

Joanna Steinhardt

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Summary: I'm a researcher, writer, and editor with a PhD in Cultural Anthropology, six years experience in qualitative research, and three years experience in user research. I'm an expert in foundational research, ethnographic methods, qualitative analysis and synthesis, writing, and editing.

Skills:

- Expert: qualitative research (user and stakeholder interviews, contextual inquiry, discourse analysis, journey mapping, persona building, literature review); desk research (literature review, analysis, and synthesis); writing and editing for both general readers and industry audiences.
- Advanced: product-focused usability studies; copy editing, proofreading, and fact-checking; educational and curatorial program management.
- Intermediate: corporate communications; market research; lecturing and teaching.

Work Experience

User Experience Researcher (Co-Lead), Hack for LA (Expunge Assist) • February 2022 - present

I have co-designed and moderated usability testing, identified and analyzed pain points in the MVP, and written up and presented research findings for PMs and the ED, leading to improved ease of use, content discovery, and user flexibility. As co-lead, I'm co-designing a research plan that aligns iterative research goals and questions with product development milestones.

Freelance Writer • June 2020 - present

My writing has appeared in *Wired*, the *LA Review of Books*, and various other outlets.

Freelance Editor • February 2019 - present

I freelance as a copy editor, proofreader, and fact checker for clients such as Zone Books, Stanford University Press, Ayin Press, and Knology. In 2019, I was the lead editor on a series about the psychedelic revival at the Society for Cultural Anthropology; I initiated, managed, and edited the ten-part series, co-wrote the introduction, and contributed as a writer.

Visitor Experience Researcher, The Exploratorium • April 2018 - March 2020

As an on-call researcher, I conducted observations and user interviews for exhibit prototypes, provided feedback to stakeholders for iterative design testing, completed data entry of results, and edited project reports. I completed multiple iterative cycles that led to enhanced educational impact on visitor experience.

Research Consultant & Writer, Dovetail Labs • November 2018 - February 2019

I conducted foundational research on artificial intelligence and machine learning in countries outside the US (VR+AR in Israel/Palestine; digital identity across Africa) for an industry-leading technology company. I wrote two comprehensive reports and executive summaries, conducted an expert interview, translated relevant media (Hebrew to English), and wrote articles on cultural effects of AI for the client-facing blog.

Graduate Student Instructor, University of California, Santa Barbara • October 2011 - September 2018

As a GSI, I taught four quarters of Introduction to Sociocultural Anthropology to 60~90 students/quarter. I prepared class discussions, presented on lecture material, and guided, edited, and graded final papers.

Communications Consultant & Market Researcher, MycoWorks • April 2016 - October 2017

At this biomaterials start-up, I conducted research into domestic and international markets for leather-replacement goods, managed nascent social media channels, grew online followings, and wrote PR and branding pieces. My work heightened the start-up's public profile and attracted potential investors.

Program Coordinator, Jewish Community Center of San Francisco • July 2008 - May 2010

I curated, administered, and led programs (one-off events, recurring lecture series, and classes) at San Francisco's premier venue for Jewish culture and education, and taught Hebrew classes for several months.

Grant Writer & Communications Assistant, Wabat al-Salam ~ Neve Shalom • April 2006 - April 2007

I wrote grant applications and communications for various projects in this unique binational village in Israel-Palestine.

Academic Research Experience

PhD Researcher, UC Santa Barbara • October 2011 - September 2018

I designed and conducted 2+ years of qualitative research on a dispersed community of do-it-yourself mycologists, wrote a dissertation, and published in academic outlets. In addition, I organized, presented on, and chaired panels at several Anthropology and Science & Technology Studies conferences.

MA Researcher, Hebrew University, Jerusalem • October 2005 - December 2007

I designed and conducted 16 months of ethnographic research on a religious (Neo-Hasidic) community in and around Jerusalem, resulting in publication.

Education

Fellow, The Los Angeles Review of Books Publishing Workshop, 2020

Ph.D., Sociocultural Anthropology, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2018

M.A., Cultural Studies, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel, 2007

B.A., Urban Studies & Asian Studies (Area Focus: Japan), University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 2003

Awards

UCSB Chancellors Fellowship, 2011-2016

Software

Advanced: Microsoft Office (Excel, Word, etc.); G-Suite; Slack

Intermediate: GitHub; WordPress; Adobe Suite; Miro

Beginner/Familiar: Figma

• Languages:

Advanced: Hebrew (near-fluent)

Intermediate: Japanese (once proficient, rusty); French (beginner speaker, intermediate reader)

Beginner: Spanish (Mexican); Arabic (Levantine)

Selected Publications

- [“Hackers, Mason Jars, and the Psychedelic Science of DIY Shrooms.”](#) *Wired*, February 12, 2021.
- [“The Mycophile’s Plea: On Merlin Sheldrake’s Entangled Life.”](#) *LA Review of Books*, September 17, 2020.
- [“Entheogen: What Does This Word Actually Mean?”](#) *Double Blind*, May 4, 2020.