Amy Mahan Research Fellowship Program to Assess the Impact of Public Access to ICTs

Benefits, Eligibility and Procedures
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Program Overview

The Amy Mahan Research Fellowship Program to Assess the Impact of Public Access to ICTs is set up as a capacity building component of the Global Impact Study.

"The Global Impact Study of Public Access to Information and Communication Technologies is a five-year, CAD $7.2-million research project sponsored by Canada’s International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The project is managed by telecentre.org in partnership with the Center for Information & Society at the University of Washington Information School." (http://globalimpactstudy.org/).

The Amy Mahan Fellowship Program is an eighteen-months project sponsored by IDRC managed by telecentre.org in partnership with Universitat Pompeu Fabra (UPF), Barcelona, in partnership with renowned scholars from leading research institutions based in Africa and the Middle East, the Asia-Pacific region, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Program will award up to 12 Research Fellowships to teams of emerging scholars from developing countries in Africa and the Middle East, Asia-Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean. These fellowships will provide research grant funding and specialized “mentoring” guidance to enable Fellows to carry out a new original research study that addresses one or more critical research questions regarding the impact of public access to ICTs.

Competition for the Fellowships is open to emerging researchers with excellent credentials, a good research proposal and suitable institutional backing. Eligible candidates may apply as sole researchers, but applications from teams of scholars are encouraged and will be favored by the selection process, given the added value that can be derived from collaborative efforts, particularly when research teams include members from various disciplines.

Objectives

The objectives of the Amy Mahan Research Fellowship Program are to deepen and strengthen the capacity of emerging scholars in developing countries to carry out rigorous research on the impact of public access to ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies), while simultaneously increasing the availability of high-quality research in the subject area coming from the developing regions of the world.

Fellowship Benefits

Program Fellowships are awarded to a research team or to individual researchers. The Principal Investigator in a team to which an award has been granted will be designated a Research Fellow and other team members, Associate Fellows. The Principal Investigator must be affiliated with an eligible developing country institution, which for Program purposes is the designated Support Institution.
Research Fellows

Selected Research Fellows will benefit from:

- A grant of up to 22,000 € to fund the realization of their study, administered by the Support Institution with which the Fellow is affiliated.

- Guidance and advice from scholars who have carried out distinguished work in the assessment of the impact of public access to ICTs.

- Participation in a Training and Research Planning Workshop in the early stages of the Program.

- Opportunities for Fellows to share knowledge and network with other Fellows and with experts working in the field, including a visit by the International Advisor to the Research Team and the Support Institution;

- Opportunities to co-publish their research results with renowned experts in the subject matter.

- The opportunity to publish their study’s findings in a special Program sponsored publication.

Associate Fellows

An Associate Fellow may derive significant benefits from participating in the Program, depending on the way that the study team is organized, substantive responsibilities are apportioned, and applicants seize the opportunities offered by the Fellowship.

Each and every Associate Fellow in a Research Team is expected to play a substantive role in the investigation. As vital members of a multidisciplinary team, each Associate Fellow will benefit from the Fellowship's Research Grant (22,000 €) that enables the realization of the study.

Research associates will also benefit from interaction with the International Research Advisor (e.g. during the Advisor’s visit to the Research Team) and with other Program staff. They will have the opportunity to contribute to a scholarly publication in collaboration with the Principal Investigator and renown experts in the field.

Some benefits are limited by funding constraints. To be specific, participation in the Training and Research Planning Workshop can only be provided (travel and lodging) to the Principal Investigator. Nevertheless, Associate Fellows who are able to get funding from other sources are welcome to join and participate fully in Workshop activities.

Support Institution

In general, participating institutions will benefit from working in partnership with leading research institutions such as Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona, Universidad de San Andrés, Buenos Aires and the University of the Philippines, Manila. The program can also help strengthen the institution’s capacity to implement research studies in an emerging multidisciplinary field. It may also
help an institution position itself as a local or even international leader in “ICTs for development”.

Depending on institutional objectives and the local context a participating institution may benefit in more specific ways. For example, Program participation may help a research center prepare its staff in anticipation of providing support to a national ICT for development effort; or it may help a university plan project activities in connection national research events, e.g. a conference or workshop.

The build up of local research capacity is a key Program objective and, accordingly, participation is not intended to place a burden on the Institution. The Research Grant may reimburse for the cost of the staff that the Support Institution allocates to the research study and up to 13 percent of the total expenses financed. (See details in Grant Budget Guidelines section below.)

