# Rebekah Larsen, PhD

Assistant Professor, Comparative Media Studies, MIT
Faculty Associate, Berkman Klein Center, Harvard Law School
ralarsen@mit.edu

**Relevant Links**
Personal Site: https://rebekahlarsen.github.io/
Google Scholar: https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=8NBx6CMAAAAJ&hl=en
ORCID: 0000-0002-0884-6217

## Education

| Degree | Institution | Date Granted |
|---|---|---|
| B.A. | University of Pennsylvania<br>Science, Technology, and Society<br>Anthropology Minor<br>*Summa cum laude* | 2012 |
| M.Phil | University of Cambridge<br>Judge Business School<br>Technology Policy | 2015 |
| Ph.D. | University of Cambridge<br>Sociology Department<br>Advisor: Dr. Ella McPherson<br>Dissertation: "*Exploring Definitional Power in the Digital Age: A Case Study of Right to be Forgotten Framing*" | Conferred Sept 2022 |

## Academic Appointments and Affiliations

**Current**  **_Old Dominion Assistant Professor, MIT (Comparative Media Studies)_**
**_Faculty Associate, Harvard Law School (Berkman Klein Center)_**

**2024 - 2025**  **_Marie Curie Fellow, University of Copenhagen (Department of Communication)_**
**_Academic Affiliate, Berkman Klein Center (BKC), Harvard University_**
- Building out a multi-year research agenda to map the Utah media environment, characterized by its comparatively religious, rural vs. urban, conservative, and broadcast-dense character. Current work includes comparisons between disinformation spread in the 2022 midterm and 2024 presidential elections.
- Publishing a monograph: *The Right to be Forgotten Decade: Definitional Battles & Platform Power*, which globally traces the 2010s definitional controversy of a privacy idea across newsrooms, activist circles, and platform councils.
- Co-authoring a book entitled *The Anti-Disinformation Industry*, giving an overview

of the complicated relations between journalists, fact-checkers, governments, platform and technology companies when it comes to combatting disinformation.

**2023 - 2024**  *Fellow, Berkman Klein Center (BKC), Harvard University*
*Visiting Fellow, Internet and Society Project (ISP), Yale University*
- Conducted second stage research and revision for first monograph, *The Right to be Forgotten Decade.* Co-organized monthly book writing 'club' across Harvard.
- Conducted initial analysis of fieldwork data collected during the 2022 US midterm elections (100+ hours of hand-recorded broadcasts and interviews from largely conservative media actors in Utah). Prepared for data collection during the 2024 US elections, including comparative in-person fieldwork, as well as spinning up a large-scale audio-to-transcript pipeline for streaming radio stations across the US.

**2021 - 2023**  *Postdoctoral Fellow, Oslo Metropolitan University (New Media and Journalism).*
- Collaborator on an international team analyzing journalist and platform approaches to electoral disinformation, with an emphasis on sociotechnical arrangements.
- Organized and co-ran international conferences, academic and professional, with the International Fact Checking Network (IFCN).
- Assessed and compared global journalistic practices and platform partnerships across through interviews, participant observation, and technical analysis of tools.

**2022 - 2023**  *Postdoctoral Associate and Lecturer, MIT (Comparative Media Studies).*
- Redesigned and taught an MIT communication intensive course, CMS 100 - *Introduction to Media Studies*, for Spring 2023 with Heather Hendershot.
- Began research agenda to map the Utah media ecosystem with special attention to conservative and religious elements. Initial content analysis and interviews.

**2021 - 2023**  *Research Associate, Cambridge (Centre for Governance & Human Rights).*
- Founding member and researcher for the academic startup, The Whistle, within which we built a reporting platform now used at multiple UK universities for safe reporting of sexual violence.
- Conducted a longitudinal technography, or ethnographic assessment, of the values embedded in verification technologies developed by fact-checkers and the EU.

