4-year PhD position in Computational Social Science at the NEWSREC project

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4-year PhD position in Computational Social Science at the NEWSREC project
The Department of Information Science and Media Studies at the University of Bergen is advertising a 4 years PhD position to work on the project NEWSREC: The Double-edged Sword of News Recommenders’ Impact on Democracy funded by the Norwegian Research Council. The position is for a fixed-term period of 4 years, of which 25% will be dedicated to teaching, supervision and administrative tasks at the Department.

The successful applicant will work with an international team of three renowned experts on news recommender systems research: Erik Knudsen (lead investigator, University of Bergen), Christoph Trattner (University of Bergen) and Damian Trilling (University of Amsterdam).

About the NEWSREC project

Because of the “black box” nature and poor transparency of algorithmic technology, the precise conditions under which news recommender systems are a threat to or an opportunity for democracy remain a puzzle. We lack knowledge on how to make informed choices about designing news recommender algorithms such that they do not end up narrowing people’s exposure to ideas and perspectives they disagree with.

The NEWSREC project addresses this puzzle by studying how news recommender systems can be designed to either increase or decrease people’s exposure to and sharing of news articles they disagree with politically.

The NEWSREC project has three main objectives:

- To develop a framework for understanding when and how news recommenders can increase or decrease people’s exposure to and sharing of news articles they disagree with politically, and delineate the ethical considerations pertaining to designing recommenders to do so.
- To develop the first news recommender equipped with factors that increase or decrease people’s exposure to and sharing of news articles they disagree with politically.
- Use a randomized field experiment to test this news recommender system to gain a precise understanding of when and how news recommender systems increase or decrease people’s exposure to and sharing of news articles they disagree with politically.

Read more about the NEWSREC project here.

About the PhDproject/work tasks:

Are you exceptionally interested in recommender systems or computational communication research? Is it your ambition to become a top-tier researcher? We are looking for a candidate who wants to work on the research frontiers in computational social social science with a focus on news media technologies.

This 4-year PhD project investigates how artificial intelligence can be developed to influence people’s exposure to and sharing of news with dissimilar views. The main objective is to develop and test the first news recommender system equipped with factors that increase or decrease so-called selective exposure and sharing (i.e., that individuals tend to consume and share political news that support their views).

This PhD project consists of three complimentary sub-projects. Sub-project 1 will develop a prototype news recommender system that is intended for increasing or decreasing news users' exposure to and sharing of news articles they disagree with politically. Sub-project 2 will use survey experiments to test the effects of the news recommender developed in Sub-project 1, and make improvements to the news recommender system based on the findings from the experiments. Sub-project 3 will, together with the NEWSREC project team, set up a randomized field experiment to test the news recommender system developed in PhD project 1. Taken together, this PhD project will be crucial building blocks for a theory on the democratic implications of news recommender systems.

The candidate will submit a plan within 3 months after the start of the PhD together with the supervisors.
The PhD candidate’s main supervisor is Dr. Erik Knudsen, and is co-supervised by Prof. Dr. Christoph Trattner (University of Bergen, Director of MediaFutures) and Dr. Damian Trilling (University of Amsterdam).

Qualifications and personal qualities:

- The applicant must hold a master’s degree or the equivalent in one of the relevant disciplines by the starting date of the position: information science, data science, computer science, social sciences (in particular communication science, political science, sociology), or related fields. We especially encourage candidates with an affinity with computational social science/computational communication science to apply.
- Candidates who expect to submit their master’s thesis in Autumn 2021 or early February 2022 (by February 4th 2022 the latest) are also welcome to apply. It is a condition for employment that the master has been awarded.
- Programming skills and knowledge of a programming language, such as Python or R, is essential. Data analysis skills in Python, R, or STATA can be an additional asset.
- The applicant should be motivated to contribute to the emerging field of computational communication science and to engage with different academic disciplines (e.g., social sciences, computer science).
- The requirements are generally a grade B or better on the Master thesis and for the Master degree in total.
- As an applicant you should have a considerable work capacity as well as an enthusiasm for research and the ability and interest to work in a team.
- A firm basis in quantitative research methods and data analysis is an advantage.
- As an applicant you should have an excellent written and spoken command of English.
- Experience with recommender systems research is an advantage.

