ANNUAL REPORT

LOCAL ACTION, GLOBAL IMPACT

THE AMERI PRIZE FOR INNOVATION IN PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

THE CPD EXPERIENCE

CPD
Your Source for Public Diplomacy

2021–2022

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The USC Center on Public Diplomacy (CPD) was established in 2003 and is housed in the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism at the University of Southern California.

The mission of the USC Center on Public Diplomacy (CPD) is to enrich the study and practice of public diplomacy in pursuit of a more peaceful and prosperous world. Through its research, convening and training, CPD serves as a gathering place for scholars and practitioners to exchange ideas, learn new skills and translate research into practice.

RESEARCH
Our innovative research agenda bridges the study-practice gap and contributes to the intellectual foundations of public diplomacy scholarship.

CONVENING
Our events and conferences provide a space for diverse segments of the public diplomacy community to investigate key topics and trends.

TRAINING
Our one-of-a-kind professional education and capacity-building programs equip practitioners with key skills needed to deploy effective and impactful public diplomacy.

Message from the Director

This past year CPD continued to expand its contributions to the study and practice of public diplomacy in meaningful and significant ways. We stayed focused on building a multi-stakeholder platform for PD research, learning and networking.

The Center’s accomplishments are rooted in our commitment to a global vision, a culture of innovation and creativity, and an emphasis on bridging the study-practice gap for real-world impact. And our work is made possible by the ongoing support of our community and the strength of our networks.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the USC Annenberg School. CPD’s work embodies the enduring spirit of the late Ambassador Walter H. Annenberg, who founded the School at which the Center is based. His career and legacy “to be of service to all” guides every aspect of CPD’s work and today, we are at the forefront of the field of public diplomacy.

The deep transformations brought on by geopolitical discontinuities, technological innovations and the rise of non-state actors will only continue. The advancements in artificial intelligence and the next generation of the internet will create new opportunities for public diplomacy. In times of disruption and uncertainty, calm analysis and true understanding are much in demand.

The CPD ecosystem continues to push forward advancements in public diplomacy research, global network-building and critical professional training. We are grateful for the robust support and new energy continually being poured into our Center to enable us to provide visionary leadership and example for the burgeoning field.

Jay Wang
From Los Angeles to Dubai, CPD explores what makes for effective public diplomacy and develops strategies to increase its impact.

Public diplomacy extends beyond official ambassadors to encompass the multitude of people and networks engaged in building international understanding, trust and cooperation. CPD continues intersecting disciplines to advance diplomatic aims and shared interests. From leveraging social media for increasing cultural understanding between nations to offering strategies for fostering partnerships among cities globally, our action-oriented research seeks better ways to connect communities for a more peaceful and prosperous world.

To explore further the impact of public diplomacy on global relations, we examine the World Expo, a mega-event that has served as a platform for cultural exchange and networking and professional skills training. The analysis gauged the program’s effectiveness in fostering cultural competence, understanding, trust and cooperation. CPD continues its work of public diplomacy in less glamorous settings on a daily basis by governments and, increasingly, non-governmental entities worldwide: This expansion of public diplomacy players has become ever more pronounced in a world linked by technology and trade—and in an era fraught with crises ranging from climate change to public health emergencies.

Noting these issues through the lens of the world’s inability to prevent the COVID pandemic, CPD Director Jay Wang suggests, “The virus has taught us that we must partner or perish.” Public diplomacy is essential to building the necessary international ecosystems of collaboration to solve global problems, and the private sector is as important to achieving this as governments are. As Wang notes, “Important possibilities exist to bridge the worlds of business and diplomacy and to reimagine their linkages and roles” in improving global policies and practices to overcome seemingly intractable challenges.

LOCAL IMPACT OF CULTURAL EXCHANGES

The World Expo may offer the largest example of an international interactivity, but cultural exchanges aimed simultaneously at promoting mutual understanding and foreign policy objectives happen in communities everywhere. These programs typically involve sponsoring selected individuals to stay in hosting countries for extended periods. But although evidence demonstrates the value of these initiatives for participants, the question remains: Do cultural exchanges actually benefit the local communities that host these visitors?

