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BUREAU OF EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS

December 2022

Welcome to the December 2022 issue of the Office of American Spaces Newsletter!

This month, we are highlighting the [2023 Programming Calendar](#) which is live on the American Spaces website and available for download as a PDF**. Key themes for the first quarter of 2023: [Human Trafficking Awareness](#) Month (January); [Black History Month](#) (February); and [Women's History Month](#) (March). Other key commemorations to note: Martin Luther King, Jr. (January 16); [Presidents Day](#) (February 20); and International Women's Day (March 8).

We are pleased to introduce [Cat Park \(Lesson Plan\)](#) on behalf of Global Engagement Center (GEC) for use in the American Spaces network. In addition to the lead story, there are two tool kits (Digital Campaign Toolkit & [Media Literacy](#) Lesson Plan) and a training invitation for December 12, 2022.

See our Kanopy Top Three in the **Did You Know?** section, along with some DCN (Digital Communications Network) information in the From the Field section.

Under the **U.S. Culture** section, read about how Taylor Swift's new album energized an English Conversation Club in Chile.

Announcements encourage your participation! We want to hear about your best program of 2022 in your American Space or Corner. Additionally, we are seeking coordinators who are also ECA alumni; learn about that opportunity in the **Alumni Support** section.

Thank you for reading and sending in your comments and suggestions.

We appreciate them; and you, our readers!

****Calendar links:** Please note that calendar links are still being transitioned from Box to a new platform. They will be updated very soon.



The Cat's Meow for Your Counter Propaganda & Disinformation Programming

The Cat's Out of the Bag: Announcing Cat Park

The U.S. Department of State is pleased to announce the release of Cat Park (<https://catpark.game>), available in English, French, Dutch, and Russian. Cat Park is a free-to-play, web browser-based game, that plays equally well on either a computer or smart phone.

In this noir cityscape, players take on the role of a disinformation agent recruited into a shadowy social media pressure campaign. They train with a group of eccentric activists with different media manipulation skillsets – creating click-bait headlines, memes, and manipulated media – but a common cause: to bring down an outrageous public works project, a park for cats!



After players destroy the fictional public square, Cat Park asks them to scoop out the litter. Using the inverse of the disinformation skills learned earlier in the game, players then educate their fellow citizens about the disinformation campaign and the media manipulation meant to hoodwink them. Cat Park is based on “active inoculation” theory, pioneered by the University of Cambridge’s Social Decision-Making Lab. Much as vaccinations work by exposing subjects to an innocuous strain of a virus in order to trigger an immune response, empirical studies indicate that the controlled experience of disinformation through a game can build cognitive resistance to disinformation in the real world. This concept is also known as “*prebunking*.”

Rather than simply waiting for lies to spread and then debunking them with a fact-check, the goal of Cat Park is to proactively educate about common disinformation techniques so that players are better prepared to spot fake news no matter what form it takes.

(<https://misinforeview.hks.harvard.edu/article/breaking-harmony-square-a-game-that-inoculates-against-political-misinformation/>)

In analysis of the game's efficacy, University of Cambridge researchers found that individuals who play Cat Park are 19-percentage points more likely than a control group to spot disinformation and 15-percentage points less likely to want to share disinformation. Cat Park builds on GEC's first media literacy, counter propaganda and disinformation game Harmony Square (<https://harmonysquare.game>). Since its November 2020 release, Harmony Square has been played nearly 400,000 times and is playable in 18 languages, including: Arabic, Bahasa Indonesian, Czech, Dutch, English, French, German, Hungarian, Latvian, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Slovenian, Spanish, Tagalog, traditional Chinese (Taiwan), Ukrainian, and Vietnamese.



