Democracy in the Digital Age: New Frontiers of Power and Trust
The JBC was established to address the misuses of digital technologies that undermine public trust and effective democratic governance, thereby threatening all democratic societies and alliances. The rate of change in the digital space has outpaced government planning and action, and that gap will likely widen with rapid adoption of increasingly autonomous and networked digital technologies. Democratic resilience, both within nations and across alliances, will depend upon new trusted institutions that generate public-facing and influential research, actionable solutions, a broad talent pool of new leaders, and international collaboration on democratic resilience.

The JBC is designed to earn trust by being non-partisan, non-profit, transparent in its relationships with partner institutions, accountable, and rigorously truthful in all aspects of its work. It seeks to generate public-facing and influential research by attracting and retaining the most talented social scientists and digital anthropologists in the world and providing them with platforms that allow them to deliver accessible and understandable distillations of their work for mass audiences and policymakers. It will produce actionable solutions by orientating its specific research undertakings in collaboration with institutions seeking answers to specific challenges. It will develop a broad talent pool through a program of internships, fellowships, and other programs designed to train emerging leaders. And it will promote international collaboration beginning with the U.S. and Australia alliance and extending to other allies through partnerships with policy-making institutions, universities, and international organizations committed to meeting these challenges.
We live today in a globalised world, where news travels at the speed of light and threats move just as fast.
We all know that the advent of digital technology has fundamentally changed the way we each work, eat, shop, and live. But it has also changed our societies and how we defend ourselves. Our nations – both separately and together – must operate in new ways to preserve our values and protect our people and allies in new battle spaces. This is the mission of the Jeff Bleich Centre for the US Alliance in Digital Technology, Security, and Governance.

For over a century, Australia and the United States have offered the world a model alliance that demonstrates how nations who trust each other can make one another stronger, more prosperous, and more secure. Alliances are not static, though, and new models are needed to meet new challenges.

To date, no nation or alliance has fully adapted to the fact that our greatest security threats reside not in land, sea, or air, but in space and cyber. New technologies have empowered hostile nations, organised crime networks, terror groups, and hacktivists with low cost, high-impact tools. The threats go beyond damage to grids, finance systems, etc. – they threaten things as basic as how we elect our leaders and govern ourselves, and how we will work with close allies.

If any two nations can chart the path forward, it is the United States and Australia. We have developed an unrivalled trust between nations, unparalleled technical sophistication, and unflinching work.

I am honoured that Flinders, with its focus on technology, its innovative scholarship, and its strong connections to defence leaders in both nations, will be its home.

I am grateful to be part of this effort and committed to give all I have – including my own name – to advancing the success of its mission.
FLINDERS UNIVERSITY

Globally focused and locally engaged, Flinders University is committed to making a difference through its innovative research, excellence in teaching and learning, and exceptional student experience.

Our research strengths include biomedical and clinical sciences, culture, policy and society, health and human behaviour, molecular science and technology, defence, engineering, and water and environment.

An award winning, state-of-the-art student hub at our main Bedford Park campus is designed to foster interactive learning in a digitally enabled environment. Our high-tech innovation campus at Tonsley engages our students with leading business enterprises within the Tonsley Innovation District. It’s home to our Flinders New Venture Institute, a leader in start-ups and entrepreneurship programs.

Internationally, Flinders jointly provides courses with leading universities in five countries around the world.

Flinders has a vision to be internationally recognised as a world leader in research, an innovator in contemporary education, and the source of Australia’s most enterprising graduates.

Flinders University aspires to create a culture that supports students and staff to succeed, to foster research excellence that builds better communities, to inspire education that produces original thinkers, and to promote meaningful engagement that enhances our environment, economy and society.

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FLINDERS HAS FORGED STRONG RELATIONSHIPS WITH INDUSTRY PARTNERS LOCALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY

The Jeff Bleich Centre will open up a new avenue for strategic collaboration between Australia and the United States. It will strengthen the special relationship between our two nations while addressing the problems associated with transformative digital technologies. South Australia is driving growth across the defense and space sectors and is now in a position to increase its influence over cyber technologies moving forward. I’m excited about the critical work that this centre will undertake in what I believe is a real turning point for South Australia.