To find answers, CPD created a conceptual framework for gauging the effects of international exchange programs on participating communities. Our investigators determined five categories of impact: knowledge about other countries and international affairs; cultural literacy; empathy; communication skills and other competencies; social connections for networking as well as trust between community bonds; civic spirit, engagement and volunteerism; and economic resources to develop business connections, opportunities and capacity-building to strengthen the local workforce.

Using these categories to understand the experience of cultural exchanges from the community perspective as well as that of the visitor will enable these programs to maximize their advantages for all participants.

KOREATOWN LA: A STUDY IN CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

One example of a community studied in depth by CPD to explore opportunities for international and intercultural engagement is Koreatown. Founded by South Korean immigrants, this Los Angeles neighborhood has evolved into a vibrant center of multicultural, multiethnic and multigenerational residents.

Our analysis shows Koreatown to be a considerable asset to the city, benefiting Los Angeles’ international engagement while also enhancing the local quality of life through a range of cultural offerings. The CPD study also revealed how Koreatown serves as a transnational diaspora network: It is the capital of the Korean American community in Southern California and a gateway to the wider U.S. community of Korean Americans. The CPD study also examined the role of cultural diplomacy in strengthening the local and national Korean American community and in promoting South Korean culture and values to the wider community.

Our analysis shows that, from a one-on-one basis to city partnerships to vast international spectacles, examples of public diplomacy abound.
s global trust and mutual understanding become ever more critical to widespread peace and prosperity, public diplomacy knowledge, understanding and technical ability have become key tools for effective conduct of foreign policy by any nation.

To further this expanding practice, CPD Advisory Board member, entrepreneur and experienced diplomat Goli Ameri has endowed the Ameri Prize for Innovation in Public Diplomacy. In 2021, CPD joined with the U.S. Department of State to launch the annual prize, which honors mid-career public diplomacy professionals who devise innovative and scalable strategies for advancing foreign policy and international cooperation. As a former U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs who served on CPD’s inaugural prize committee, Ameri was so impressed by the award’s possibilities that she wanted to ensure it could continue in perpetuity.

Ameri, who was born in Iran, describes herself as a first-generation immigrant who continues to be inspired by the ideals of the United States. “This country—and everything it stands for—empowered me and helped me understand what truly matters in an ideal society: freedom, democracy, human rights, inclusion and equality, helping those in need and always thinking of the greater good,” she said.

Promoting such ideals, Ameri notes, is why “public diplomacy has always sung to me. I want the rest of the world to experience America and American values the way I have, and to see how a society that questions itself and that is consistently on the path to self-improvement can serve its constituents in the best possible manner.”

The innovations recognized by the Ameri Prize will not only demonstrate public diplomacy leadership on behalf of the United States but also further bolster the field at a moment when public diplomacy is needed more than ever.

Ameri Prize for Innovation in Public Diplomacy

The annual Ameri Prize honors U.S. foreign and civil service officers for creative and scalable initiatives that advance global public diplomacy.

Public diplomacy has always sung to me. I want the rest of the world to experience America and American values the way I have.
PERFORMANCE

Event Highlights

John Kerry, U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, visited CPD for a special talk on climate diplomacy with USC Annenberg Dean Willow Bay and USC alumni Montana Denton (22), covering the role of youth, artificial intelligence for improving quality of life, engaging island states and the Caribbean with technology and financial resources, and more.

Are the Arts Essential? A 2022 book on the importance of the arts in our society was featured in a panel at the Japanese American National Museum with contributing authors including CPD Director Jay Wang, who discussed the needs of an increasingly diverse and global society and the role of the arts in nurturing a global mind.

City Diplomacy: Framework or Patchwork? The Hague Journal of Diplomacy and CPD hosted a webinar on city diplomacy with special attention to cities’ resources, functions and innovation.

