

PUBLIC INTEREST TECHNOLOGY

Digital security = good for democracy

This transcript is from a video featuring data scientist and researcher Jennifer Helsby. It's part of the *Public Interest Technology* series, celebrating Ford-supported visionaries working at the intersection of art, design, and technology to help shape a future that serves justice and the public interest.

Transcript begins.

JENNIFER HELSBY: I like the analogy of the internet as a library. A library is a place that everyone can go to, regardless of how much money you have, and you can get free access to information. That is the way that I think we should view the internet. Having a free and open internet enables every person to read and speak freely online. We need every citizen to be knowledgeable and informed so that they can participate in democracy.

[Jennifer Helsby, Ford-Mozilla Open Web Fellow, Freedom of the Press Foundation. A white woman with short brown hair, wearing a purple shirt and dark gray cardigan.]

Some of the most important stories in investigative journalism have come because of leaks. So, for example, the Pentagon Papers, the Snowden disclosures, Watergate. And none of this would be possible without a secure way for journalists and sources to communicate. One challenge for civil society organizations is the unequal playing field. State actors, for example, have a lot more resources, by orders of magnitude, than a small nonprofit does. And it can be a bit of a David and Goliath situation.

I worked on a technology project called SecureDrop, which is an anonymous whistleblowing platform. It's a critical tool for journalists, just like an anonymous tip line. More recently, we've seen a lot more surveillance. We've seen, for example, during the Obama administration, the Department of Justice acquired the telephone records of reporters at the Associated Press in order to identify a source. And these kinds of government intrusions make it necessary to use a tool like SecureDrop to enable sources and journalists to connect and exchange documents, exchange messages without being identified if a leak investigation occurs after the fact.

Any journalist can go to our website, freedom.press, and request a digital security training, where we will help you understand the threats that you face and train you on how to deal with them. Even if you're not working on national security issues or working with source documents, it's important that everyone who's working in journalism is able to keep themselves safe, such that they're not chilled and they can do their jobs and help maintain democracy.

[Ford Foundation logo: a globe made up of a series of small, varied circles. Mozilla logo.]

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End of transcript.