Hon Steven Marshall
Premier, South Australia

No.1 in AUSTRALIA in Computing & Information Systems for overall quality of educational experience (postgraduate).


90% of our research is rated world standard or above.

Flinders has 100 partner institutions across 33 countries.

Over 102,500 alumni in 120 countries.

With 25 research centres and institutes, we’re focussed on making a positive difference, improving people’s lives, and creating a better world.

Home to Australia’s Future Submarine and Future Frigate program.

Flinders is the home of American Studies, a source of innovation and academic leadership.

Lead Institution in Social Science Defence Research with major federal grant.
The digital revolution has initiated societal change on a scale comparable to the invention of the printing press and the arrival of the industrial revolution. The cyber revolution offers a multitude of benefits but with many costs. The disruptive costs of the digital revolution have been high, largely unanticipated and only recently addressed as some have escalated into crises.

Many of the security challenges we face threaten to undermine the core tenets of liberal democracies. Internationally, a digital war is already taking place. In military parlance this is "competition below conflict": deliberate efforts deployed to impair and shape individual, corporate and government decision-making through corrupt, distorted, or false information campaigns. In recent years cyber interference from foreign actors in the domestic affairs of other nations has become public knowledge.

It is important that democratic nations do not repeat past errors by welcoming the digital revolution and associated technological change without consideration of the potential "disruptive" societal and human costs. There is a pressing need to anticipate possible threats and to develop systemic responses that enhance, rather than reduce, confidence and trust in democratic institutions. To this end, it is important to support the capacity of governments to respond to these challenges and threats.

Core values and institutions of democratic societies are under threat from digital exploitation and anticipated uses of future digital technologies. Research and talent are needed to help the public and policymakers recognize potential threats, coalesce around solutions, and deploy laws, regulations, countermeasures, and public education to anticipate and develop plans to deal with new threats. Because of their rare history of trust and cooperation in the digital space, the United States and Australia are uniquely positioned to collaborate in developing these solutions. Flinders University is based in Adelaide, South Australia, the hub of Australia’s efforts to advance new technologies that enhance digital and space security between our nations. And Flinders has rapidly established itself as a leading non-profit institution for studying digital technologies, acquiring a large industrial space and transforming it into new technology hubs.
The Jeff Bleich Centre will conduct and commission interdisciplinary research on the advance of digital technologies that impact societies and governments. The research will put an emphasis on resilience and trust. The Jeff Bleich Centre will commence with research defined by its four founding concerns:

1. The impact of rapid technological change in the digital domain
   - Artificial intelligence (AI)
   - regulation
   - 5G
   - blockchain
   - health data security

2. The socio-cognitive and narrative challenges for democratic governance in the cyber age
   - the erosion of trust and the weakening of societal cohesion
   - public policy considerations
   - weaponization of social media
   - shaping of individual behaviour

3. Challenges to national and international security
   - defence and intelligence
   - economics and trade
   - election security

4. Democratic resilience
   - human behaviour and social media interactions
   - ethical governance in the cyber age and legal implications
   - corporate and public governance with social responsibility and civic obligation
   - individual empowerment through knowledge and trust
   - blockchain technology as a mechanism to re-establish trust
   - patterns of corruption in digital pathways

Figure 1: Research capacity flowing in and through the Jeff Bleich Centre
Mission
The JBC is a research and training center established to
• inform the public and democratic policymakers about challenges posed to democratic societies by digital technologies and to
• promote cooperative solutions to these challenges through trusted research, a cohort of researchers skilled in communication, and a program for empowering a new generation of policymakers to bring solutions forward.

Vision
The JBC aspires to be a trusted and respected public resource from which leaders of allied democratic nations, their universities, and other civic institutions seeking an international liberal order can draw valuable insights, develop collaborative solutions, and find talent to address the policy issues posed by the digital age that threaten their common democratic values and structures.

