

# Rahaf Alharbi, Ph.D.

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## OVERVIEW

Broadly, my research lies at the intersection of accessibility and human-computer interaction (HCI). I draw from disability studies and disability justice activism to understand, critique, build, and design real-world technologies. In collaboration with blind communities, a key thread of my research aims to rethink artificial intelligence (AI) tools for visual information access by surfacing and combating privacy and transparency harms. Additionally, I have led and collaborated on projects related to accessible workplaces and multilingual captioning with D/deaf and neurodivergent communities. My scholarly work has been published in top-tier HCI venues, including ACM CHI, ASSETS, and CSCW.

## EDUCATION

University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, USA Aug. 2020 - Jul. 2025

Ph.D. in Information, GPA: 4.00/4.00

Affiliated with Accessibility, HCI, Aging (AHA!) and Center for Ethics, Society, and Computing (ESC)

Advisors: Dr. Robin Brewer and Dr. Sarita Schoenebeck

Dissertation title: *Reimagining Privacy and Transparency in Visual Assistance Technologies With Blind People*

Committee: Dr. Sarita Schoenebeck (co-chair), Dr. Robin Brewer (co-chair), Dr. Ann Heffernan (UM Political Science), and Dr. Cynthia Bennett (Google Research)

🏆 Recipient of the Predoctoral Fellowship by UM

🏆 Named as Gary M. Olson Outstanding Ph.D. Student by UMSI

University of California, San Diego, CA, USA

Sep. 2015 - Mar. 2020

B.S. in Mechanical Engineering (minor in Ethnic Studies), GPA: 3.67/4.00

🏆 Fully funded by the KAUST Gifted Student Program (KGSP)

## WORK EXPERIENCE

### Assistant Professor (Tenure-Track)

Pratt Institute, School of Information, Manhattan, NY, USA

Aug. 2025 - Present

Teaching and conducting research on accessibility, disability studies, ethical implications of technology, privacy and human-computer interaction.

### Graduate Research Assistant

University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, USA

Aug. 2020 - Jul. 2025

Mentors: Dr. Sarita Schoenebeck and Dr. Robin Brewer

Led empirical accessibility research with over 70 participants; collaborated across disciplines; mentored several undergraduates and graduate students; published multiple papers in top-tier HCI and accessibility venues.

### UX Research Intern (Responsible AI Team)

Meta, Menlo Park, CA, USA

May 2023 - Aug. 2023

Mentor: Dr. Amy Piedalue

Conducted foundational research shaping responsible AI; collaborated with ethicists, data scientists, and UX researchers; delivered several talks to various teams at Meta; internally published two papers.

### Research Intern (Ability Team)

Microsoft Research, Redmond, WA, USA

May 2022 - Aug. 2022

Mentors: Dr. John Tang and Karl Henderson

Interviewed professionals with disabilities on hybrid meeting accessibility; delivered several research and product talks; published first-authored CHI paper.

## PUBLICATIONS

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*\*\* Students I directly mentored are underlined.*

### • Peer-Reviewed Journal Publications

- [J3] Denition drives design: Disability models and mechanisms of bias in AI technologies  
Denis Newman-Griffis, Jessica Sage Rauchberg, **Rahaf Alharbi**, Louise Hickman, Harry Hochheiser  
First Monday, 2023
- [J2] Understanding Emerging Obfuscation Technologies in Visual Description Services  
for Blind and Low Vision People  
**Rahaf Alharbi**, Robin N. Brewer, Sarita Schoenebeck  
Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction (CSCW), 2022
- [J1] Beyond Borders: Womens Perspectives on Harm and Justice after Online Harassment  
Jane Im, Sarita Schoenebeck, Marilyn Iriarte, Gabriel Grill, Daricia Wilkinson, Amna Batool,  
**Rahaf Alharbi**, Audrey N. Funwie, Tergel Gankhuu, Eric Gilbert, Mustafa Naseem  
Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction (CSCW), 2022

### • Peer-Reviewed Conference Publications

*\*\* In HCI and related areas of computing research, conference papers are heavily peer-reviewed and archived. They are considered equivalent, if not superior, to journal papers in terms of rigor, prestige, selectivity, and visibility.*