Research Team and representatives of the Support Institution are encouraged to explore ways to fully profit from participating in the Program and to make these considerations explicit in Part III of the Application Form.

Eligibility Requirements

The selection process will favor applications submitted by teams of led by an emerging scholar. Examples include: a “junior/emerging” professor leading a team which also has one or more students pursuing higher degrees; a network of emerging researchers working in different institutions (even different countries) who wish to work together on a joint research project.

Stand-alone proposals from individuals will be considered, provided they meet all eligibility requirements including the pertinent institutional backing. Team proposals are, however, considered to be more likely to have greater impact on local research capacity and will be favored by the selection process. Individual researchers who wish to submit a proposal are encouraged to explore ways to collaborate with other emerging scholars and submit a joint application as this will increase the prospects that their proposal is selected for a Fellowship.

All members of a team submitting a proposal will co-sign their submissions and designate a Principal Investigator. If the Team is awarded a Fellowship, this Principal Investigator will be responsible for receiving and administering grant funds at his/her institution, overseeing the realization of research activities, and submitting all deliverables including three Research Reports, two Financial reports and the Ethical Standards Compliance report, as will be stipulated in the grant contract. Other members of a Research Team submitting an application are Associate Researchers. The principal organization with which the Principal Investigator is affiliated is the Support Institution.

Institutional restrictions may prevent the designated Principal Investigator from signing on behalf of the sponsoring institution in order to receive and administer Fellowship funds. This may happen, for example, where the Principal Investigator is a graduate student with insufficient authority to act on behalf of a sponsoring University. In such cases, the sponsoring institution may designate a staff member (e.g. a professor or administrator) to support the Principal Investigator. He or she will help the Principal Investigator in overseeing the grant fund disbursements and their application. In such cases, the applications will need to give evidence that this arrangement will work expeditiously and will be supportive of the study’s implementation plans under the direction of the Principal Investigator.
By signing their application, all members of a Research Team and the Support Institution representative will acknowledge that the products of the study funded wholly or in part by this Fellowship will be made available under an open access regime, and that findings and publications will therefore be made freely available to the research community.

All members of a team submitting a proposal must also agree to fully comply with fundamental ethical standards of research. The Draft Ethical Standards that will Guide the Conduct of the Research may be used as a basis, but a study’s particular procedures may make it necessary to make adjustments to this draft. The Principal Investigator must also agree to immediately report to the Program Manager any difficulties encountered in complying with these ethical standards and propose suitable corrective action. In the Ethical Standards Compliance Report to be submitted at the end of the study, the Principal Investigator will describe how the Research Team carried out the study complying with high ethical standards.

In general, the study, research team members or the Support Institution should not present inordinate risks that could compromise the independence or scholarly rigor of the results or prevent its timely completion as described in the application form.

**Principal Investigators**

The Principal Investigator must:

i. Be an emerging scholar, i.e. either presently pursuing a graduate research degree, or is working as a professional that received his or her doctorate degree at most 7 years previously.

ii. Work and reside in a developing country in Africa and the Middle East, Asia-Pacific, or Latin America and the Caribbean.

iii. Have a formal affiliation with an institution with headquarters offices in Africa and the Middle East, Asia-Pacific or Latin America and the Caribbean that is eligible to function as Support Institution.

iv. Give evidence (tenure track position, term contract longer than 12 months, etc) of a commitment to remain at the same institution for the duration of the Fellowship.

v. Give evidence of a long term commitment to a research career (e.g. current involvement in research activities, a long-term commitment to a research career, be currently involved in research training or have completed research training.

vi. Identify three referees that know the Principal Investigator well and are in a position to confirm her or his academic credentials.

For purposes of this Fellowship Program, an emerging scholar is a person who is either presently pursuing a research postgraduate degree or is working as a researcher in a professional capacity that received his or her research postgraduate degree at most 7 years prior to the date of application. A doctorate is often considered the standard “research postgraduate degree”, but this is not always the case and emerging researchers that depart from the norm but are
able to document a career commitment to scholarly research will also be considered to be “emerging scholars”.

During implementation, substitutions for researchers originally specified in the application may be made with prior consent from the Amy Mahan Program Manager, except for the Principal Investigator who is expected to head the Research Team until the completion of the study.