Fulbright Scholars
For the past decade Flinders has hosted a Fulbright Distinguished Chair, first in the American Political Science, and now with Carnegie Mellon University Australia focussing on democratic resilience. Flinders has already hosted more Fulbright Distinguished Chairs than any university in Australia.

Washington Internship Programs
The two Flinders University Washington Internship Programs have sent 122 students to work in the US Congress to date – the greatest presence on Capitol Hill achieved by any university outside the United States. Students returning from the Washington internship programs are offered 15-day placements in the South Australian State Government in areas proximate to their substantive work in the US Congress. A third Internship has been established with the US Consulate in Melbourne.

“I undertook the Washington Internship Program which was incredible. I also did an internship with the United States Consulate General in Melbourne last year and found learning about diplomacy really fascinating.”

Molly Stephens
(2018, Sen Kirsten Gillibrand, D-New York)
Prof Don DeBats  
- Centre Director  
Prof Don DeBats is Head of American Studies and the Director of the JBC at Flinders; he is a Visiting Research Professor at the University of Virginia and a Resident Fellow at Virginia Humanities. He is joint CI on defence contracts, providing leadership on Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technologies and network methodologies and analysis. His research interests are comparative Australian-Canadian-US politics and political history, US foreign policy, democracy and governance. His historical research is supported by major grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities Collaborative Research Program and explores earlier challenges to democratic norms. His most recent publications demonstrate the operational independence of social and spatial networks.

Dr Maryanne Kelton  
- Research Lead (Foreign policy, Alliance relations)  
Dr Maryanne Kelton is a Senior Lecturer in International Relations at Flinders University and a research leader for the JBC. Maryanne’s research prioritises Australian foreign policy, social cybersecurity and trust, the Australia-US alliance, and the economic-security nexus. She is currently working in a strategic multilayered research program on uncertainty and trust in the digital age. Maryanne’s publications with her JBC counterparts include Australian security in the digital age, and the securitisation of cyberspace in Australia-US relations.

Ali Lehman  
- Research Coordinator  
Ms Ali Lehman is the Research Coordinator for the JBC. Her network, management and contractual experience provide the critical intersection for academic, government and industry links with the JBC. Ali will continue to be a key contact for the Centre while continuing to work with students, the American Studies Internship programs, and Fulbright Distinguished Chairs at Flinders University.

Dr Emily Bienvenue  
- Research Lead (Security)  
Dr Emily Bienvenue is a Senior Analyst in Joint Operations and Analysis Division of the Defence Science and Technology Group where she provides support to strategic policy and operational planning. Dr Bienvenue is a Defence Adjunct of JBC. Her research interests include the shift to society-centric warfare and developing trust as a strategic resource in the changing strategic landscape.

Dr Zac Rogers  
- Research Lead (National security, social cybersecurity, democratic resilience)  
Dr Zac Rogers is a Research Lead at JBC, integrating themes from national security, intelligence, and defence with social cybersecurity, digital anthropology, and democratic resilience. Currently lead researcher in a three-year defence/academic collaborative project exploring the impact of digital transformation from infrastructure to the human/computer interface on Australia’s internal and external security, national interests, defence planning, and strategy. He writes for general audiences across multiple platforms.

Dr Sian Troath  
- Research Lead (Trust)  
Sian Troath is a JBC Research Lead researching the impact of digital transformation on Australia’s strategic outlook and defence policies, and theories of trust in international relations. Her areas of expertise are international relations and the theoretical formulations of trust, trusted governance in the digital age, Australian foreign policy, and trust and cooperation in the Indo Pacific region.

RESEARCH TEAM
RESEARCH AFFILIATES

Professor John Spoehr
Strategic Professor, College of Business, Government and Law

John Spoehr is Pro-Vice Chancellor – Research Impact at Flinders University. He is also Director of the Australian Industrial Transformation Institute. John leads a multi-disciplinary team focusing on industry and workplace transformation in the context of technological change and innovation.