- [C6] "Trying to Piece It Together": Exploring Accessible Error Detection in Emerging Privacy  
Techniques With Blind People With Blind People  
**Rahaf Alharbi**, Angela Cheong, Jaylin Herkovitz, Robin Brewer and Sarita Schoenebeck  
Proceedings of the ACM SIGACCESS Conference on Computers and Accessibility (ASSETS), 2025  
Acceptance rate: 29.7%
- [C5] Toward Language Justice: Exploring Multilingual Captioning for Accessibility  
Aashaka Desai, **Rahaf Alharbi**, Stacy Hsueh, Richard Ladner, and Jennifer Mankoff  
Proceedings of the ACM Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI), 2025  
Acceptance rate: 24.9%
- [C4] Misfitting With AI: How Blind People Verify and Contest AI Errors  
**Rahaf Alharbi**, Pa Lor, Jaylin Herkovitz, Sarita Schoenebeck, Robin Brewer  
Proceedings of the ACM SIGACCESS Conference on Computers and Accessibility (ASSETS), 2024  
Acceptance rate: 30%
- [C3] ProgramAlly: Creating Custom Visual Access Programs via Multi-Modal End-User Programming  
Jaylin Herskovitz, Andi Xu, **Rahaf Alharbi**, Anhong Guo  
Proceedings of the ACM Symposium on User Interface Software and Technology  
Acceptance rate: 22%
- [C2] Accessibility Barriers, Conflicts, and Repairs: Understanding the Experience of Professionals  
with Disabilities in Hybrid Meetings  
**Rahaf Alharbi**, John Tang, Karl Henderson  
Proceedings of the ACM Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI), 2023  
Acceptance rate: 28.4%
- [C1] Hacking, Switching, Combining: Understanding and Supporting DIY Assistive Technology  
Design by Blind People  
Jaylin Herskovitz, Andi Xu, **Rahaf Alharbi**, Anhong Guo  
Proceedings of the ACM Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI), 2023  
Acceptance rate: 28.4%

- Workshops & Special Interest Groups Organized

- [W3] Organizing for More Just and Inclusive Futures: A Community Discussion  
Kim Fernandes and **Rahaf Alharbi**, Cella M. Sum, Vaishnav Kameswaran,  
Franchesca Spektor, Ashique Ali Thuppilikkat, Adrian Petterson, Megh Marathe,  
Foad Hamidi and Priyank Chandra  
ACM CSCW 2024
- [W2] Bridging the Gap: Towards Advancing Privacy and Accessibility  
**Rahaf Alharbi**, Robin Brewer, Gesu India, Lotus Zhang, Leah Findlater, Yixin Zou,  
and Abigale Stangl  
ACM ASSETS 2023
- [W1] Dreaming Disability Justice in HCI  
Cella Sum, **Rahaf Alharbi**, Franchesca Spektor, Cynthia Bennett, Rua Williams, Katta Spiel,  
Christina Harrington  
ACM CHI 2022

- Invited Articles

- [A1] Challenging Ableism: A Critical Turn Toward Disability Justice in HCI  
Cella Sum, Franchesca Spektor, **Rahaf Alharbi**, Leya Breanna Baltaxe-Admony, Erika Devine,  
Hazel Anneke Dixon, Jared Duval, Tessa Eagle, Frank Elavsky, Kim Fernandes,  
Leandro S. Guedes, Serena Hillman, Vaishnav Kameswaran, Lynn Kirabo,  
Tamanna Motahar, Kathryn E. Ringland, Anastasia Schaadhardt,  
Laura Scheepmaker, and Alicia Williamson  
XRDS, Summer 2024, VOL.30, NO.4

- Selected Peer-Reviewed Workshop Papers and Extended Abstracts

- [WP4] Speculating Perfect Algorithmic Reparations for Disability  
Robin Brewer, **Rahaf Alharbi**, Sarita Schoenebeck  
Algorithmic Reparation Workshop, University of Michigan, 2022
- [WP3] Care, Disability, & Live Streaming  
**Rahaf Alharbi**, Audrey Labrie  
Presented in The Future of Care Work. CSCW 2021 Workshop
- [WP2] On Obfuscation, Privacy & Visual Description: Rethinking Access Technology as Contested  
**Rahaf Alharbi**, Jasmine Duong, Robin Brewer, Sarita Schoenebeck.  
Presented in Artificially Intelligent Technology for the Margins: A Multidisciplinary Design  
Agenda CHI 2021 Workshop
- [WP1] "I Am Not an Engineer": Understanding How Clinicians Design & Alter Assistive Technology  
**Rahaf Alharbi**, Ada Ng, Rawan Alharbi, Josiah Hester  
ACM CHI Extended Abstract (EA CHI'20)