**2017**  *Visiting Scholar, MIT (Center for Civic Media).*
- Conducted fieldwork in the USA, interviewing journalists and activists about the Right to be Forgotten.
- Contributed to the development of an open-source platform, MediaCloud, used for studying media ecosystems in terms of texts, visuals, sources, and networks of connections based on hyperlinks. C

# Research and Scholarship

## Publications

**Larsen, R.,** Gaddini K. (forthcoming, March 2026). "Making a Case for On-The-Ground Research with the Right". Introductory essay as special editors for a collection in *Contemporary Sociology*.

**Larsen, R.,** Bélair-Gagnon, V. (2024). "Platforms and Misinformation". Chapter in the *Routledge Handbook of Political Campaigning.*

Westlund, Oscar, Bélair-Gagnon, V., Graves, L., **Larsen, R.,** Steensen, S. (2024). "What is the Problem with Misinformation? Fact-Checking as Sociotechnical Practice and Problem-Solving Practice". *Journalism Studies.*

Belair-Gagnon, Valérie, **Larsen, R**., L. Graves, O. Westlund. (2023) "Knowledge Work in Platform-Fact Checking Partnerships." *International Journal of Communication.*

Graves, Lucas, Bélair-Gagnon, V., **Larsen, R.** (2023) "From Public Reason to Public Health: Professional Implications of the "Debunking Turn" in the Global Fact-Checking Field". *Digital Journalism.*

Westlund, Oscar, **Larsen, R**., L. Graves, L. Kavtaradze. (2022) "Technologies and fact-checking: a sociotechnical mapping and assessment". Chapter in Disinformation Studies: Perspectives in an emerging research field. LabCom Books.

**Larsen, R.** (2022) "'Information Pressures' and the Facebook Files: Navigating questions around leaked platform data". *Digital Journalism.* DOI: 10.1080/21670811.2022.2087099

**Larsen, R**. (2020) "Mapping *Right to be Forgotten* frames: Reflexivity and empirical payoffs at the intersection of network discourse and mixed network methods" 22 (7). *New Media & Society.*

J. Powles, **Larsen R**. (2015) "Academic Commentary: Google Spain". *Cambridge Code*. Available at: http://www.cambridge-code.org/googlespain

**Larsen, R**. (2015) "The Digital Information Verification Field: Current Actors, Practices and Trends". Report containing *findings from field research with The Whistle Project at the University of Cambridge. This report contains an overview of new and emerging technologies around online information verification; it also contains analysis of certain practices discovered via fieldwork.* Available online at http://thewhistle.org/.

**Larsen, R.,** Brochot, G., Lewis, D., Eisma, F.L., Brunini, J. (2015) "Personal Data Stores". European Commission – DG Connect. *Report commissioned by the European Commission on personal data tools to evaluate feasibility and potential areas of policy assistance.* Available at https://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/news/study-personal-data-stores-conducted-cambridge- university-judge-business-school.

**Larsen, R**. (2012). "The Political Nature of TCP/IP". Momentum. *Published senior thesis in the University of Pennsylvania undergraduate journal, exploring socio-technical development of key Internet infrastructure.* Available at https://repository.upenn.edu/momentum/vol1/iss1/20/.

## Works in Progress

- ***Fake Frictions: Power and Invisibility in the Political Economy of Falsehood.*** A co-authored manuscript. This book maps and explores the various interests, motivations, and agendas of actors involved in anti-disinformation production, from fact-checkers, journalists, and governments to platform

and technology companies. It is based on empirical, mainly qualitative research with these actors and their products over the course of two years. This book also presents a vision of how the field should approach inequalities and power imbalances in the industry. Targeted at communications, journalism studies, and media studies.
  - *Full manuscript complete; currently circulating to university presses (January 2026).*

- ***The Right to be Forgotten Decade: A privacy battle in the 2010s and infopolitics now*** **(working title)** First solo-authored manuscript exploring definitional controversy about privacy and data control in the 2010s. This book, critically employing a 'networked public sphere' approach, moves from a network of algorithmically curated headlines to activist circles in Latin America; from busy newsrooms at competing British newspapers to a Google roadshow across Europe. *The Right to be Forgotten* illustrates the lasting and heterogenous power incumbent in defining; it also argues that exercise of this power is a multi-sited and complicated thing—especially in the context of changing media technologies, changing measures of media pluralism, and increasing platform manipulation.