As Pro-Vice Chancellor Research Impact he is actively involved in the development of industry, government and community research partnerships at a local, national and international level.

Professor Trish Williams
Professor of Digital Health Systems, College of Science and Engineering

Professor Trish Williams is CISCO Chair and Professor in Digital Health Systems at Flinders University in South Australia. Trish is also co-director of the Flinders Digital Health Research Centre.

Professor Williams has a strong focus on the translation of research into practical application, demonstration of the contribution that digital health technologies can make to support healthcare, and the use of information security as an enabler for improved healthcare communication and interoperability.

She is recognised internationally for her digital health information security expertise and experience in digital health information interoperability.

Professor Karl Sammut
Professor, College of Science and Engineering

Karl Sammut completed his Ph.D at The University of Nottingham (UK) in 1992 and was employed between 1992 and 1995 as a Postdoctoral Fellow at The Politecnico di Milano (Italy), and at Loughborough University (UK).

He commenced his appointment at Flinders University in 1996. He is currently a Professor with the Engineering Discipline in the College of Science and Engineering.

His primary research activities are in the area of autonomous marine vehicles, including mission planning, vehicle navigation, guidance and control, and situation awareness. Prof Sammut is the Director of the Centre for Maritime Engineering at Flinders University.

Professor Rocco Zito
Professor in Civil Engineering, College of Science and Engineering

Over his career Professor Zito has been involved in many research projects and consultancies in a wide variety of applications some of which are:
- Use of GPS and GIS in Intelligent Transport Systems
- Use of GPS in trip and travel time surveys
- Demand responsible public transport
- GPS in the derivation of traffic congestion parameters
- Real time integration of GPS and GIS
- Use of GPS and GIS in mining and heavy earth moving
- GPS and GIS as a tool for law enforcement
- Connected and Autonomous vehicle research

Associate Professor Tania Leiman
College of Business, Government and Law

Tania Leiman is currently the Dean of Law in the College of Business, Government and Law.

She is a teaching specialist bringing digital technology into the Flinders Law degree and into the classroom for students.

She is a member of the Legal sub-group of the Australian Driverless Vehicle Initiative Policy & Risk Group.

Professor John Roddick
Professor of Computer Science, Head of Engineering, College of Science and Engineering

Professor John Roddick joined Flinders in April 2000 after 15 years at the Universities of Tasmania and South Australia. This followed 10 years experience in the computing industry. He was Dean of the School of Computer Science, Engineering and Mathematics from January 2008 until July 2017. He is currently the Chair of the University’s Academic Senate and Head of Engineering.

He is a Fellow of both Engineers Australia and the Australian Computing Society.
PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Cyber Development: be cognizant of on-going change
• Develop connections with US companies creating the next phases of the digital revolution with an emphasis on social responsibility
• Anticipate the disruptive effects of on-going technological change
• Become the Australian Centre for California-based innovative collaboration

Applied Policy Development: lead innovative policy development
• Work with internal and external partners to establish a Fulbright Distinguished Chair in the cyber domain
• Re-establish the Flinders Congressman in Residence program

Bilateral Relations
• Engage American universities in a digital research program
• Establish a research network with US industry and defence partners

Leadership of the Future: train the next generation of custodians of the Australian-American alliance
• Re-invigorate the American Studies teaching program at Flinders University
• Integrate undergraduate teaching into the research program of the Jeff Bleich Centre
• Extend the existing Flinders internship programs to a national program and relate Congressional placements to the objectives of the Centre
• Integrate early career researchers (ECRs) into the Centre’s development
• Recruit students from first year through honours, participate in their research training and providing academic and career pathways in areas of interest to the Centre

CONTACT

The JBC management team welcomes every opportunity to discuss how we can work with you on a variety of initiatives and programs:
• Research
• Education
• Teaching

Email the management team at: JBC.research@flinders.edu.au
Visit our website: flinders.edu.au/jbc
LinkedIn: JBC Jeff-Bleich-Centre
Twitter: @FlindersJBC