2S2. July 22 [upcoming] |
| 2025 | <i>Misinformation and Disinformation Online</i>
SI 315 Interpersonal & Psychological Implications of Social Media. April 1. |
| 2025 | <i>Tenet Media: Foreign state funded content creation</i>
UM Political Communication Working Group. November 22. |
| 2024 | <i>Wikipedia in Wartime: Experiences of Wikipedians Maintaining Articles about the Russia-Ukraine War.</i>
Wiki Workshop 2024. June 20. |
| 2023 | <i>(Not) here to build an encyclopedia: How do Wikipedians maintain articles related to the Russo-Ukrainian war?</i>
UM Computational Social Science Working Group. December 8. |

Awards

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|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2025 | University of Michigan Rackham Graduate Student Research Grant, Pre-candidacy (\$1,500) |
| 2024 | University of Michigan Rackham Doctoral Intern Fellowship, Summer 2024 (\$12,990)
University of Michigan Rackham Conference Travel Grant (\$900) |
| 2023 | University of Michigan School of Information Travel Grant (\$500) |

Professional Development and Service

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| 2025 | Organizer, <i>CSCW workshop - Beyond Information: Online Culture and Information Disorder</i>
Presenter, <i>IC2S2</i>
Reviewer, <i>ICWSM</i> ; <i>Wiki Workshop</i> ; <i>WebSci Workshop - Global Election and Information Security</i> |
| 2024 | Presenter, <i>Wiki Workshop</i>
Participant, <i>ICWSM workshop - Digital State Sponsored Disinformation and Propaganda Information; CRA/CCC workshop - Future of Research on Social Technologies</i>
Reviewer, <i>CSCW</i> ; <i>ICWSM workshop - International Workshop on Cyber Social Threats (CySoc)</i> |
| 2023 | Participant, <i>ACL</i> ; <i>CSCW</i>
Reviewer, <i>ICWSM</i> |

Skills

Human Languages: Advanced Russian language proficiency [reference: CEFR C1 Level, Alta Level 10 Advanced Plus]

Computer Languages: Proficient in Python, including the libraries Pandas, Tensorflow, PyTorch, and Transformers

Data Science Skills: Jupyter notebook, network analysis, topic modeling, and social media analysis