

# THE PRIVACY ADVISOR

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## Fulbright funds privacy pro grant



By Angelique Carson, CIPP

Harry Valetk, corporate privacy director for Metlife's Global Privacy Office, was selected for a Fulbright Senior Specialist grant in February to represent the United States at the University of Oxford, United Kingdom. The grant lets working professionals engage in research and teaching opportunities typically reserved for traditional Fulbright scholars. Valetk spent two weeks at the university conducting research, teaching a seminar and attending a conference on free speech.

The conference hosted representatives from the UK, Canada, Asia and Australia and included industry, advocacy and law enforcement representatives. Participants discussed the borderless challenges an online world presents.

The conference made it apparent that ideas about how to protect children online differ across borders, Valetk said. In the U.S., the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) protects children under the age of 13. But Valetk's European colleagues—who tend to understand privacy as a constitutional right—wanted to know, "how did you come up with age 13?" he said.

The group discussed issues including the importance of building Internet safety and data privacy into new technologies as well as the U.S. trend toward legislative action as a result of online dangers, Valetk said. It also examined the importance of evidence-based policymaking rather than reactive policies.

Valetk said it was significant to him that Fulbright—a U.S. institution that often funds more "bread and butter key issues"—would fund a privacy professional.

"I don't think they would have done it 10 years ago...it was such a supremely specialized area that they would have said, 'it's not the kind of thing we think would gain a lot of attention or traction; it's too specialized,'" Valetk said. "I think it's a realization on their part that this is an area that has matured and is a basis on which they are prepared to fund a program."

Victoria Nash, director of Graduate Studies at Oxford, said it was "very valuable for us to have a privacy expert at that forum as privacy is an emerging policy issue...It was also valuable to have a privacy professional able to present the legal issues as they currently play out in U.S. courts."