Cat Nip: How Your Space Can Use Cat Park

1. Promote the launch of Cat Park Online. Use the attached digital campaign toolkit to publicize the launch of Cat Park on social media.
2. Organize an event at an American Space. Consider utilizing an American Space, Corner, makerspace, cat café, or other suitable venue to host events. Possible events could include discussions with journalists, academics, educators, game developers, gamers, and cat people about the game, local challenges around disinformation, and how to promote media literacy. You can also facilitate the game as a part of a counter propaganda and disinformation lesson using the attached media literacy lesson plan. GEC is willing to participate in events, where appropriate.
3. Include the games in functional English lessons.

4. Join the Global Engagement Center's Gaming Program

Lead for a virtual American Spaces training of trainers on December 12, 2022, from 8-10am ET (Washington-time). If you're interested in joining the training, please email Jelena Stanojcic StanojcicJ@state.gov. If more than one person from your Center is interested in participating in the training, please designate one point-person per Center to email Jelena.

U.S. Culture:



Going Viral: Chilean English Conversation Club about Taylor Swift's New Album

Hundreds of "Swifties" participated in an English conversation club dedicated to Taylor Swift's new album, *Midnights*, led by American Corner Universidad Diego Portales in Santiago. The conversation club was streamed on YouTube with more than 600 views. After receiving a record number of registrations (over 700) for the discussion, the American Corner network in Chile *swiftly* organized additional smaller events to allow participants to practice their English-speaking skills. Hoy se Habla TVN interviewed the Corner's coordinator, Indira Viras, about the event on a nationwide television program, giving greater exposure to American Spaces throughout Chile.

General Announcements:

Cat Park Training

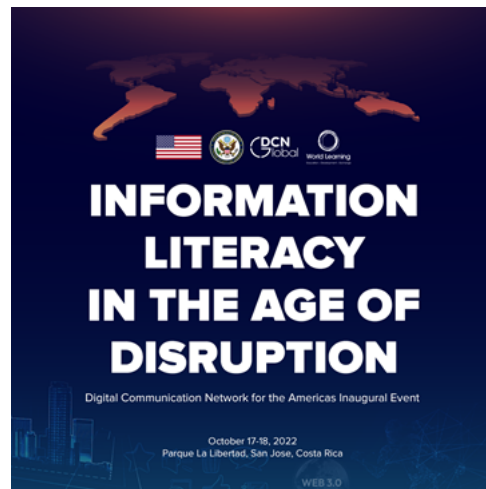
Join a Cat Park virtual training on December 12, 2022, from 8-10am EST. Paul Fischer from the Global Engagement Center is leading this special training for trainers. Don't miss out on

this special opportunity! If you're interested in participating, please email Jelena Stanoicic StanojicJ@state.gov. Note: if more than one person from your Center is interested in joining, please designate one point-person per Center to email Jelena.

What's Your Best?

Show your BEST to the rest! The Office of American Spaces wants to share your best program from 2022. Please pick one per location. If you have a photo or other information to share, please include that too. We want to feature your submission in the January 2023 newsletter - send in your submissions to americanspaces@state.gov by December 10th!

From the Field:



Supporting a Healthy Information Ecosystem

Earlier this year, the [Digital Communications Network](#) (DCN) launched in WHA. At a time when media freedom is waning around the world, the DCN is filling the gap. The DCN for the Americas will empower a new generation of voices and ideas in the digital communication space and connect WHA to the existing global DCN network.

The DCN achieved success in Ukraine and in 2021, helped create the Influencers Hub, Ukraine, supported by the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv and administered by the DCN in partnership with American House Kyiv. It began operations with the focus on fostering cross-sector collaboration and promoting democratic values, entrepreneurship, and critical thinking. The

Influencer Hub encourages emerging young voices who are digitally savvy, civic-minded, and socially active. Through a series of online training programs in English, Ukrainian, and Russian, the Hub supports the creation of products, services, and content for countering misinformation and promoting resilient digital citizens.