- **"Absolved and Solved: Technosolutionism and Hidden Platform Influences in Independent Fact-Checking Technology".** A co-authored article exploring platform influence on the development of a widely used fact-checking verification platform.
  - *Planned submission to Information, Communication and Society in March 2026.*

- **"Rural Rightwing Talk Radio in Utah: Sociotechnical Practices, Identifications, and Politics".** A solo-authored article based on multiple electoral seasons of fieldwork (interviewing, newsroom ethnography, and analysis of political filings and broadcasts) at four rural, family-owned, conservative Utah stations**.** Each of these commercial stations plays a significant part in local democratic processes (e.g., organizing and broadcasting local electoral debates) and shaping the political paradigm of these regions with conservative talk and news—sometimes as the only or main source of news.

- **"Mapping the Utah Media Ecosystem"** – a solo-authored journal article laying out the main actors, networks, and influences of this unique media ecosystem, with special attention to influences such as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) as a key player and global disseminator of digital media.

## Presentations
*Academic Conferences, Workshops, and Invited Talks*

24 February 2025 – "Beyond Infotainment and digital-only paradigms: Conservative talk radio in rural USA". Centre for Governance and Human Rights, University of Cambridge (UK).

21 February 2025 – "Local Airwaves, National Impact: Conservative, rural talk radio in the US". Culture and Computation Lab, University of Luxembourg (Luxembourg).

1 November 2024 - "Digitization and Polarization in Local Context: Contemporary Rural Talk Radio Stations in the US". Association for Internet Researchers (AoIR), Sheffield University (UK).

26 September 2024 - "Politics and Social Change: Perspectives of Continuity and Change through Conservative Media in the USA". Invited Speaker – Politics and Social Change Series, Sociology Department (Harvard University).

19 June 2024 - "Considering Rurality, Technology, and Religion: Mapping Alternative Media Ecosystems and Addressing Gaps in Misinformation Research". Invited Speaker - Center for Tracking and Society, Communications Department (University of Copenhagen).

1 November 2023 - *"Personal Data and Platform Power from 2014 - 2023: The Right to Be Forgotten"*. Community Hour Series, Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society (Harvard Law School).

25 May 2023 - "Connecting the global fact-checking field and technological development: A Technographic Case Study of the InVID/WeVerify Plugin". Information Communications Association (ICA) Preconference: Global Fact-Checking Field. Center for Social Innovation, Toronto CA.

23 June 2022 - "There is Cap: Platforms and Fact-Checkers Cross Sector Partnerships". Global Fact 9, Oslo Metropolitan University. Co-presenters: Bélair-Gagnon, V., Larsen R., Graves, L.

29 May 2022 - "What Are Fact-Checkers for? The Divide Between 'Fact-Checking' and 'Debunking' in a Growing Transnational Field". *Negotiating Boundaries of Journalism and Journalistic Practices*. International Communication Association, Paris 2022. Co-presenters: Graves, L., Larsen, R.

25 September 2021 - "Approaching a Pressured Press in Context: Differing Journalistic Responses to Media Controversy." Future of Journalism (Cardiff University)

9 February 2021 - "Data into Theory: Visibility in Media Research and Culture Studies". Data into Theory Seminar Series. Online at https://www.sociology.cam.ac.uk/data-theory.