The Information War over Ukraine: A panel on unprecedented public information campaigns to shape global opinion included CPD Faculty Fellow Nicholas J. Call (USC Annenberg), Adam Yehia Elsharad (USC Annenberg), Robert English (USC School of International Relations), CPD Faculty Fellow Katarzyna Pszanka (Warsaw School of Economics and Founder/Director, European Academy of Diplomacy in Poland), and CPD Director Jay Wang.

Geopolitics of International Education and Public Diplomacy: Roopesh Deen Tirlikar, CPD’s 2021 Canada-U.S. Fulbright Visiting Research Chair in PD, shared her research on the relationship between public diplomacy and national security when it comes to international education in a discussion moderated by Joelle Uzarski, CPD’s U.S. Public Diplomat in Residence (2020-22).

Information Capability & Defense: Li, Col. Gregory M. Tomlin shared his proposal of an expansion of the military definition of “engagements” to include information activities that influence audiences during peacetime in a discussion moderated by CPD Advisory Board Member Marie Royce.

Public Diplomacy 3.0: Mapping the Next Stages of Tech Disruption: CPD Faculty Fellows Cornelia Bjøl (University of Oxford) and Anna Yang (USC Annenberg) explored the extent to which artificial intelligence, extended reality and cloud computing may “shake up” the field of public diplomacy.

Cultural Diplomacy in Your Neighborhood: In partnership with the North American Cultural Diplomacy Initiative, this panel examined cultural relations at the local level.


Home Country as Stakeholder: Michelle S. Gruda, Executive Vice President of Capital Strategy & Risk at Weber Shandwick, presented a groundbreaking report exploring executives’ perceptions of the relationship between a multinational business and its home country.

Israel meets Athens: CPD Visiting Scholar (2021-22) Aristotle Triantafyllis of the University of Piraeus discussed how and why Israel, Cyprus and Greece are cooperating to develop stability in the Eastern Mediterranean during an event at the Skirball Cultural Center.

PERFORMANCE

Research Networks

2022-24 CPD Research Fellows

Dmitry Chernobrov
University of Sheffield
Strategic Humor and Post-Truth Public Diplomacy

Alina Dolea
Bournemouth University
Discourse Diplomacy, Emotions and Disruption

Kyle Long
Northwestern University
Great American Higher Education

2021 CPD Doctoral Dissertation Grant Recipient

Isabelle Karlsson
Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Strategic Communication, Lund University (Sweden)

Karlsson’s dissertation, “Public Diplomacy and the Communication of Foreign Policy: The Case of Sweden’s Feminist Foreign Policy,” probes how public diplomacy as a communicative practice makes meaning of foreign policy.

NEW CPD FELLOWSHIPS

CPD Eastern Mediterranean Research Fellowship

The Public Diplomacy in the Eastern Mediterranean initiative at CPD explores the vital role of public diplomacy in shaping the new regional order, with a focus on examining and understanding the attitudes and actions of the public in mediating differences and facilitating a stable equilibrium in the region.

CPD U.S.-South Korea NextGen Creative Fellowship Program

With support from the Korea Foundation, CPD brings together early/mid-career creative industry executives and practitioners in both countries to explore key trends in storytelling and content creation, develop a deeper knowledge of this rapidly growing sector and grow partnerships for better international understanding.
As a long-recognized leader in professional training and education for public diplomacy practitioners, CPD brings an evidence-based, solution-driven and timely curriculum to those seeking to stay ahead of the curve with impact. Our flagship program CPD Summer Institute and CPD Mini-Courses offer actionable insights through courses in specialized topics and the latest technologies, such as data science, artificial intelligence (AI), next-generation content creation and more.

CPD’s training academy offers an opportunity time and place to reflect and build public diplomacy toolkits while drawing on current scholarship, communications tools and network-building opportunities designed to improve every aspect of the practitioners’ PD strategy and implementation.

GET TO KNOW CPD’S PROFESSIONAL TRAINING FACULTY

Clarissa S. Beyah  
CPD Summer Institute Faculty  
USC Annenberg Professor of Professional Practice

“For public diplomacy practitioners across the globe, effectively managing campaigns during this transformative time has never been more challenging. The media landscape continues to evolve under our fingertips. The practice of media relations—amid large-scale, grassroots, social mobilizations happening across the globe and a backdrop of increasingly dynamic investigative and citizen journalism—has made message creation and penetration even more challenging. Now, add the digital landscape and eruption of content across multi-channel-storytelling platforms. This perfect storm of challenges presented an exciting opportunity for practitioners convened at the USC Center on Public Diplomacy for Summer Institute 2022.

