

PhD student position in digital culture at the Institute of Media and Journalism, Faculty of Communication, Culture and Society at USI Università della Svizzera italiana

Università della Svizzera italiana (USI) is a young and lively university, a hub of opportunity open to the world where students are offered a quality interdisciplinary education in which they can be fully engaged and take center stage, and where our researchers can count on having the space to freely pursue their initiative.

Established in 1996, USI is in constant evolution, always taking on new challenges while remaining true to its three guiding principles: quality, openness and responsibility.

The Institute of Media and Journalism, part of the Faculty of Communication, Culture and Society, conducts research in media studies, digital culture, journalism studies, media economics, and media history. In digital culture, IMeG is active in intergenerational media use, digital media consumption, young people and media, and digital fandom. IMeG adopts multiple perspectives and methods and promotes a culture of cooperation and mutual support. Within the Institute, people from different disciplines and backgrounds collaborate to generate new knowledge and societal impact. We offer excellent opportunities for national and international networking.

The Institute invites applications for a fully funded Ph.D. position (4 years).

The project

The position will be supervised by Dr. Eleonora Benecchi (<http://usi.to/hdi>), who leads research on young people and media and fan cultures within IMeG and is the director of the Bachelor in Communication at USI.

The position is primarily linked to the SNSF-funded research project "Swiss Fan Worlds and Social Exclusion". This project explores how children and young people (CYP) engaged in fan worlds perceive and experience online risks, develop social and emotional capacities, and implement coping strategies in digital spaces. This study represents the first systematic exploration of fan worlds created by CYP in Switzerland, offering important theoretical contributions to the fields of fan studies and youth digital media. It also responds to calls for further research on how young people navigate online risks and harms, particularly in spaces characterized by deep emotional engagement and social connectivity. The successful candidate will join an international and multidisciplinary team of scholars and will be responsible for data collection through digital ethnography and questionnaires.

The Ph.D. Position

The PhD candidate is, first and foremost, expected to complete a dissertation in three to four years. In addition, they will contribute to the development of the Institute's research agenda. They will set up data collection for their dissertation while also participating in a variety of tasks related to the research project. As a PhD candidate, they will take part in the doctoral educational programme at the Faculty of Communication, Culture and Society.

The candidate will serve as a teaching assistant in courses at both the Bachelor and Master levels, contributing to the preparation of teaching materials and tutoring students. The PhD candidate is expected to present papers at scientific conferences (the position entails travel), publish in high-ranking scientific journals, acquire further academic qualifications, and contribute to academic service within the Institute.

Candidates' profile

Ideal candidates should satisfy the following requirements:

- A Master's degree (or equivalent) in media studies, communication sciences, digital culture, or a related discipline.
- A strong personal interest in digital culture and media use; interest in fandom studies and youth and media is a plus.
- Experience with qualitative methods and data analysis; interest in ethnography.
- Enthusiasm for working in an interdisciplinary and international setting.
- Excellent oral and written English skills.
- Excellent oral and written German is an advantage.
- Good organisational skills; ability to work independently and to plan and direct one's own work.
- Motivation to undertake a PhD dissertation; ability to work in a team and engage in scientific dialogue with colleagues and other members of the Institute.
- Interest in teaching and tutoring students.

Contract terms

Admission to the Ph.D. program is highly competitive. Admission decisions are based on the candidate's background, interests, attitude and potential for academic achievement. Successful enrolment in the Ph.D. program and the position as doctoral researcher are not compatible with a further professional activity.

The position is fully financed and the salary levels correspond to those set by the Swiss National Science Foundation for PhD researchers.

Workplace is USI Università della Svizzera italiana, located in Lugano, Switzerland.

The ideal starting date is **1 March 2026**. Shortlisted candidates will be invited to an online interview in January 2026.

The Application

Applications may be submitted upon acceptance of the Applicant Personal Data Processing Notice found at the following **LINK**. In the online form, you will be asked to declare that you have read and understood our privacy policy.

Applications should contain: (1) A cover letter, including a description of your research interests and an explanation of why you are applying for this position, (2) a complete CV, (3) copies of certificates and official transcripts of your Master's degree, (4) a PhD proposal* that clearly speaks to the SNSF project Swiss Fan Worlds and Social Exclusion while foregrounding your research field and conceptual framing, (5) the names, affiliations, and email addresses of two academic references and (6) an electronic copy of a research work (Master's thesis or another scientific publication).

The PhD proposal* should: (a) articulate a focused research question relevant to one or more of the following fields: digital culture, youth, fan worlds, and social exclusion; (b) specify the theoretical approach and key concepts; (c) indicate your preferred methodological orientation (qualitative, quantitative, mixed) with a brief plan appropriate to your question; and (d) explain the anticipated contribution to the state of the art and to the project's aims.

Innovative, interdisciplinary approaches are welcome, provided they are thematically coherent and ethically sound (max. 1000 words).

Applications must be submitted ONLINE by filling out the form accessible through the following link: **APPLY**. You will also need to upload the documents listed above.

Requests for further information to the Head of the Institute of Media and Journalism Prof. Colin Porlezza (colin.porlezza@usi.ch).

Applications received before before 15 December 2025, will be given priority. However, applications will be received until the position is filled.

USI strives to be an equal opportunity and family friendly employer and is further responsive to the needs of dual career couples. We guarantee that the selection process will give equal opportunities to female and male researchers.

As an institution that values diversity, USI particularly encourages applications from women and from all individuals from underrepresented groups.

Lugano, 22.10.2025