8 January 2019 - "Networked Discussions about the Network: A Case Study of Public Discussion around the Right to be Forgotten". Presented at Understanding the Social in the Digital Age (Norwich University)

29 June 2018 - "Media Manipulation, Visibility, and Rights: Public Discussion Around the Right to Be Forgotten". Presented at Media Manipulation Conference, University of Cambridge.

22 May 2018 - "Data Colonialism and Data Protection Reform: Transnational Advocacy Networks in Latin America". Presented at Data Justice Conference, Cardiff University.

16 March 2018 - "Media Cloud: A Platform for Exploring Dynamic Media Ecosystems". Technology Demonstration at the Post Truth Conference, University of Cambridge.

16 February 2018 - "Researching Think Tanks with Digital Methods and Data Sprints". Digital Methods Winter School (UVA) and Bath University's *On Think Tanks* conference. Co-presenters: Oman, S., Larsen, R., Tchilingirian, J.

28 October 2017 - "Mapping Dynamic Media Ecosystems: A Case Study of the Right to Be Forgotten". Presented at Dubrovnik Media Days: Digital Intermediaries and Media Pluralism.

## Major Research Projects and Grants

*2024 – 2025*   ***Considering Rurality and Religion: Mapping an Alternative Media Ecosystem and Addressing Gaps in Media Research* (Awardee and Principal)
Funding: Marie Curie Actions – European Commission (€230,774/$250,821)**

- Successful solo grant to further research focused on the unique Utah media ecosystem. Based at the University of Copenhagen, this research will include interviewing journalists and other media commentators throughout the state of Utah about their work and upcoming midterm elections; also using digital and network methods to track regional stories + relationships.
- *Ended in July 2025 for MIT professorship; original grant ran until 2026.*

**2021 - 2023**     ***Source Criticism and Mediated Disinformation* (Collaborator)**
                  **Funding: Norwegian Research Council (9.5M NOK/$1M)**
- Main project aim: the advancement of journalists' ability to critically scrutinize sources and information in a digital age, using global empirical research.

**2015 - 2021**     ***Definitional Power and Right to Be Forgotten Framing* (Doctoral Research Project)**
                  **Funding: Cambridge International Scholarship (£122,000/$140,000)**
- Explored influences—cultural, social, political, and economic—on news production, knowledge creation, and visibility online, using a data privacy controversy as a case study. I designed an innovative mixed methods project that prioritized less visible voices in the 'networked public sphere'.
- This project was recognized by the Association of Internet Researchers in the 2021 Dissertation Award scheme; I am developing a resultant book proposal.

**2016 - 2020**     ***The Whistle Project* (Collaborator)**
                  **Funding: ESRC Acceleration Grant, EU Horizon 2020 'Chain-React' Project**
- Founding member of an academic startup building a digital platform for reporting human rights violations. Project aims also included academic and public-facing publications and reports
- Current iteration of The Whistle is currently used in multiple UK universities for safe and secure reporting on sexual violence and harms.

**2015 - 2016**     ***ICTs and the Right to Life* (Collaborator)**
                  **Centre for Governance and Human Rights, Cambridge University**
- Part of a student team collecting and assessing examples of information technologies used for human rights reporting.
- Contributed to report for United Nations Human Rights Council on *ICTs and the Right to Life* via the Centre for Governance and Human Rights (CGHR).

**2014 - 2015**     ***Study of Personal Data Stores, European Commission* (Collaborator)**
                  **Judge Business School Consulting Project**
- Designed and conducted a research project on data protection tools and potential users. Engaged in primary data collection and analysis, interviewing companies, NGOs, and academics involved in data management and privacy across the EU.
- Presented findings in Brussels in a market report to EU policymakers, leading to conferences, funding allocation, and roundtables at the European Commission**.**

**2011 - 2012**     ***The Political Nature of TCP/IP* (Undergraduate Research Project)**
                  **Senior Thesis, STS Department, University of Pennsylvania**
- Interviewed key industry figures regarding Internet development and conducted significant secondary research on internet history.
- Published thesis on technical/political development of Internet architecture in the UPenn undergraduate research journal.

