

Sara Lafia, Ph.D.

Research Methodologist

NORC at the University of Chicago, Chicago, IL

lafia-sara@norc.org

saralafia.com

Education

Ph.D. in Geography, UC Santa Barbara, CA

9/2014 - 7/2020

Dissertation: Designing for Serendipity: Research Data Curation in Topic Spaces

Committee: Werner Kuhn (Chair), James Frew, Kelly Caylor, and Daniel Montello

Emphasis: Information Technology and Society

Certificate: College and University Teaching (CCUT)

B.S. in Urban Planning, Geography - GIS, Cal Poly Pomona, CA

9/2009 - 6/2014

Kellogg Honors College (Valedictorian)

Appointments

Research Methodologist III

8/2023 - present

NORC at the University of Chicago, Chicago, IL

Postdoctoral Research Fellow

8/2020 - 7/2023

ICPSR, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI

Engineering Intern

6/2017 - 8/2017

Esri Research & Development, Arlington, VA

Informatics Intern

6/2016 - 9/2016

National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis, Santa Barbara, CA

Graduate Student Researcher

9/2014 - 7/2020

Center for Spatial Studies, UC Santa Barbara, CA

Teaching and Mentorship

Lecturer: School of Information, University of Michigan

2022 - 2023

- Co-instructed two remote, graduate-level data science courses in *Information Visualization* with 70+ students

Graduate Research Mentor: School of Information, University of Michigan

2021 - 2023

- Supervised two Information graduate students (a Master's project developing a Natural Language Processing model to detect data citations in articles and a PhD project analyzing a research data citation network)

Undergraduate Research Mentor: Center for Spatial Studies, UCSB 2015, 2017, 2019

- Supervised three Computer Science and Geography undergraduate students (a web map usability survey, a research publication visualization, and a spatial data ingest workflow with university librarians)

Instructor of Record: Department of Geography, UCSB 2017 - 2018

- Developed course materials and delivered lectures for *Introduction to Geographic Information Systems* (28 students) and *Geography of California* (60 students), receiving excellent student evaluations for both courses

Workshop Co-Instructor: iDigBio Georeferencing Workshop, NCEAS (with Dr. Katja Selmann) 2016

- Developed training materials and sample data for a QGIS training workshop supporting collections managers

Discovery Seminar Co-Instructor: Department of Computer Science UCSB (with Dr. Chandra Krintz) 2015

- Introduced computer science students to GIS, designed learning activities, and facilitated guest lectures

Teaching Assistant: Department of Geography, UCSB 2014 - 2018

- Led sections for *Introduction to Geographic Information Systems*; *People, Place, and Environment*; *Analytical and Computer Cartography*; and *Geography of Surfing*, receiving excellent student evaluations for all courses

Publications

Peer Reviewed Articles

Fan, L., Lafia, S., Li, L., Fangyuan, Y., & Hemphill, L. (2023). [DataChat: Prototyping a Conversational Agent for Dataset Search and Visualization](#). In *Proceedings of the Association for Information Science and Technology* (ASIS&T). doi: 10.1002/pra2.820

Fan, L., Lafia, S., Wofford, M., Thomer, A., Yakel, E., & Hemphill, L. (2023). [Mining Semantic Relations in Data References to Understand the Roles of Research Data in Academic Literature](#). In *Proceedings of the ACM/IEEE Joint Conference on Digital Libraries* (JCDL). doi: 10.1109/JCDL57899.2023.00039

Lafia, S., Bleckley, D.A., & Alexander, J.T. (2023). [Digitizing and parsing semi-structured historical administrative documents from the GI Bill mortgage guarantee program](#). *Journal of Documentation*. doi: 10.1108/JD-03-2023-0055

Lafia, S., Thomer, A., Moss, E., Bleckley, D., and Hemphill, L. (2023). [How and Why do Researchers Reference Data? A Study of Rhetorical Features and Functions of Data References in Academic Articles](#). *Data Science Journal* (DSJ). doi: 10.5334/dsj-2023-010

