

A leading voice on issues related to technology, society, and education **Cathy N. Davidson** has been awarded grants from the Guggenheim, ACLS, Mellon, NEH, and NSF foundations, and is the 2025 Recipient of the Harold W. McGraw Jr. Prize in Higher Education, a lifetime achievement award for “pioneering contributions that have advanced learning opportunities and impacted countless lives.” She has served on the board of directors of Mozilla, co-directed the competitions for the \$245 million John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Digital Media and Learning Initiative, and was appointed by President Barack Obama to the National Council on the Humanities. She has twice keynoted the Nobel Prize Committee’s Forum on the Future of Learning.

Davidson served as Senior Advisor on Transformation to the Chancellor of the City University of New York (CUNY) from 2019-2025 and as Founding Director of the Futures Initiative (2014-2025) and is Distinguished Professor Emerita of English, Digital Humanities, and Data Analysis and Visualization at the Graduate Center, CUNY. She is also Distinguished Professor Emerita of Interdisciplinary Studies at Duke University where she was named the first Vice Provost for Interdisciplinary Studies, leading innovation in some sixty programs across the university. In 2000, she cofounded and continues to codirect HASTAC (Humanities, Arts, Science, and Technology Alliance and Collaboratory, known as “Haystack”), the “world’s first academic social network,” comprised of some 18,000 members at over 400 institutions and in 30 countries.

Davidson has published numerous academic and trade nonfiction books, ranging from the classic *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in the United States* (Oxford UP, 1986; updated 2004) to *Closing: The Life and Death of an American Factory* (Norton, 1998), a collaboration with documentary photographer Bill Bamberger. She has written several books on technology, including *The Future of Thinking*, with HASTAC cofounder David Theo Goldberg (MIT Press, 2010), and *Now You See it: How the New Science of Attention Will Change the Ways We Live, Work, and Learn* (Viking Penguin 2011). Davidson is the only person to have twice received the Frederic W. Ness Book Prize from the American Association of Colleges and Universities, for *The New Education: How to Revolutionize the University to Prepare Students for a World in Flux* (Basic Books, 2017; updated paperback 2022) and, co-authored with Christina Katopodis, *The New College Classroom* (Harvard UP, 2022; paperback 2024). She is also the co-author with Jody Greene of *Faculties: A Dialogue on Inciting Constructive Change in Destructive Times* (forthcoming, Fall 2026, Duke University Press). She is currently writing a historical study situating GenAI within the context of three previous “information revolutions” in America’s 250 year history.

A dedicated and innovative educator, Davidson spent the last few decades teaching all aspects of the history of technology, and writing extensively about the internet, with particular attention to human cognition, learning science, and educational innovation. She offers a unique, hands-on perspective on technology. When she cofounded HASTAC, an academic social network before Facebook or even its predecessor MySpace or any other “social media” existed, she and her colleagues met with Jimmy Wales to discuss developing

their first website. They were building a revolutionary “wiki” designed to host “crowdsourcing” (a term that didn’t exist yet). A year later, Jimmy Wales and Larry Sanger launched Wikipedia. With colleagues at HASTAC and at Duke University, Davidson beta-tested a number of early technologies in collaboration with Silicon Valley partners--the first iPods, digital badges, the first MOOCs, and Google Wave (a failed real-time collaboration platform that HASTAC subjected to global Usability Testing and were able to crash, prompting Google to discontinue its development and saving them millions of dollars and preventing lots of consumer heartache). On HASTAC Commons, she recently began a blog series, “[Intelligent Artifice](#),” on thinking wisely and well with, through, about, and sometimes despite AI.

Davidson has given over 250 keynote addresses and public lectures at major professional organizations, libraries, and universities in twenty-five countries and at annual corporate meetings of Google, IBM, Cisco, AIG, and many others. She has served as consultant or advisor on institutional innovation at over forty colleges and universities and to the directors of foundations including ACLS, Mellon, MacArthur, and Guggenheim Foundations. She is currently a member of the Science, Technology, and Social Values Lab at the Institute for Advanced Study (Princeton, NJ), directed by Dr. Alondra Nelson (former US representative to the UN High-Level Advisory Body on Artificial Intelligence).

She and her husband Ken Wissoker live in New York City. She can be found on Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and Bluesky.