The opportunity to help participants design relevant media relations approaches for the significant issues they were managing real-time was sobering. The topics brought forward by the participants through their casework have significant implications for their individual nations and our collective global community. Equipping them with tangible knowledge, strategic frameworks and tools—knowing the serious, real-time challenges they faced—added urgency to the work they completed together.

Knowing participants would leave the Center better equipped to address the daunting needs for their nations and some of the toughest issues in our world, and of our time, made this one of the most valuable and exhilarating instructional experiences of my career.”

CPD MINI-COURSES

Cultural Diplomacy for a Post-pandemic World  
Foundations of Cultural Diplomacy  
Creating a Cultural Diplomacy Evaluation Strategy  
Communicating with Your Alumni for Lasting Engagement  
Hybrid Strategy for Cultural Diplomacy

Data-driven Public Diplomacy  
Computational Thinking and Data Types  
Fundamentals of Machine Learning and AI  
AI and Bots for Public Diplomacy  
Real-time Analytics and Digital Insights

BACK IN-PERSON  
CPD Summer Institute, Class of 2022

CPD’s annual professional training for mid-career public diplomacy practitioners returned to USC’s campus for the first time since 2019.
In Their Own Words

Xiao “Alicia” Liu
CPD Digital Marketing Intern & B.A., Communication Student (24)

CPD has been a truly enriching experience for me and provides multilayered opportunities to gain insights into areas of communication, international relations and culture. As a digital marketing intern, I obtain hands-on experience in social media management and put the theories I learned in classes into practice. I copyedit some of the latest works and research in public diplomacy and have gradually started to gain a better understanding of the important role of this field in the modern day.

Another valuable part about CPD is that it offers me the opportunity to meet public diplomacy experts and hear firsthand accounts of PD and global affairs. I attended CPD’s event with U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry and learned about public diplomacy for many years now. In particular, our Global Attitudes team, which studies public opinion around the world on topics such as international affairs and democracy, has worked closely with CPD on a variety of collaborations, including a number of successful events that have featured our research on America’s global image and other issues.

Jesús Fernandez
Master of Public Diplomacy (21) and former CPD Assistant Programming Coordinator

In April 2022, I completed my six-month service as a Youth Ambassador for the USA Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai representing my country and the greater Southern California region. Looking back on this experience, I find that one of my greatest treasures from my time at the World Expo is my pavilion name tag.

In Southern California the name Jesús is nothing unique. In fact, in California it may be more common than names like Christian, Thomas or John. However at the World Expo in Dubai, my name caught much attention. In the United Arab Emirates and surrounding countries, the name “Jesus” is extremely uncommon but very well-known because of its religious connotation. Naturally, people referred to me using the English version: “Jesús.” This experience was something completely new to me. My entire life had I lived in Spanish-speaking communities where the name Jesús was not unusual.

Instead of hiding my name tag to avoid having to correct people, I embraced it and wore it proudly. I took those moments as the opportunity of a lifetime to bring awareness and advocate for my community back home. As a Mexican American, I am part of one of the largest ethnic communities in the United States. In Dubai, I realized not many people outside of the Americas are familiar with the Mexican diaspora in the U.S. The interest that visitors took in my name was very satisfying. I felt I was able to empower my community back home.

At the Pew Research Center, we’ve had a great relationship with the Center on Public Diplomacy for many years now. In particular, our Global Attitudes team, which studies public opinion around the world on topics such as international affairs and democracy, has worked closely with CPD on a variety of collaborations, including a number of successful events that have featured our research on America’s global image and other issues.

Ponchitta Pierce
A prolific journalist and media consultant, Pierce is a graduate of the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism.

Q: What is your message to the next generation of public diplomacy scholars and practitioners?