## Conference, Workshop and Seminar Organization

**Convened a researcher workshop, *Research with the Right* (June 2025).** Invited several US-based researchers (graduate students, postdocs, and professors), in journalism studies, sociology, and religious studies. Aims of the workshop were to further discussion and action plans around research support, training, and ethical guidance.

**Organized a one-day preconference, *On-the-Ground Research with the Right,* at the American Sociology Association (2024).** This ASA preconference identified and addressed difficulties—institutional, personal, theoretical, ethical, methodological and logistical—faced by researchers attempting in-person ethnographic research.

**Co-organized academic track of *Global Fact 9* (2022),** an international conference with thousands of attending journalists, platform representatives, and researchers. Personally drafted and disseminated call for abstracts; reviewed and selected presenters; and moderated panels.

**Convened the Cambridge Technology and New Media Research Cluster (2018 – 2019).** Brought together a diverse range of international academics and practitioners each term, selecting them based on conference presentations and recent publications. Discussion and presentation subjects included surveillance capitalism and critical analysis of artificial intelligence.

**Doctoral Research Convenor, Centre for Governance and Human Rights (2017 - 2018).** I organized and moderated a UK-based graduate conference (2018). I arranged monthly research presentations and discussions across diverse Cambridge University departments around technology and human rights.

**Undergraduate Representative – Science, Technology, and Society (STS) (2011 – 2012)**
Founded and edited the undergraduate journal *Momentum* in the STS department, as an Advisory Committee member and student representative at the University of Pennsylvania.

## Peer Reviewer

- *New Media and Society*
- *Digital Journalism*
- *Journal of Human Rights Practice*
- *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*
- *International Journal of Press/Politics*
- *Sociology Compass*

## Membership in Professional Organizations

- Association for Internet Researchers (AoIR)
- American Sociology Association (ASA)
    - Section Member – Communication, Information Technologies, and Media Sociology (CITAMS)
    - Member and volunteer mentor – First Generation/Working Class Sociologists (FG/WC)
- International Communication Association (ICA)
- Phi Beta Kappa (national honor society)

## Methods Expertise and Training

- Expertise with collaborative and mixed methods media research approaches: qualitative coding platforms (Atlas.ti, NVivo), topic mapping and web scraping, some object-oriented programming (java and python), Gephi and other network mapping tools, markup languages (HTML and XML).

- Digital methods training certificates from the University of Amsterdam's Digital Methods Institute (2018) and Boston University Department of Emerging Media Studies (2017).

- Cambridge Social Science Research Methods Courses (SSRMC) in Qualitative Coding, Survey Analysis, Statistics, Interviewing, and Social Network Analysis.

## Teaching and Training

### MIT, Comparative Media Studies/Writing Department

- CMS 100, Introduction to Media (3/3/6) – Spring 2023. Redesigned syllabus, teaching a field survey and writing intensive seminar with 25 students maximum. Topics of focus included media texts, technologies, ideologies, and meta-discourses all influencing meaning creation and reproduction.
- Training: Kaufman Teaching Certificate program, completed in 2023.

### University of Cambridge, Sociology Department

- SOC 003 – Modern Societies. Lectured, co-created syllabus, supervised, and graded.
- SOC 007 – Media, Culture, and Society. Supervised and graded.
- Training: Undergraduate Effective Supervision Course – workshop and student feedback.

## Other Leadership and Service

- Expert Advisor on digitalization and technology – Queen Mary Centre, University of Copenhagen (2024)
- St. John's College - Mountaineering Society President and committee member (2016 – 18)
- Elected MPhil in Technology Policy student representative (2014 – 2015), representing 30 students at Judge Business School, University of Cambridge.
- Board member, Cambridge University Science & Policy Exchange (2014 – 2015). Round tabled with industry and academic experts (Google, EU, Cambridge Engineering).
- Internet Society (ISOC) Next Generation Leader (2012 – 2013). Produced group report regarding privacy online and international trade implications.
- Elected student representative to UPenn STS department (2011 – 2012). Launched undergrad journal.