Lafia, S., Million, A. J., & Hemphill, L. (2023). [Direct, Orienting, and Scenic Paths: How Users Navigate Search in a Research Data Archive](#). In *Proceedings of the ACM on Human Information Interaction and Retrieval* (CHIIR). doi: 10.1145/3576840.3578275

Lafia, S., Fan, L., Thomer, A., & Hemphill, L. (2022). [Subdivisions and Crossroads: Identifying Hidden Community Structures in a Data Archive's Citation Network](#). *Quantitative Science Studies* (QSS). doi: 10.1162/qss_a_00209

Lafia, S., Fan, L., & Hemphill, L. (2022). [A Natural Language Processing Pipeline for Detecting Informal Data References in Academic Literature](#). In *Proceedings of the Association for Information Science and Technology* (ASIS&T). doi: 10.1002/pra2.614

- Thomer, A., Akmon, D., York, J., Tyler, A.R.B., Polasek, F., **Lafia, S.**, Hemphill, L., & Yakel, E. (2022). [The craft and coordination of data curation: complicating “workflow” views of data science](#). In *Proceedings of the ACM on Human Computer Interaction (PACM HCI)*. doi: 10.1145/3555139.
- Hemphill, L., Pienta, A., **Lafia, S.**, Akmon, D., & Bleckley, D. (2022). [How do properties of data, their curation, and their funding relate to reuse?](#). *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology (JASIST)*. doi: 110.1002/asi.24646
- Lafia, S.**, Thomer, A., Bleckley, D., Akmon, D., & Hemphill, L. (2021). [Leveraging Machine Learning to Detect Data Curation Activities](#). In *Proceedings of 17th IEEE eScience 2021*, Innsbruck, Austria, September 20-23. Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE). doi: 10.1109/eScience51609.2021.00025
- Lafia, S.**, Kuhn, W., Caylor, K., & Hemphill, L. (2021). [Mapping Research Topics at Multiple Levels of Detail](#). *Patterns*, 100210. doi: 10.1016/j.patter.2021.100210
- Lafia, S.**, Zhu, R., Regalia, B., & Kuhn, W. (2021). [Reimagining GIS Instruction through Concept-Based Learning](#). In *AGILE: GIScience Series (AGILE)*, 2, 1-7. doi: 10.5194/agile-giss-2-6-2021
- Hervey, T., **Lafia, S.**, & Kuhn, W. (2020). [Search Facets and Ranking in Geospatial Dataset Search](#). In *11th International Conference on Geographic Information Science (GIScience)*. Schloss Dagstuhl-Leibniz-Zentrum fuer Informatik. doi: 10.4230/LIPIcs.GIScience.2021.I.5
- Lafia, S.**, Last, C., & Kuhn, W. (2019). [Enabling the Discovery of Thematically Related Research Objects with Systematic Spatializations](#). In *14th International Conference on Spatial Information Theory (COSIT)*. Schloss Dagstuhl-Leibniz-Zentrum fuer Informatik. doi: 10.4230/LIPIcs.COSIT.2019.18
- Lafia, S.**, Turner, A., & Kuhn, W. (2018). [Improving Discovery of Open Civic Data](#). In *10th International Conference on Geographic Information Science (GIScience)*. Schloss Dagstuhl-Leibniz-Zentrum fuer Informatik. doi: 10.4230/LIPIcs.GISCIENCE.2018.9
- Lafia, S.**, & Kuhn, W. (2018). [Spatial Discovery of Linked Research Datasets and Documents at a Spatially Enabled Research Library](#). *Journal of Map & Geography Libraries (JMGL)*, 14(1), 21-39. doi: 10.1080/15420353.2018.1478923
- Allen, C., Hervey, T., **Lafia, S.**, Phillips, D. W., Vahedi, B., & Kuhn, W. (2016). [Exploring the Notion of Spatial Lenses](#). In *International Conference on Geographic Information Science (GIScience)*, pp. 259-274. Springer, Cham. doi: 10.1007/978-3-319-45738-3_17
- Lafia, S.**, Jablonski, J., Kuhn, W., Cooley, S., & Medrano, F. A. (2016). [Spatial Discovery and the Research Library](#). *Transactions in GIS (TGIS)*, 20(3), 399-412. doi: 10.1111/tgis.12235
doi:10.1007/978-3-319-45738-3_17

