

by collaborating, we create something better.

**ETH** zürich

# life

Es erfüllt mich mit Stolz, an der ETH zu sein.

ETH community magazine  
June 2016

Kein Stress,  
gute Leute,  
gute Kommunikation  
— perfekt!

Mich beeindruckt die hohe Identifikation der Mitarbeitenden mit der Institution.

We work together closely; there's a family feeling.

## Wir sind die ETH!

Mir gefällt die Internationalität. Der Austausch mit unterschiedlichen Kulturen öffnet den Horizont.

Ich schätze die gute Zusammenarbeit, die Bottom-up-Kultur und den gegenseitigen Respekt.

ETH is a fair and reliable employer.

Spannend finde ich die Vielfalt: Ich arbeite mit den verschiedensten Menschen, vom Präsidenten bis zum Putzmann.

People are proud of what they're doing - I'm proud to work here.

## The ETH Spirit

Women Professors Forum

## New president: Janet Hering



Photo: Heidi Hostettler

The aim of the Women Professors Forum (WPF) at ETH Zurich is to increase the career opportunities of women in the field of natural sciences and engineering. The network now has a new president: Janet Hering (on the right of the photo) is a professor in the Department of Environmental Sciences and director of Eawag. She is taking over from Ursula Keller, Professor of Experimental Physics in the Department of Physics (centre of photo).

[www.eth-wpf.ch](http://www.eth-wpf.ch) →

Services

## Peter Stäuble is the new workshop coordinator

There are numerous workshops in operation at ETH Zurich. ETH has now appointed a workshop coordinator to analyse the situation and exploit the synergies of these workshops. Peter Stäuble took up the role in the Services department on 2 May 2016.

[www.services.ethz.ch](http://www.services.ethz.ch) →

Key figure

# 8016

The number of international research partners that ETH worked with in 2015. More than half of these were within Europe.

[www.ethz.ch/annualreport](http://www.ethz.ch/annualreport) →

InfoLehre

## New service for questions about studies

InfoLehre is a new service provided by the Rectorate for ETH members and those outside the university who have questions regarding teaching, courses or academic operations and are not sure who to contact. Queries can be submitted via email or using the InfoLehre buttons on the ETH website.

[infolehre@ethz.ch](mailto:infolehre@ethz.ch) →

Manifesta

## ETH Zurich at Manifesta

Manifesta, the European Biennial of Contemporary Art, is being held in Zurich this year and will run until 18 September. ETH Zurich is involved in two projects: firstly, students of Professor Tom Emerson have created the "Pavillon of Reflections" on Lake Zurich – a floating, multi-functional platform with a giant LED screen, audience seating, a pool and a bar. Meanwhile, in the second project, Professor Alex Lehnerer has converted the Cabaret Voltaire into a "guild house for the arts".

[www.m11.manifesta.org](http://www.m11.manifesta.org) →



Photo: Peter Rüegg

### Publishing information

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Evelyn Graf

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life magazine, ETH Zurich,

HG FO 37.6, 8092 Zurich

Email the editors: [life@hk.ethz.ch](mailto:life@hk.ethz.ch)

Further information: [www.ethz.ch/life](http://www.ethz.ch/life)

### Cover illustration

Evelyn Graf



Gastro



Photo: Alessandro Della Bella

## New food market

The new food market in the HPR building had its official opening on 9 May. Three different counters serve vegetarian dishes, pizza and pasta as well as specialities from the grill. The dining area can also be used as a student work space between mealtimes and is further enhanced by the newly designed atrium. The interior has capacity for around 620 people.

[www.gastro.ethz.ch](http://www.gastro.ethz.ch) →

Oberstrass market

## Cyathlon preview

The traditional Oberstrass "Mäart-Fäscht" festival on 4 and 5 June gave local institutions and residents the opportunity to meet. At the festival, ETH Zurich provided a sneak preview of the first Cyathlon, which will take place on 8 October 2016. In one of its disciplines, the "wire loop" task, participants demonstrated their dexterity by testing their arm movement control.