## Honors and Awards

2025        Awarded the Old Dominion Career Development Chair (endowed) as an incoming Assistant Professor (MIT).

2022        Recognized by major scholarly organization, Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR), for **outstanding doctoral dissertation in 2021**: "*[A] very timely study on internet governance, user data processing and control. The study is particularly interesting as it looks at the right to be forgotten as an 'activist' tool for marginalized groups but also on the other hand how it serves as an exclusionary measure. The dissertation thus not only deals with many issues important in internet scholarship but has implications for policy debates along the North-South divide*."

2020          Collier Travel Grant, MIT Outdoor Club, for inclusivity in sports. (USD 400)

2019          Annual fund grant for 'Empowering Women' program at St. John's College, Cambridge, for gender-inclusive weight training and facilities. (£1450/$1640)

2019          Lundgren Fund - Research award for doctoral project (£675/$764).

2018-2019    Grants from Cambridge Political Economy Society for doctoral research. (£4000/$4520)

2018-2019    Grant from the Cambridge Trust for continuing doctoral research (£9000/$10,180)

2017-2018    Sociology Department Fieldwork Fund award for doctoral research (£7990/$9040)

2016          Parson's Fund travel grant for 'Dodecanese: Climbing and Community' (£400/$565)

2015-2020    Cambridge Trust International Scholarship. Received a highly competitive PhD scholarship based on significant academic potential. Scholarship covered overseas tuition, living stipend, and training costs. (Estimated £123,00/$140,000)

2012          Society of the College Award (UPenn) for best interdisciplinary thesis.

# Other Experience
### Professional, NGO, Academic-Adjacent

2015 - 2020   **Researcher and Market Analyst, The Whistle (Academic Startup).**
- Launched an academic startup developing an online information verification reporting platform for human rights violations. Authored and presented findings to journalists, academics, and practitioners in workshops and seminars.
- Led market research efforts surveying media engaged in information verification. Developed protocol and coded media actors based on their practices, outputs, and funding. Conducted content analysis and interviewed journalists, activists, and startups involved in online information verification practices.

2020          **Research Consultant, Global Disinformation Index (NGO)**
- As part of an international team, analyzing 30 UK news domains in terms of content and operations; employing research expertise in journalism studies and specific media markets to assess journalistic practice and technologies.
- Assessing news domains in terms of 'risk of disinforming' using the GDI's rating criteria and index methodology; this risk assessment will be used to disrupt, defund, and down-rank disinformation.

2012 - 2014   **Legal Assistant, Skarzynski Black (civil litigation law firm)**
- Effectively managed fifteen attorney caseloads as head paralegal and took on increasing levels of responsibility to typical new associate work at time of departure.
- Conducted legal research; proofed and revised legal filings; prepared evidence and documents for discovery.

2012 - 2014   **Voluntary Research Assistant and Coordinator, ACCESS (NGO)**

- Recruited, trained, and coordinated volunteer team of 20 for the international Silicon Valley Human Rights Conference, a professional multi-day event with over 700 attendees from 65 countries.
- Produced reports and collated research on cybersecurity and access

2008 - 2012    **Content Assistant, WXPN (NPR-affiliated radio station in Philadelphia)**
- Developed hands-on experience at a Top 25 Music site in web production and music festival operations. Live-blogged music events and reviewed new releases.
- Met tight deadlines with via content development, operating within a web team, and gaining exposure to backend site management.

2009 - 2010    **Digital Archivist, PennSound (non-profit poetry archive)**
- Digitized, edited, and uploaded poetry and the spoken word from various events and historical tapes.
- Gained experience in basic web page creation, using databases, html, and CSS.