Conferences and Workshops

- Fan, L., **Lafia, S.**, Bleckley, D., Moss, E., Thomer, A., Hemphill, L. (2022). [Librarian-in-the-Loop: A Natural Language Processing Paradigm for Detecting Informal Mentions of Research Data in Academic Literature](#). *Workshop on Investigating Data Work Across Domains: New Perspectives on the Work of Creating Data (CHI)*.
- Lafia, S.**, Moss, E., Thomer, A. & Hemphill, L. (2021). [Detecting Informal Data Use in Literature](#). *The Future of Research Communications and e-Scholarship (FORCE11)*. doi: 10.5281/zenodo.5748382

Lafia, S., Thomer, A., Bleckley, D., Akmon, D., and Hemphill, L. (2021). [Analyzing Data Curation Work at a Social Science Archive with Machine Learning](#). *WebSci'21 Workshop on Research Infrastructure for Web Science* (RI4WebSci).

Akmon, D., **Lafia, S.**, Thomer, A., Hemphill, L., Pienta, A., Yakel, E., Bleckley, D., and Tyler, A.R.B. (2020). [Measuring and improving the efficacy of curation activities in data archives](#). *Research Data Alliance* (RDA).

Lafia, S., Xiao, J., Kuhn, W., & Hervey, T. (2019). [Talk of the Town: Discovering Government Data via Conversational Voice Assistants](#). In *14th International Conference on Spatial Information Theory* (COSIT). Schloss Dagstuhl-Leibniz-Zentrum fuer Informatik.

Golubovic, N., Krintz, C., Wolski, R., **Lafia, S.**, Hervey, T., & Kuhn, W. (2016). [Extracting Spatial Information from Social Media in Support of Agricultural Management Decisions](#). In *Proceedings of the 10th Workshop on Geographic Information Retrieval* (p. 4). ACM.

Lafia, S., & Staehli, L. (2016). [From Research Objects to Research Networks: Combining Spatial and Semantic Search](#). *Workshop on Semantic Data on the Web* (SDW@GIScience) (pp. 35-40).

News and Reports

Lafia, S., & Kuhn, W. (2019). [Enabling the Spatial Discovery of Research Data in Libraries](#). In *US National Report* (US National Committee for the International Cartographic Association).

Coggins, B. L., **Lafia, S.**, & Torghabeh, B. V. (2018). [Dramatic Change in North Korea: Instability and Human Flight Propensity](#). *North Korean Review*, 14(1), 49-70.

Seltmann, K., **Lafia, S.**, Paul, D., James, S., Bloom, D., Rios, N., ... & Davis, E. (2018). [Georeferencing for Research Use \(GRU\): An Integrated Geospatial Training Paradigm for Biocollections Researchers and Data Providers](#). *Research Ideas and Outcomes* (RIO), 4, e32449.

Lafia, S. & Kuhn, W. (2017). [Opening Access to University Scholarship through Spatial Discovery](#). *ArcUser* (ESRI).