[www.cyathlon.ch](http://www.cyathlon.ch) →

Lecturers' Conference

## New president for Lecturers' Conference

Edoardo Mazza is the new president of the Lecturers' Conference (KdL). The General Faculty Conference elected the Professor of Mechanics at the Institute of Mechanical Systems (D-MAVT) on 12 May 2016. Mazza, who was born in 1969 in Italy, has been at ETH Zurich since 2006. The Lecturers' Conference advises the Executive Board in all matters relating to teaching staff and protects their interests.

[www.kdl.ethz.ch](http://www.kdl.ethz.ch) →



Photo: Giulia Marthaler

Pilot test

## First-year exams to be split up from autumn

Students starting courses in the Departments of Computer Science, Electrical Engineering and Information Technology, Mathematics or Physics in the autumn will be able to take their first-year examinations in two blocks. This new system means that the students will receive feedback from the departments earlier in the year and there will be less time between the lectures and the exams. The pilot test, which will span four years, should also indicate whether more students can be motivated to take the exams. At the moment, some students with top cognitive prerequisites leave ETH without attempting the first-year examinations.

[www.ethz.ch/first-year-examinations](http://www.ethz.ch/first-year-examinations) →



Photo: Alessandro Della Bella

ETH Spin-off



Photo: Franz Sommer

## Züri Fäscht app with dance detector

Information on free parking spaces for cars and bikes, public transport timetables, visitor numbers in the various party zones, and even a dance detector which shows how much people are dancing and when: all of this can be found on the Züri Fäscht app from ETH spin-off antavi GmbH. The Züri Fäscht festival takes place from 1 to 3 July 2016. The app can be downloaded from the official event website.

[www.zuerifaescht.ch](http://www.zuerifaescht.ch) →

MATTER IN HAND



# Working with the





# ETH spirit



## ETH Zurich brings together 26,500 people from different places and backgrounds. How does our university create a sense of togetherness among its members?

**Text** Andrea Schmits

**Photos** p. 4/5 Alessandro Della Bella

The students beamed with pride as they accepted their hoodies embroidered with the “ETH Zürich – best. 2015” (ETH Zurich – passed 2015) logo. All Bachelor’s students who passed their first-year examinations were given a hoodie in autumn 2015 in recognition of their achievement. 92 percent of those contacted collected their hoodies – a resounding success for the campaign, which was repeated in spring this year.

The hoodie campaign is just one of many tangible examples of the ETH spirit: “The ETH spirit is based on typical ETH values such as a bottom-up culture, participation and mutual respect,” says ETH President Lino Guzzella. “Building on this basis, it is creative and critical thinking which drives ETH Zurich forward. And finally, it is also a sense of pride at being part of one of the best universities in the world. But ETH spirit is not something that you simply acquire and keep forever – it is a living bond to be cherished and looked after.”

According to ETH Rector Sarah Springman, ETH spirit is particularly apparent when “several people are proud

of something that they have achieved together”. Springman knows this feeling well from her time studying at the University of Cambridge, and she is still in touch with her former classmates today.



Photo: Giulia Marthaler

“You continue to feel and benefit from the sense of togetherness for the rest of your life,” she says. But how does this team spirit come about?

In 2015, there were 26,500 people studying, researching, teaching and working at ETH Zurich. 11,000 are staff, more than half of whom come from abroad. Bringing together all of these people – from different countries and backgrounds – to form a united entity is a challenge. And yet all ETH members combine their ideas, talents and energy in the ETH crucible to create a successful whole.