**Associate Researchers**

Team members other than the Principal Investigator – should meet the first three requirements above, i.e., they should

i. Be an emerging scholar, i.e. either presently pursuing a graduate research degree, or is working as a professional that received his or her doctorate degree at most 7 years previously.

ii. Work and reside in a country in Africa and the Middle East, Asia-Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

iii. Have a formal affiliation with an institution based in Africa and the Middle East, Asia-Pacific or in Latin America and the Caribbean that may or may not be the same as the Support Institution.

Minor departures from these requirements may be permitted and will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. For example, scholars from developed countries with a specialized skill may be part of a team of predominantly developing country researchers investigating public access in one of the target regions. Similarly, a team led by an emerging Principal Investigator may include among its members experienced and well-established University professors.

In the case where an Associate Researcher does not fully meet requirements i-iii above, the role of this scholar in the study should be minor and the proportion of the Research Grant budget allocated to their input or under their control should not exceed 10% of Research Grant funding.

The situation should be made clear in Part III of the Application, where applicants are asked to describe the management structure of their study, attach terms describing the roles and responsibilities of every member of the research team, and to indicate how much of the research grant budget will be allocated to the different individuals working in the project.

**Support Institution**

The Support Institution may be an academic, public sector, private sector or civil society organization. To be eligible to participate in the Program, it should meet the following requirements:

i. Have its headquarters in Africa and the Middle East, Asia-Pacific or in Latin America and the Caribbean.

ii. Be a reputable well-established institution that has as an important part of its mandate and activities the conduct of rigorous independent research.
iii. Have the capacity to sponsor the proposed research study, administer
Grant funds and supervise the study as described in the Application
submitted.

iv. Be legally recognized in the country where it has its headquarters and
is physically located.

v. Present no inordinate risk that could potentially jeopardize the
completion of the proposed research study. There should be no potential
conflict of interest with the study results and, therefore, there should be
no direct link between the institution to the facilities or agency responsible
for the intervention that will be the subject of study.

An authorized representative of the Support Institution will need to sign the
Application Form corroborating the institution’s willingness and ability to support
the Principal Investigator and the research study as described in the application.

There are no prior requirements of other institutions, but their involvement
should not compromise the independence of the study or impose undue risks.

Countries

In general, **emerging researchers from developing countries** from Africa and
the Middle East, Asia-Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean are eligible to
participate in the Program.

**Researchers** from high-income countries are not eligible (e.g. in Asia-Pacific:
Australia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Singapore, New Zealand; in the Caribbean:
Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Bermuda, Trinidad and Tobago).

**Investigations** in high-income countries may be used as a basis of comparison
with developing country conditions, but the bulk of the research must be carried
out in a developing setting.

**Studies** that would be carried out in countries presenting undue risks to their
completion or that would pose significant monitoring challenges (e.g. in conflicts
areas) are also ineligible.

New Original Research

Grant proceeds are intended to support **new original research studies**.

The Selection Panel may, **on an exceptional basis**, award a Fellowship that
gives supplementary support to a public access impact study already under way.
Applicants would need to justify such an exception, bearing in mind that grant
proceeds may only be used to expand the scope of the ongoing study.

The justification must be written in a separate Annex added to the Application
Form and specify:

i. Why funding for the proposed expansion was not included in the original
study?

ii. How will the original study’s scope be expanded using Amy Mahan
Program Grant funds?
iii. What has already been achieved by the study and what is the significance of its findings? How does progress to date serve to justify the proposed expansion?

iv. What benefit(s) will the expansion provide (e.g. generate additional knowledge, cover more geographic scope, etc.) to the existing study?

The Selection Process

The Program’s Selection Panel will be responsible for the final determination of Fellowship awards following the criteria developed for appraising the proposals. Subject to adjustment, the Panel is expected to have the following 9 members: 1 Program Manager, (UPF), 1 Representative from IDRC, 3 Regional partners, 2 Senior UPF staff and 2 External Reviewers

The selection of Fellows will proceed in four stages.

The first stage will consist of a first sifting through the applications by the Program Manager and the Program Officer to make sure that eligibility requirements are met.

In a second stage the Program Manager and the corresponding Regional partner will review every application received from each region and will select the top ten applications for each region by applying the 7 first order selection criteria.

The first-order selection criteria that will be used to rate and award the Fellowships are:

1. Presentation and clarity of the proposal
2. Potential impact of research findings
3. Quality of research design and methodology
4. Scholarship record of Principal Investigator
5. Adequacy of Budget, Work Plan and Plan for the Application of Funds
6. Gender sensitivity of research proposal
7. Impact on developing country research capacity.