Datasets and Code

Lafia, S., Fan, L., Bleckley, D., Moss, E., Thomer, A., and Hemphill, L. (2023). [Measuring the Impact of Curation Actions: ICPSR Administrative Data, Global, 1984-2021 \(ICPSR 38845\)](#). doi: 10.3886/ICPSR38845

Lafia, S. (2022). [ICPSR Bibliography Citation Network](#). Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 2022-07-05. doi: 10.3886/E174361V1

Lafia, S. (2022). [ICPSR Dataset References: v1.0.0 \(v1.0.0\)](#). Zenodo. doi: 10.5281/zenodo.6798661

Presentations

Invited Talks

“The Power and Perils of Spatial Metaphors: Storytelling and Decision-making with Maps.” UMD iSchool 2022

“[Computational Perspectives on Curating Data for Discovery and Reuse](#).” University of Pittsburgh SCI 2022

“Measuring the Impacts of Curatorial Actions on Research Data Reuse.”	LIBER Webinar: Online	2020
“Designing for Serendipity: Supporting Data Discovery with Spatial Curation.”	ICPSR: Ann Arbor, Michigan	2020
“Discovering Spatial Data for Our Changing Earth.”	ESIP Summer Meeting: Tucson, Arizona	2018

Oral Presentations

“A NLP Pipeline for Detecting Informal Data References in Academic Literature.”	ASIS&T: Pittsburgh, PA	2022
“Digitizing and Structuring Historical Records with Deep Learning.”	SIG AI at ASIS&T: Pittsburgh, PA	2022
“Surfacing Specimen Citations for Natural History Collections.”	AGU Annual Meeting: Chicago, IL	2022
“Expanding the ICPSR Bibliography of Data-related Literature.”	ICPSR Data Fair: Online	2022
“From Dataset Detection to Instructional Resources.”	ICPSR Biennial Meeting: Online	2021
“Analyzing Data Curation Work at a Social Science Archive with Machine Learning.”	RI4WebSci: Online	2021
“Designing for Serendipity: Research Data Curation in Topic Spaces.”	Dissertation Public Defense: UCSB	2020
“Enabling the Discovery of Thematically Related Research Objects.”	COSIT: Regensburg, Germany	2019
“Talk of the Town: Discovering Government Data.”	COSIT: Regensburg, Germany	2019
“Spatially Supported Thematic Discovery of Research Data.”	COSIT: Regensburg, Germany	2019
“Re-creating and Exploring Research Neighborhoods.”	FORCE11 Summer Institute: UCLA	2019
“Spatial Data Discovery at UCSB: Future Directions.”	Library Open Access Week: UCSB	2018
“Improving Discovery of Open Civic Data.”	GIScience: Melbourne, Australia	2018
“Discovering and Sharing Campus Scholarship.”	Center for Spatial Studies Lightning Talks: UCSB	2017
“Linking Geographic Footprints to Topic Spaces.”	Graduate Slam Competition: UCSB	2017
“From Research Objects to Research Networks.”	Western Association of Map Librarians: Stanford, CA	2016
“Spatial Discovery and the University Library.”	TGIS Session at ESRI User Conference: San Diego, CA	2016
“People and Places: Resource Discovery in a Library Context.”	AAG: San Francisco, CA	2016
“Degrees of Separation: Measuring Musicians and Places.”	Center for Spatial Studies: UCSB	2016

Poster Presentations

“Detecting Specimen Citations in Scientific Literature.”	ESIP Summer Meeting: Pittsburgh, PA.	2022
“Relating Data Reuse to Curation Decisions and Funding Models.”	RDAP Summit: Online.	2022
“Detecting Informal Data Use in Literature.”	FORCE11: Online	2021
“Detecting Informal Indicators of Research Data Reuse in Scientific Publications.”	Text as Data: Online	2021

“How Does Data Curation Impact Discovery?” ESIP Winter Meeting: Online	2021
“Measuring and Improving the Efficacy of Curation Activities in Data Archives.” RDA 16th Plenary: Online	2020
“Supporting Interdisciplinary Research Reviews with Multi-Level Topic Maps.” MIDAS Symposium: Online	2020
“Mapping Research Topics at Multiple Levels of Detail.” AIDR Symposium: Online	2020
“Computing with Core Concepts of Spatial Information.” COSIT: Santa Fe, New Mexico	2015

External Funding

National Science Foundation	2021 - 2023
Co-Principal Investigator with Libby Hemphill (PI), & A.J. Million. “Transforming Data Discovery Through Behavior Modeling and Recommendation” (#2121789). SBE Social and Economic Sciences, Science of Science: Discovery, Communication, and Impact. \$362,861.	
Michigan Institute for Data Science	2021 - 2023
Co-Principal Investigator with J. Trent Alexander (PI), Katie R. Genadek, & David A. Bleckley. “Images to Integrated Data: Piloting new methods to digitize, parse, and link historical records” . Propelling Original Data Science (PODS) Grants. \$69,910.	