With the success realized through partnerships administered by the DCN in Ukraine, the DCN launched in the Americas in October. 180 digital communicators from nearly every country in the Western Hemisphere and 900 online participants attended. Secretary Blinken announced DoS support for the DCN's Latin-American growth during the Summit of the Americas in June.

By clicking the link above, you will find ideas about how to use DCN resources related to programming, resource discussions, and other ideas for use in your location. Please consider using this new tool.

Toolkits:

As noted on the 2023 thematic calendar, there are many key dates over the next several months. And we have many toolkits available to help you regarding these subjects and more.

For January 2023 programming, we wanted to draw attention to human trafficking, also known as trafficking in persons or modern slavery, it is a crime in which force, fraud, or coercion is used to compel a person to perform labor, services, or commercial sex.

There are nearly 25 million people currently victims of trafficking. The United States is committed to fighting it because trafficking destabilizes societies, it undermines economies, it harms workers, it enriches those who exploit them, it undercuts legitimate business, and most fundamentally, because it is so profoundly wrong.

[Human Trafficking Awareness](#)

HUMAN TRAFFICKING AWARENESS TOOLKIT

RESOURCE TOOLKIT FOR AMERICAN SPACES

This Resource Toolkit is designed for programming at American Spaces to create a greater awareness of human trafficking and modern slavery and how the United States works to prevent it. **NOTE:** Some of this content may not be suitable for all audiences and should be reviewed by Public Diplomacy staff.



Did You Know?

Kanopy Top Three

Through Kanopy—a video streaming service that the Office of American Spaces uses—viewers can see films and documentaries in your American Space! (Please consult with your REPS about available titles.)

Since September 2017, the top three screened films by American Spaces were: *“I Learn America”*, *“RBG”*, and *“Martin Luther King, Jr: I Have a Dream”*. Please think about using these titles (and others) as you select programs for 2023!

Alumni Support

ECA Program Alumni

Calling all ECA Program Alumni! Did you participate in a program as a participant? We want to hear from you! If you now serve as a coordinator of an American Space, we welcome hearing your path from ECA program participant to alumni to working in an American Space. Please reach out with ECA Alumni in the subject line to americanspaces@state.gov. We hope to share these stories in future issues of this newsletter!

Calendar of Events

To plan ahead, please feel free to access these resources now for the coming months!
The 2022 and the 2023 calendars are [here](#)!

December 1: World AIDS Day - see [related resources](#)

December 2: International Day of the Abolition of Slavery - see [official site](#)

December 3: International Day of Persons with Disabilities - see [toolkit](#)

December 5: International Volunteer Day - see [toolkit](#)

December 5-11: Computer Science Education Week - see [related site](#)

December 9: International Anti-Corruption Day - see [toolkit](#)

December 10: International Human Rights Day - see [resources](#)

December 18: International Migrants Day - see [official site](#)

December 20: International Human Solidarity Day - see [official site](#)

January: Human Trafficking Awareness Month – see [toolkit](#)

January 2: Science Fiction Day

January 4: World Braille Day - see [official site](#)

January 11: Human Trafficking Awareness Day - see [toolkit](#)

January 16: Martin Luther King Jr., Day - [Kanopy Film](#) & [toolkit](#)

January 16: National Religious Freedom Day - see [toolkit](#)

January 19: Popcorn Day - see [official site](#)

January 24: International Day of Education - see [official site](#)

January 25: Opposite Day - see [official site](#)

January 27: International Day of Commemoration of Victims of the Holocaust - see [official site](#)

January 29: Puzzle Day - see [official site](#)

Thanks to all of you who have shared your programming ideas and highlights with your colleagues through our American Spaces FB page. You can continue to share your news and information by emailing us at AmericanSpaces@state.gov. If you have any questions or content to add, email Karlene Noel Jennings at JenningsKN@state.gov.

To add someone to this newsletter, email us at AmericanSpaces@state.gov.



American Spaces

Want to learn about more events in your area or causes you care about? Tell us about yourself and your interests here:

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