In the third stage the Selection Panel will apply the same 7 first-order selection criteria to grade and rank all of the short listed applications; i.e. the top ten short-listed applications from each region, or a total of 30 in all.

The Program’s target is to grant 4 Fellowships per region provided that all awards meet a basic standard of quality. Some adjustments in the Selection Panel’s ordering of proposals may be undertaken during this third stage in order to ensure that two second order selection criteria are met: diversity in the country of origin of proposals and diversity in research topic.

In the fourth and final stage the results of the selection process and awards will be announced and formal Fellowship offers will be made to the Researchers and Support Institutions selected.

Details of the selection process are given in “Award Criteria and Selection Process”.
Deliverables

The study period of Program supported research should not exceed 12 months, including the preparation and submission of the final report on research findings. Accordingly, the study budget should cover a period of up to 12 months.

Each research study Team is expected to produce three Research Reports, two Financial Reports (Mid-Term and Final) and one final Ethical Compliance Report.

Research Reports

The products of the study funded wholly or in part by this Fellowship will be open access. Researchers will have copyright over the publications that they have authored reporting on their research findings, mainly for the purpose of having control and ensuring the integrity of their own work. All applicants must agree that any resulting publications will be made freely available to the research community through open access channels and under an appropriate open content license such as the Creative Commons.

First Research Report is standard for all studies. It consists of a comprehensive literature review and detailed definitive research design used (theory, data collected, sample design, questionnaire, methodology for data collection, etc.). First Research Report will be discussed during the Program’s Training and Research Planning Workshop and is due before the first day of the Workshop.

Second Research Report is a status report that will vary from one study to another. It should present palpable evidence of progress in the investigations. To illustrate, three prototype examples of Second Research Report follow:

Example 1: Report with basic statistics drawn from the survey carried out, and documenting the database formed integrating the survey data collected, and that is now ready for subsequent processing and analysis. Includes an attachment with the database in digital format.

Example 2: Report summarizing principal preliminary findings of Ethnographic interview reports Includes as an attachment the complete collection of interview reports.

Example 3: Report summarizing principal preliminary findings of database with analyses of the content of Oxytocin in the blood of the sample of library users who were or were not using the Internet at the time their blood sample was taken. Annex with database in digital form is attached.

The Research Findings Report is a polished document ready for publication. Its production will involve a review process engaging peers, International Advisors and the Program Implementation Team. During implementation, it will be important for the Research Team to plan the preparation of a draft of this final research report allowing sufficient time (one to two months) for the review process to take place.

Research reports may be prepared in English, Spanish, French or Portuguese.
Financial Reports and Ethical Standards Compliance Report

Each Team is expected to produce two Financial Reports, one at Mid-Term and the other one, a Final Report, at the end of the study period.

The Mid-Term Financial Report will give a detailed account of the use of the 40% of grant funds previously received, and may be submitted at the same time that Second Research Report is submitted to the Program Manager.

The Ethical Standards Compliance Report needs to be submitted after all research activities have been completed. It will inform on the implementation of the study’s ethical standards, including any difficulties encountered and corrective measures adopted.

Both Financial reports and the Ethical Standards Compliance Report must be prepared in English.

Research Grant Disbursements

Grant proceeds will be disbursed in four installments, as follows.

20% within 10 working days of signing the formal agreement between the UPF and the respective sponsoring institution;

20% within 10 working days of satisfactory delivery of First Research Report;

40% within 10 working days of satisfactory simultaneous delivery of two documents: Second Research Report and Mid-Term Financial Report;

20 percent within 10 working days of satisfactory simultaneous delivery of three documents: the Research Findings Report, the Final Financial Report, and the Ethical Standards Compliance Report.

For all Research Teams, the deadline for the delivery of the last three documents, the Research Findings Report, the Final Financial Report and the Ethical Standards Compliance Report, is the same: 14 February 2011.

Implementation Calendar

The Program’s implementation calendar is as follows.

15 September 2009       Call for Proposals is launched.
October – November 30, 2009 Consultations: General and Topic Queries
31 December 2009       Submission of Applications Due
January 2010            Selection of Awards
2 February 2010        Announcement of Fellowship Awards
3-15 February 2010    Fellowship Agreements signed with Principal Investigators and Support Institutions
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<tr>
<td>24-27 March 2010</td>
<td>Training and Research Planning Workshop (4 days)</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 Feb. 2010 – 14 February 2011</td>
<td>Field Research and mentoring activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 January – 31 March 2011</td>
<td>Research reports submitted and Program publication is prepared and disseminated</td>
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