

Asvatha Babu

PhD Student, Communication and Media Studies
American University Washington, D.C.

EDUCATION

- Doctor of Philosophy, Communication** Expected Aug 2021
Research Focus: The Design and Use of Facial Recognition Technology for Surveillance by the Indian State
Advisor: Dr. Saif Shahin and Dr. Aram Sinnreich
School of Communication, American University, Washington, DC
- Master of Arts, International Communication** May 2017
School of International Service, American University, Washington, DC
- Bachelor of Arts, Journalism** April 2015
M.O.P. Vaishnav College for Women (Autonomous), Chennai, India

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Communication and Cultural Studies | Technology, Governance, and Power | Surveillance Studies | Media and Social Shaping of Emerging Technology | Public Understanding of Technology and Technology Policy | Use and Understanding of Technology at the Margins | Human Rights and Technology | Access | Cybersecurity

PRESENTATIONS

- “The Techno-Logic of Solving Climate Change: a Critical Analysis of Geoengineering in the News”** Feb 2020
Presented at the Tri-school PhD Symposium, American University
- “Compelled Traceability: Regulating Speech through Technology in India”** Aug 2019
Presented at the Oxford Media Policy Summer Institute, Oxford University
- “Behind the Veil of Decentralization: a Closer Look at Blockchain’s Backers”** April 2019
Presented at the 2019 American University Graduate Research Symposium
- “Decoding the Internet Governance Forum: Analyzing IGF Transcripts through text mining”** April 2017
Paper presented at AU Working Symposium on Research Methods in Internet Governance
Poster presented at American University Graduate Student Showcase (selected Best Presentation)

PUBLICATIONS

- “The Techno-Logic of Solving Climate Change: a Critical Analysis of Geoengineering in the News”**
(Journal article; In development)
- “Behind the Veil of Decentralization: a Closer Look at Blockchain’s Backers”**

(Journal article; In development)

“Compelled Traceability: Regulating Speech through Technology in India”

(Journal article; In development)

WikiLeaks’ CIA Document Dump: More Questions than Answers Mar 2017
Web Publication/Analysis, Cyber Statecraft Initiative - Atlantic Council, Washington DC

If the DIDP did its job Nov 2016
Web Publication/Analysis, Centre for Internet and Society, Bangalore, India

AWARDS / FELLOWSHIPS / SCHOLARSHIPS

Student Paper Award, TPRC 2020 February 2021
Washington, DC

Oxford Media Policy Summer Institute Fellowship Aug 2019
Oxford University, Oxford, UK

Summer Research Fellowship Summer 2019
American University Internet Governance Lab, USA

PhD Merit Award 2018 - 2021
American University School of Communication, USA

Goodman Award for Outstanding Academic Performance April 2017
American University School of International Service, USA

Semi-Finalist, Cyber 9/12 Student Challenge March 2017
[2017 US Cyber 9/12 Student Challenge](#) co-hosted by American University and The Atlantic Council

Best Outgoing Student April 2015
Department of Journalism, MOP Vaishnav College for Women, Chennai

Best Research Project for report titled: April 2015
“Exploring reader response towards gender specific news on the internet”
Department of Journalism, MOP Vaishnav College for Women, Chennai

Best Outgoing Student April 2015
Department of English, MOP Vaishnav College for Women, Chennai

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Doctoral Researcher | **American University Internet Governance Lab** Aug 2018 -

- Assisting Dr. Laura DeNardis with background research on various topics related to internet governance, human rights, and emerging technology
- Researching the social shaping of technology and technology policy at the margins. Currently working on a project exploring regulatory responses to the disinformation challenges on Whatsapp in India.

- Conducting research on the history, evolution, and media representation of Artificial Intelligence for Faculty Director, Dr. Laura DeNardis
- Conducting field research for project exploring the use of public-access computers and internet in a DC Public Library.
- Conducted background research on governance issues and challenges for the Internet of Things for upcoming book by Dr DeNardis.

Research Consultant | **Internews Network** Jan 2018 - Jun 2018

- Assisted Principal Consultant with research on information security and risk perceptions of major governmental and non-governmental donors that provide aid to global human rights organizations. Final report to be released in 2019.
- Collaborated with Principal to design research and strategize for interviews with donor organizations.
- Collected background information on interviewees and their organizations and prepared briefing documents.
- Conducted solo interviews with representatives from US government agencies that provide aid to human rights organizations.
- Assisted Principal with conducting interviews with representatives from big philanthropies and private foundations, and aid agencies of foreign governments.