A: The future of public diplomacy is with our young people: students who attend our classes shaping their thoughts on a new world order and who are committed to changes and a sense of global responsibility. The world is not ruled by the past, not by any means, but each generation brings new ideas and ways of implementing them. And in each case, it is hoped confrontation gives way to consensus. America bears the burden of being the most powerful country in the world. But public diplomacy suggests there are times it must step back from the limelight, giving other nations room to shine. Hopefully, unimagined by divisiveness and limited vision, young people, as they age, will set a course for America and the world that is daring, dynamic and creative. They will move forward with an independence unknown by past generations. All things considered, it is why our Master of Public Diplomacy program is so important.

Q: What milestone mean to you as both an Annenberg alum and member of the CPD Advisory Board?

A: The invitation to the School’s 55th anniversary was a reminder that a great school of journalism and communication does indeed “serve as a laboratory for change.” Communications and journalism offer students a balanced view of the bifurcated world. Walter Annenberg, who loved and breathed journalism, was a man of vision and commitment. Looking back, I remember the many days I spent on campus as a journalism major writing for the Daily Trojan. And believe it or not, I have a picture of Tommy Trojan in my office. Traditions live. This well-deserved collaboration honors a media giant who understood the value of communications and journalism and the outreach to so many. As he often said, “You will not be satisfied unless you are contributing something to or for the benefit of others.”

Matthew Asada
U.S. Foreign Service Officer and U.S. Public Diplomat in Residence (2022–24)

It’s great to be back in an academic environment, and I am very excited to be able to spend the next two years at the USC Center on Public Diplomacy. Over the years I have had the pleasure of working with USC faculty, staff and alumni as part of the five-year journey to a USA Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai, where I most recently served as the Deputy Commissioner General. While here at USC, I look forward to continuing my research and writing on global mega-events, such as the World’s Fair, Olympics and World Cup, while also focusing on the nascent field of subnational diplomacy, the efforts of cities and states to engage internationally. Los Angeles is a great place for this research as the second-largest U.S. city, with the world’s third-largest consular corps, and as a future host city of the 2026 FIFA World Cup and 2028 Summer Olympics.

As I shared my culture with the 1.2 million visitors to the USA Pavilion, I kept in mind one of the most important lessons from my studies in the USC Master of Public Diplomacy program: public diplomacy is true; it is authentic. Being a Youth Ambassador allowed me to be a true and authentic voice for my community.

Richard Wike
Director of Global Attitudes Research, Pew Research Center
As the global theme of transition advances into the post-COVID era, the Center on Public Diplomacy has demonstrated agility, innovation and critical network-building. The Center’s immense value to the field shines through its timely research collaborations, the return to in-person training for mid-career professionals and hosting key voices in today’s geopolitical landscape, such as John Kerry, U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, and most recently former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and Ukraine’s Director General for Public Diplomacy and Communications Iryna Borovets.

This year the Center welcomed a generous gift from Board Member Goli Ameri, who endowed the Ameri Prize for Innovation in Public Diplomacy, recognizing emerging leaders of public diplomacy at the U.S. Department of State. We launched new research fellowships and co-published a report on our field’s domestic dimension with the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy. Our distinguished Board grew, welcoming Alan Schwartz, seasoned entrepreneur, entertainment professional and civic affairs leader, and Colleen Graffy, the first person to serve as U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy.

CPD’s impact is ever-more profound as its leadership, perspectives and reach continue to grow. The years ahead are bright as we continue to seek new avenues of support, expand our networks and serve as an essential resource for today’s changing world.

SUPPORT CPD

CPD is grateful for the generous support of individuals, foundations and institutions committed to building the field of public diplomacy. We are pleased to acknowledge the following contributors over the past year.

JOIN US

CPD relies on the generosity of donors, like you, to meet the needs of the public diplomacy community at home and abroad. Your tax-deductible gift allows us to produce pioneering research, convene global leaders and build the field through professional development and training. To learn more about how you can support CPD, please visit USCPublicDiplomacy.org/Giving.

Thank you!