

SOCIAL & TECHNOLOGICAL HUMANITARIAN STUDIES

DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY
UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Social and Technological Humanitarian Studies is a research project based out of the Department of Geography at the University of Calgary. This project looks at how digital technologies impact humanitarian action, like in using social media and web-based data processing to support the collaboration of remote and on-the-ground individuals. Rather than taking the narrow and simplified view that this development is uniformly “good”, this project explores its uneven impacts, geographic and social variation, and its role in people’s interactions around the world. Part of this entails examining how the field takes different forms within different institutional and geographic contexts. For example, right now, the field relies on many buzzwords and phrases like ‘innovation’, ‘revolutionary’, and ‘making a difference’ that have little substance and unclear definition, or at the very least change depending on who’s using them. Moreover, we’re interested in the persistence of inequalities within this *digitized humanitarianism* - and how, rather than being removed, inequalities are reframed, relocated and shifted.

The project has been ongoing since 2012, and has already led to several peer-reviewed journal articles, international conference presentations, and interdisciplinary collaborations. The current goal is a book that’s in the works, which provides both researchers and practitioners a set of provocations about what happens when humanitarianism becomes digital.

PI: Ryan Burns, ryan.burns1@ucalgary.ca

Research assistants: Robyn MacDermott, Angela Ambrose