Shortlisted candidates will be invited for an interview.

The teaching language is usually Norwegian, but some of the teaching is given in English.

About the PhD position:

The duration of the PhD position is 4 years, of which 25 per cent of the time each year comprises required duties associated with research, teaching and dissemination of results. The employment period may be reduced if you have previously been employed in a PhD position.

About the PhD training:

As a PhD research fellow, you will take part in the PhD programme at the Faculty of Social Sciences, UiB. The programme corresponds to a period of three years and leads to the PhD degree. To be eligible for admission you must normally have an educational background corresponding to a master’s degree with a scope of 120 ECTS credits, which builds on a bachelor’s degree with a scope of 180 ECTS credits (normally 2 + 3 years), or an integrated master’s degree with a scope of 300 ECTS credits (5 years). Master’s degrees must normally include an independent work of a minimum of 30 ECTS credits. It is expected that the topic of the master’s degree is connected to the academic field to which you are seeking admission.

We can offer:

- Salary at pay grade 54 upon appointment (Code 1017) on the government salary scale (equivalent to NOK 491 200,- per year). Further promotions are made according to length of service in the position
- A good and professionally challenging working environment
- Enrolment in the Norwegian Public Service Pension Fund
- Good welfare benefits

Your application must include:

- A cover letter that includes a brief account of your research interests and motivation for applying for the position must accompany the application.
- The names and contact information for two reference persons. One of them must be the main advisor for the master's thesis or equivalent thesis.
- CV
- It is an advantage (but not a requirement) to include a sample of some code you have written (either as a file or as a Github link or similar) that you are proud of, such as a script you wrote for your thesis or an assignment, or a hobby project you liked.
- Transcripts and diplomas showing completion of the bachelor’s and master's degrees.
- Relevant certificates/references
- A list of academic publications/conference presentations (if any)
- If you have a master's degree from an institution outside of the Nordic countries, or a 2-year discipline- based master's degree (or the equivalent) in a subject area other than the one associated with the application, you may later in the application process be asked to submit an overview of the syllabus for the degree you have completed.

The application and appendices with certified translations into English or a Scandinavian language must be uploaded at Jobbnorge following the link on this page marked “Apply for this job”.

Closing date: 10.01.2022. The application has to be marked: 20/16957

General information:

Additional information about the position is obtainable by contacting Project leader Erik Knudsen or Head of department Marija Slavkovik.
Practical questions regarding the application procedures should be directed to Adviser - HR, Bodil Hægland.

Appointed research fellows will be admitted to the PhD programme at the Faculty of Social Sciences. Questions about the programme may be directed to Adviser-PhD: Hanne.Gravermoen@uib.no.

The state labour force shall reflect the diversity of Norwegian society to the greatest extent possible. People with immigrant backgrounds and people with disabilities are encouraged to apply for the position.

The University of Bergen applies the principle of public access to information when recruiting staff for academic positions.

Information about applicants may be made public even if the applicant has asked not to be named on the list of persons who have applied. The applicant must be notified if the request to be omitted is not met.

The successful applicant must comply with the guidelines that apply to the position at all times.

For further information about the recruitment process, click here.

Life as a PhD candidate at UiB
Marion Claireaux tells about life and work as a PhD candidate at UiB.

Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nrtp6VxMeJ4&index=2&list=PLf9ZIYfAO0qghROTj6SthDbSScg0lSO6G

About The University of Bergen

The University of Bergen is a renowned educational and research institution, organised into seven faculties and approximately 54 institutes and academic centres. Campus is located in the centre of Bergen with university areas at Nygårdshøyden, Haukeland, Marineholmen, Møllendalsveien and Årstad.

There are seven departments and three centres at Faculty of Social Sciences. Read more about the faculty and departments.

Jobbnorge-ID: 214465, Søknadsfrist: 10. januar 2022