

# Experts Sound Alarm on Foreign Control of Data about American Researchers, Call for Action

*SXSW 2026 Proposal Available for Public Support*

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, August 8, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Data Foundation President Nick Hart, former Federal Chief Information Officer Suzette Kent, NYU Professor Julia Lane, and former U.S. Chief Statistician Nancy Potok published a new commentary in NextGov warning about national security vulnerabilities for how data about America's researchers is managed and controlled by foreign entities.

A graphic for the SXSW 2026 PanelPicker Proposal. It features a pink header with the SXSW logo, the dates "2026 MARCH 12-18 AUSTIN, TEXAS", and the text "VOTE NOW PANELPICKER PROPOSAL". Below this is a purple section with the title "GREAT DATA HEIST: AMERICA'S RESEARCH UNDER FOREIGN CONTROL". At the bottom is a pink bar with "COMMUNITY VOTING AUGUST 5 - 24". To the right of the text are four portrait photos of the panelists: a woman with brown hair, a man with a beard, a man with glasses, and a woman with blonde hair. Below the graphic, text reads "Voting is Open for SXSW 2026 - Including the Data Foundation's Great Data Heist Proposal".

**SXSW** 2026 MARCH 12-18  
AUSTIN, TEXAS  
**VOTE NOW**  
**PANELPICKER PROPOSAL**

**GREAT DATA HEIST:**  
AMERICA'S RESEARCH  
UNDER FOREIGN CONTROL

COMMUNITY VOTING AUGUST 5 - 24

Voting is Open for SXSW 2026 - Including the Data Foundation's Great Data Heist Proposal

In "[Knowledge Nation and Security at Risk](#)," published in July 2025, the experts detail how foreign publishers are systematically acquiring tools and data about American researchers, creating unprecedented security risks for U.S. intellectual property and scientific competitiveness.

The commentary describes:

- Over 400 American academic institutions and 700,000 researchers have their confidential data managed by foreign-owned systems following acquisitions like Dutch-based Elsevier's purchase of Interfolio
- Foreign publishers can now "move information off American soil, use it to build a full picture of current and future American science, and repackage and resell it regardless of the potential threat to national security"
- Current privacy policies allow data to be processed and stored in countries including China, with no controls over reuse and resale of sensitive research information

"There is now a real and present danger of the sale of sensitive information to third parties and use of that data without the knowledge or consent of the U.S. government," the authors write. "The resulting vast data repository reflects the often unpublished intellectual property and

scientific collaborations of tens of thousands of American researchers."

The authors highlight concerning examples, noting that Elsevier's updated privacy policy makes clear "the data on research and researchers can be reused and resold by their Anglo-Dutch owners, RELX and their related companies... [as well as] sponsors, joint venture partners and other third parties." The information may be "stored and processed in your region or another country where Elsevier companies and their service providers maintain servers and facilities, including Australia, China, France, Germany, India, Ireland, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Singapore, the United Kingdom and the United States."

The experts propose a comprehensive three-step national strategy:

- Balance contract negotiations by requiring universities to negotiate as domestic consortiums with mandatory transparency requirements
- Secure data about researchers through domestic hosting with federal certification and strict access controls
- Require openness and transparency including public disclosure of foreign publishers' methodologies and analysis tools

"If the for-profit foreign data broker industry continues to go unmonitored and unchecked, the United States risks weakening the security of critical research," the authors warn. "Immediate action by policymakers and research leaders is urgently needed."

### SXSW Panel Proposal Seeks Community Support

The Data Foundation submitted a panel proposal titled "[Great Data Heist](#): America's Research Under Foreign Control" for the 2026 South by Southwest Conference. [The proposal is now live for community voting](#) through August 24, 2025.

The proposed panel would feature Hart, Kent, Potok, and Christopher Marcum exploring solutions to protect America's research infrastructure while maintaining the openness essential to scientific progress.

"This represents one of the most significant but underreported threats to American scientific leadership," said Hart. "We need immediate policy action and public awareness to prevent further erosion of control over our nation's intellectual assets."

Community members can vote for the panel proposal at:

<https://participate.sxsw.com/flow/sxsw/sxsw26/community-voting-sxsw/page/community-voting/session/1753655865720001INpw>

Voting closes Sunday, August 24, 2025 at 11:59 PM PT. SXSW will announce accepted programming in early November.

Read the full Nextgov commentary: <https://www.nextgov.com/ideas/2025/07/knowledge-nation->

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#### About the Authors:

Nick Hart, Ph.D. is President and CEO of the Data Foundation and previously served as policy and research director of the U.S. Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking. He is a fellow at the Bipartisan Policy Center and National Academy of Public Administration.

Suzette Kent is former Federal Chief Information Officer and co-led development of the Federal Data Strategy initially published during the first Trump Administration.

Julia Lane is Professor at NYU and a leading expert on research data infrastructure. She is a fellow of the American Statistical Association, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the International Statistical Institute, and the National Academy of Public Administration.

Nancy Potok is former U.S. Chief Statistician and co-led development of the Federal Data Strategy initially published during the first Trump Administration. She is a former member of the U.S. Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking and a fellow of the American Statistical Association and the National Academy of Public Administration.

#### About the Data Foundation

The Data Foundation is a non-profit organization based in Washington, D.C. that champions the use of open data and evidence-informed public policy to make society better for everyone. As a nonpartisan think tank, we conduct research, collaborative thought leadership, and advocacy programs that advance practical policies for the creation and use of accessible, trustworthy data. Our activities proactively address emerging data-related needs in the country with the goal of devising realistic solutions, accelerating policy coordination, and advancing innovation. The Data Foundation is recognized by Candid Guidestar with the Platinum Seal of Transparency and received 4-Stars from Charity Navigator. To learn more, visit [www.datafoundation.org](http://www.datafoundation.org). (LEI: 254900I43CTC59RFW495)

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Data Foundation

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