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

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- At Pratt Institute:

*\*\* I am the instructor of record of all listed courses at Pratt Institute.*

**Information Architecture & Interaction Design (INFO 643)**

*Fall 2025*

**Digital Accessibility (INFO 606)**

*Fall 2025*

- At the University of Michigan:

**Preparing Future Faculty Program**

*Summer 2024*

Completed the nationally recognized Preparing Future Faculty program, focusing on equity-centered teaching and course design, including the development of a teaching statement and syllabus

**Graduate Student Instructor (SI 552): Introduction to Accessibility (Graduate Level)**

*Fall 2021*

- Invited Teaching:

**SI 410: Ethics and Information Technology, University of Michigan** Fall 2024

*Invited by Dr. Matt Bui & Dr. Katie LaPlant*

Talk: Empowering or Disempowering? A Critical Introduction to Assistive Technology

**SI 552: Introduction to Accessibility, University of Michigan** Fall 2024

*Invited by Dr. Robin Brewer*

Talk: Co-Designing Visual Assistance Technologies with Blind Communities

**CSE 493e: Accessibility, University of Washington** Fall 2024

*Invited by Dr. Jennifer Mankoff*

Panel: Intersectionality & Accessibility

**ARTG 6600: Design for Accessibility, Northeastern University** Winter 2024

*Invited by Dr. Maitraye Das*

Talk: Co-Imagining Privacy Futures with Blind People: The Case of Visual Assistance Technologies

**SI 623: Research Methods for Information Professionals, University of Michigan** Winter 2024

*Invited by Yvette Ramírez & Dr. Melissa Chalmers*

Talk: Co-Imagining Privacy Futures with Blind People: The Case of Visual Assistance Technologies

**SI 710: Algorithms, Discrimination, and Justice, University of Michigan** Fall 2022

*Invited by Dr. Sarita Schoenebeck*

Talk: Understanding Emerging Obfuscation Technologies in Visual Description Services

**SI 552: Introduction to Accessibility, University of Michigan** Fall 2021

*Invited by Dr. Robin Brewer*

Talk: Understanding Emerging Obfuscation Technologies in Visual Description Services

## FELLOWSHIPS, AWARDS AND HONORS

Ibn Khaldun Fellowship, Massachusetts Institute of Technology 2025

*Competitively awarded postdoctoral research fellowship for accomplished early-career scholars. Declined in favor of a tenure-track faculty appointment at Pratt Institute.*

Gary M. Olson Outstanding Ph.D. Student Award, UM School of Information 2024

Human Computer Interaction Consortium (HCIC) invite with travel funding 2024

Rackham Predoctoral Fellowship 2024-2025

*Most prestigious award offered by the University of Michigan, aimed to support dissertations that are "unusually creative, ambitious, and impactful."*

UMSI Travel Grant x 2 (awarded twice) 2023

Rackham Graduate School Travel Grant x 2 (awarded twice) 2023

DEI Travel Grant from ACM SIGACCESS 2022

Mini grant from UM Initiative On Disability Studies (UMInDS) 2021

DEI Travel Grant from ACM SIGACCESS 2020

KAUST Gifted Student Scholarship (KGSP) 2015

*Awarded to top 1% of Saudi high school students for achievement in international science olympiads. Includes full tuition and stipends to pursue an undergraduate degree in the United States*

## TALKS AND PRESENTATIONS

[T5] **Misfitting With AI: How Blind People Verify and Contest AI Errors**

- Presented at ASSETS 2024

[T4] **Accessibility Barriers, Conflicts, and Repairs: Understanding the Experience of Professionals with Disabilities in Hybrid Meetings**

- Presented research and product-oriented talks to various groups at Microsoft
- Presented at CHI 2023

- [T3] **Understanding Emerging Obfuscation Technologies in Visual Description Services for Blind and Low Vision People**
  - Presented at U-M Center for Disability Health and Wellness Research Symposium, 2023
  - Presented at the Michigan Interactive and Social Computing (MISC) research group, 2022
  - Presented at CSCW 2022
- [T2] **Understanding the Motivations and Practices of Disabled Live Streamers**
  - Co-presented at UMSI Lighting Talks at the Intersections of Information, Diversity, Inclusion and Equity. Ann Arbor, Michigan, 2021
- [T1] **I Am Not an Engineer: Understanding How Clinicians Design & Alter Assistive Technology**
  - Presented in ACM SIGACCESS, Riyadh, 2020

