

# Congratulations to Alissa Cooper

by [Leslie Harris](#) [1]

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Technologists so rarely understand the mysteries of policy, and policy makers so rarely understand how policy choices impact the Internet's technical architecture. Yet policy wonks and technologists alike make decisions that greatly impact the free and open nature of the Internet. So when someone comes along who can navigate both worlds at the highest levels with ease and sophistication, he or she is truly a rare bird. CDT's departing Chief Computer Scientist, Alissa Cooper, is one of those people. She is brilliant, passionate and possesses a preternatural ability to speak truth to power across the technology-policy divide. She is a leader poised to shape the future of the Internet for a generation to come.

Alissa and I started at CDT together more than eight years ago, so I have seen her rapid metamorphosis from smart Stanford grad to valued member of our staff to global leader. She helped us get it right on net neutrality, helped CDT draw the right lines on difficult privacy challenges and served as our technologist liaison to companies. Most importantly, she has represented the organization in the forums where technical decisions about the architecture of the Internet are made, often as the only voice for civil liberties and human rights. She very quickly made her mark, crafting and contributing to technical proposals that support openness, free expression, and privacy, while defending against proposed architectural changes that threaten these values.

While at CDT, Alissa has testified before Congress and the FTC, co-chaired the Geographic Location/Privacy working group within the IETF, and served on the Internet Architecture Board. The list continues - she is also a member of the Broadband Technical Advisory Group and the FCC's Open Internet Advisory Committee. In these roles she has built an incredible network, built dynamic partnerships, and fostered greater understanding and appreciation between the Internet's technical and policy communities, all while pursuing her doctorate at Oxford. To say that Alissa is a force is frankly a major understatement.

One of her most striking accomplishments is the IAB Privacy Program, which for the first time is crafting official guidance to IETF standards developers about how to incorporate privacy considerations into their protocol designs, raising broad awareness of the privacy impact and properties of Internet protocols, and coordinating with other standards organizations, researchers, developers, and regulators to understand the impact of standards on privacy. Alissa is the lead author of the privacy guidance document and is developing a privacy tutorial to help institutionalize privacy as a design value in the IETF.

A few weeks ago, when Alissa asked whether she could come sit on my front porch and talk, I knew it wasn't what I wanted to hear. But I also knew it was what I wanted for Alissa: a wonderful new opportunity. With her new Ph.D. from the University of Oxford in hand, she has accepted an incredible position with Cisco, serving as a Distinguished Engineer.

Alissa will continue to serve as a CDT Fellow so we will still benefit from her expertise and insights, but I will miss her sharp intellect, her dry wit, her passion and her humbleness in the face of her extraordinary accomplishments. And yes, she is also a runner, a dog lover and a techie who actually writes personal handwritten thank you notes.

CDT strives to develop leadership among our team members and it is always bittersweet to let young leaders go. Alissa Cooper is one of the most remarkable. She is a role model for any technologist looking to make a meaningful contribution to the public interest and frankly for young women looking to find their place in the technology arena. I am so proud.



## **Congratulations to Alissa Cooper**

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