Research Fellow | **Blockchain Trust Accelerator - New America** Jan 2018 - Jun 2018

- Lead author on report on the landscape of blockchain uses in governance and democratic processes. (To be released in 2019)
- Wrote winning proposal for State Department grant to partner with Harvard University and Consensus and pilot-test a blockchain-based employee wellness survey application in Mexico.
- Engaged with social impact focused blockchain startups, pilot-projects, and government trials to gauge interest, effectiveness and challenges in the blockchain ecosystem.
- Contributed to background research for report titled “Blockchain for Social Impact blueprint.”
- Set up Around the Block(chain) blog to document BTA activities and learning outcomes from pilot projects.

Sr. Research Associate | **AU Institute on Disability and Public Policy** May 2016 - Jul 2017

- Provided background research for Dr. Derrick Cogburn’s book titled *Transnational Advocacy Networks in the Information Society: Partners Or Pawns?*
- Co-ordinated the Global Network on Disability Inclusive Accessible Urban Development (DIAUD): organized meetings and engaged global stakeholders, experts and organizations.
- Conducted qualitative research on inclusion of
- Promoted to Program Officer in June and July 2017 to help manage office while supervisor went on leave.
- Oversaw IDPP communication and outreach efforts including managing social media and website.
- Liaised with international staff on multiple research and advocacy projects.

Intern | **Cyber Statecraft Initiative - Atlantic Council** January - May 2017

- Provided research support to senior staff on Internet-Of-Things (IoT) security, cyber safety and cyber policy.
- Published analytical articles on recent news and events related to cyber law, policy etc.
- Planned and conducted high-profile events relevant to cyber statecraft in the US and Europe.

Intern | **The Center for Internet and Society (Bangalore)** July 2017

- Conducted research for senior staff on multi-stakeholder model of internet governance, big data in the financial tech industry, and smart city initiatives in India.

- Analyzed ICANN transparency processes through the analysis of 28 Documentary Information Disclosure Policy (DIDP) requests filed and ICANN responses to the same. Published blog posts regarding the same.

PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATIONS WORK EXPERIENCE

Intern | **Information Technology and Innovation Foundation** Sep 2017 - Dec 2017

- Manage and update press lists using media-monitoring software (Cision) and Excel.
- Assist with development and dissemination of communication materials such as press releases and event recaps.
- Monitor media for news relevant to technology policy and innovation and compile daily summary e-mails.

Digital Marketing Co-ordinator | **AU Career Center** Nov 2015 - Dec 2016

- Created and edited promotional videos for Career Center campaigns & events using FinalCut and iMovie
- Initiated use of “live videos” on Facebook Live & Periscope to cover Career Center events with great success
- Developed content and graphics for the AU Job & Internship Fair mobile app

Consultant (Capstone project) | **ICITAP - US DoJ** Sep 2016 - Dec 2016

- Designed a social media strategy for ICITAP that would allow them to create an online identity
- Conducted an audit and landscape and gap analysis to evaluate best practices for ICITAP social media
- Advocated for adoption of social media plan through presentation to senior ICITAP officials

Freelance Reporter | **Times of India (Chennai)** May 2014 - Dec 2014

- Started as an intern: reported on issues in the education and development beats.
- Published 39 articles in total with 15 bylines - most articles published by an intern till date.
- Gained distinction of being the only intern to be published on the front page of Times of India, Chennai.

CAMPUS LEADERSHIP / SERVICE

President, Culture & Communication Student Forum Oct 2016 - Apr 2017

AU School of International Service

- Engaged with current and incoming students in the Intercultural and International Communications (IC) program to facilitate extra-curricular interests and activities
- Organized regular events and meetings to create a community of professionals in the communications field.
- Engaged with the Graduate Student Council to advocate for the interests of IC students and scholars.

International Student Mentor, Global Networks Program Jan 2016 - May 2016

AU School of International Service

- Mentored incoming international students to AU School of International Service
- Provided guidance on courses, registration, housing issues and social norms to international students
- Organized regular meetings between mentees to build community

Editor-in-chief, Mosaic

Jul 2013 - Apr 2015

Annual Journal - Department of English, MOP Vaishnav College for Women, Chennai

- Solicited articles, essays, poems, and short stories from student body
- Copy-edited entries and designed the journal cover and layout using Adobe InDesign
- Published and distributed copies to student body

President, Present Tense Club (Current affairs & media)

Jul 2014 - Apr 2015

Department of Journalism, MOP Vaishnav College for Women, Chennai

- Represented student body of the Department of Journalism to faculty and administration.
- Organized current affairs-related events for the department such as guest lectures, panel discussions, and conferences.
- Co-organized the national-level 2014 MOP Model United Nations Competition