## RESEARCH MENTORSHIP

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- At the University of Michigan:

**Denise Perez**, UM Mechanical Engineering Undergraduate Winter 2025

 **Blue Ribbon Recipient for an Outstanding Research Poster**

**Graham Xavier**, UM Data Science Undergraduate Fall 2024 - Winter 2025

**Angela Cheong**, UMSI Undergraduate, co-authored [C6] Winter 2024 - Summer 2024

**Pa Lor**, UMSI Masters, co-authored [C5] Fall 2023 - Winter 2024

 **DEI UMSI Award Recipient for Research and Service**

**Jasmine Duong**, UMSI Undergraduate, co-authored [W2] Fall 2020 - Winter 2021

## SERVICE AND LEADERSHIP

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- Service to the Field:

**Accessibility Co-Chair in CHI 2026** 2025 - 2026

Led accessibility planning and implementation for CHI 2026, including coordinating accommodations, documentation, and accessible reviewing workflows.

**Accessibility Student Volunteer in DIS 2023** 2022 - 2023

Supported Accessibility Chairs (Robin Brewer and Cynthia Bennett) in creating an accessibility guide, selecting services, and evaluating venue accessibility.

**Student Volunteer (Day Lead) in CSCW 2021** 2021

Assigned tasks to volunteers and created accessibility documentation for social media image descriptions.

- Service to the University of Michigan:

**Co-Coordinator & Reviewer for UMSI PhD Feedback Program** 2023 - 2025

Assisted in assigning reviewers for over 50 underrepresented PhD applicants, and reviewed several applications.

**Making Research Communication Accessible Panel** 2023

Served as co-panelist at Michigan Interactive and Social Computing (MISC) research group to share accessibility practices for designing presentations.

**Community Advisory Board at the Motor & Visual Development Lab** 2023 - 2024

Served as a research and community advisor to the MVD lab at the School of Kinesiology (University of Michigan). To support the inclusion of neurodivergent communities, I reviewed and evaluated research projects and study design materials.

**Neubacher Award Committee Member** 2023

Reviewed nominees and selected winners for the James T. Neubacher Award which is presented to UM faculty, students, and staff who empower people with disabilities, advocate for disability rights, and increase accessibility in the university.

**Co-Authored Proposal to Increase UMSI Travel Funding** 2023  
Assisted Doctoral Executive Committee (DEC) at UMSI to research and author a proposal to address equity concerns and increase travel funding for Ph.D. students who attend and present in conferences. As a result our successful proposal, the current policy increased by a maximum of \$1300 from the original funding amount.

**Accessibility, HCI, Aging (AHA) Research Group at the University of Michigan** 2022 - 2023  
Co-moderator of biweekly group meetings with faculty and students across the School of Information and the Computer Science & Engineering department.

**Personal Care Assistant Graduate Student Scholarship at the University of Michigan** 2021  
My responsibilities included advertising and reviewing scholarship applicants.

**Disability Studies & HCI Reading Group at the University of Michigan** 2020 - 2021  
Organizer.

**Services for Students with Disability Office at the University of Michigan** 2020 - 2021  
Advisory board.

• Peer Reviewing:

**ACM CSCW** 2020 - Present  
2-3 paper reviews per year  
Associate Chair (AC) for posters in CSCW 2024

**ACM CHI** 2020 - Present  
2-4 paper reviews per year  
*Special Recognition for Outstanding Reviews in CHI 2022, CHI 2024 & CHI 2025*

**ACM ASSETS** 2020 - Present  
1-2 workshop reviews per year

CITATIONS IN POLICY DOCUMENTATIONS

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[I2] [C5] and [C4] are cited in the public response titled "*Accessibility Considerations in the Development of an AI Action Plan*," submitted to the OSTP Request for Information (RFI) and published in the Federal Register.

[I1] [J1] is cited in the report titled "*The Impact of Digital Technologies on Well-Being: Main Insights from the Literature*," by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

SKILLS

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**Methods:** Qualitative Analysis, Interviewing, Focus Groups, Co-design Workshops, Ethnography, Usability Testing, Quantitative Analysis, Survey

**Programming:** Python, MATLAB

**Languages:** English (fluent), Arabic (native)