

# THE DIGITAL COGNITION AND DEMOCRACY INITIATIVE

The Digital Cognition and Democracy Initiative seeks to understand how digital systems affect human cognition, determine what those effects mean for democratic institutions, and develop solutions for increasing human resilience.

Digital systems are changing our cognitive faculties and capabilities in both negative and positive ways—and each needs to be explored to better understand the net impact. Given the mixed nature of these impacts, **it is critical to improve human resilience to new technologies in a way that looks beyond today’s technologies and addresses core human vulnerabilities.**

We need to better prepare our minds and our democratic institutions for the current and future information environment and digital landscape. The best solutions will mitigate the negative externalities of technology on cognition and amplify the positive ones.

The Digital Cognition and Democracy Initiative team has spent almost two years researching this question, and has brought together a coalition of experts to identify digital threats to citizens’ abilities to engage, participate, and support democracies—and find actionable solutions.

With this initiative, we are bringing together experts from the technology community, academia, national security, medicine, psychology, neuroscience, government, and civil society, breaking apart the silos that keep different fields from convening on shared problems and developing comprehensive solutions.

In this first phase of the global initiative, we focused on the foundational understandings of the challenge, determining where existing solutions have fallen short, and identifying the gaps in proposed solutions. The second phase will focus on developing and implementing solutions that fill this gap.

Our challenge is to find solutions that can coexist alongside current and evolving technologies and that allow humans to benefit from digital systems, while still protecting the individual, communities, democratic institutions, and national security.

The Initiative is co-chaired by **Philip Reiner**, **Vera Zakem**, and **Yaël Eisenstat**, with advice, input, and guidance from the DCDI Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee is made up of thought leaders across the diverse spectrum of expertise that we are involving in DCDI.

**Expected outcomes:** DCDI is seeking to have broad impact across various stakeholders critical to the funding, enforcing, and implementation of the solutions that will come out of the initiative. It also seeks to bring awareness to the national security implications of digitally influenced cognition, and generate new thinking about the implications of individual and collective cognitive resilience. Additionally, DCDI aims to influence the technology sector, providing recommended solutions to lessen the negative cognitive impacts of the systems it is designing.

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