Awards and Competitions

ESIP Community Fellow : Earth Science Information Partners (ESIP), Discovery Cluster	2020 - 2022
Kaggle Competitions Contributor : Top 45% in Coleridge Initiative - Show US the Data	2021
Best Paper of the Year Award : Journal of Map & Geography Libraries, Volume 14	2020
Excellence in Teaching Award : Department of Geography, UC Santa Barbara	2019
Mellichamp Ph.D. Research Fellowship : 21st Century Global Dynamics, UC Santa Barbara	2019
Womxn/Hacks Hackathon Winner (Best Use of Google Cloud Platform) : UC Santa Barbara	2019
SAP + Esri Spatial Hackathon Finalist (Geo-machine learning) : Esri DevSummit	2018
Robert Raskin Scholarship : Earth Science Information Partners (ESIP)	2018
Jack & Laura Dangermond Graduate Fellowship : Department of Geography, UC Santa Barbara	2017 - 2018
Greater Research Opportunities (GRO) Fellowship : U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	2012 - 2014
Prete Environmental Education Fellowship : Lyle Center for Regenerative Studies	2012 - 2013

Academic Service

Qualitative Data Repository (QDR) Technical Advisory Board Member : Online	2024 - present
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in a biannual meeting to review and provide feedback on QDR’s technical infrastructure 	

- ASIS&T Special Interest Group on Artificial Intelligence, Communications Officer:** Online 2024 - present
- Help coordinate events to build AI technical capacity in the Library and Information Science community
- EarthArXiv Advisory Council and Moderation Crew:** Online 2023
- Monthly team review of earth science submissions for compliance with preprint server's moderation policy
- Reviewer:** JASIST, Earth's Future, JGSA, JOSIS, IJDE, Semantic Web Journal, ASIS&T 2018 - present
- Reviewing manuscripts and conference submissions on data science and Semantic Web technology topics
- Institute for Social Research CoderSpaces Co-host:** University of Michigan 2021 - 2022
- Providing weekly help desk consultations for university researchers with computational questions
- Earth Science Information Partnership (ESIP) Community Fellow:** University of Michigan 2020 - 2022
- Organizing teleconference sessions for data discovery and semantic technology community working groups
- Antiracism Working Group Member:** Postdoctoral Association, University of Michigan 2020 - 2021
- Facilitating virtual discussion events and developing educational web resources for postdocs
- Faculty Search Committee Representative:** Environmental Data Science & GIS, UCSB 2017, 2019
- Reviewed candidate materials, supported invited candidate visits, and facilitated graduate student voting
- Meeting Co-organizer:** Spatial Discovery Expert Meetings, Center for Spatial Studies 2015, 2017, 2019
- Co-organized agenda and session topics on spatial search at the intersection of libraries and GIS services
- Graduate Student Association Representative:** Associated Student Government, UCSB 2018 - 2019
- Served as an elected department representative and campus liaison for Geography graduate students
- Workshop Co-organizer:** Core Computations on Spatial Information at GIScience in Melbourne, Australia 2018
- Reviewed invited papers and talks, contributed to agenda, and moderated discussion of a half-day workshop
- Graduate Student Representative:** Associated Students Campus Bicycle Committee, UCSB 2017 - 2018
- Inventoried bicycle infrastructure and deployed an interactive web application for mapping campus projects
- GIS Help Desk Consultant:** Center for Spatial Studies, UCSB 2017
- Provided GIS research services and consultations for students, staff, and faculty from campus research units