### Everyone plays a part

The participation mentioned earlier by Lino Guzzella is also cited by other ETH representatives as the recipe for success: “ETH is characterised by its flat hierarchy. Together with a distinctive culture of participation, this means that staff are able to contribute to decision-making

processes,” says Werner Wegscheider, President of the University Assembly since the start of June. This view is confirmed by André Blanchard, President of the Personnel Committee: “Everyone can

**“ETH spirit is not something that you simply acquire and keep forever – it is a living bond to be cherished and looked after.”**

Lino Guzzella,  
President of ETH Zurich

play a part here,” he says. Regarding the ETH spirit, he adds: “You can of course demonstrate it symbolically with an ETH tie or a pin on your jacket. But the key thing is to express a shared identity and sincerely felt solidarity – in both words and actions.”

### Spirit levels

However, André Blanchard has sensed from various conversations that the spirit is rather weak at the moment. “The sense of community is like a curve on a graph with ups and downs. At the moment, I think we need to do something about it. How? It is important that we all work together in a professional, open and respectful manner, and that everyone gives their all. At the same time, this attitude has to be appreciated and encouraged.”

For Lukas Vonesch, Head of Human Resources, the relationship that ETH members have with the university is unique: “It almost goes without saying that everyone identifies with ETH. You don’t

### togETHer 2016 – “One ETH”

The togETHer staff party will take place on 26 August 2016 from 4 p.m. to midnight on the Hönggerberg campus. The aim of the event is to come together to celebrate diversity, with culinary and cultural treats from all over the world. Every staff member will receive vouchers for refreshments after registering for the event.

[www.ethz.ch/together-en](http://www.ethz.ch/together-en) →

need to justify working here – in other companies it's more of a contentious issue." But does this feeling span the entire university, or is the sense of togetherness more evident within teams or academic and administrative departments?

### Foundation for top performance

Isabella Schalko, member of the Academic Association of Scientific Staff at ETH Zurich (AVETH), has seen it working at both levels: "Technically, the two levels complement each other," she says. "The sense of community at department level is important for day-to-day work and interdisciplinary cooperation. When you feel happy within a team, you identify more with ETH – which in turn boosts ETH spirit."

"The shared spirit strengthens the institution and is not just an outstanding foundation for top performance," says Lino Guzzella, "but is also essential in order for ETH to continue developing as a living organisation." The sense that everyone is pulling together is in direct opposition to the parochial attitudes which make organisations inflexible and unwieldy.

### Valuable contributions

Furthermore, former ETH members who feel connected to the university are keen to give something back. The alumni of the Excellence Scholarship and Opportunity Programme are a prime example, with 15 former scholarship recipients among the programme's patrons. "These people are convinced that the scholarship

helped them get where they are today, and that motivates them to help others," says Sarah Springman. "This spirit helps people to achieve their goals. And then they go into business or research where they make valuable contributions to our society and our country."

Which means that the ETH spirit benefits more than just the university itself. "Switzerland needs ETH: partly to drive innovation, and partly because it is our graduates who take the ETH mindset into society," says Lino Guzzella. "ETH remains the pre-eminent education institution in the country for top experts in technology and natural sciences. It plays an indispensable role in securing our prosperity." And all of this is based on the ETH spirit. ■

## "Working at ETH is more than just a job"

**What do ETH members think about the university? What does ETH Zurich mean to them? A team from Corporate Communications spent a day on the Hönggerberg and Zentrum campuses asking people for their thoughts.**

"I'm an ETH child – my mum spent 34 years working here. When I was little, my favourite thing was eating fish fingers on the Hönggerberg campus. When I told my mum about my job here, she was absolutely thrilled."

"ETH is the pinnacle of Switzerland."

"Working at ETH is more than just a job. For me, it's all about commitment, enthusiasm and identifying with the university."

"It's great to see how highly ETH is valued by society. As a member of ETH, doors will always be open to you."

"When you study at ETH, you are part of the ETH world."

"Even though ETH is a world-renowned uni, you feel at home straight away."

"The Hönggerberg campus has become a real town, with something going on 24 hours a day. I really like that."

"I feel very connected with ETH."

"I'm impressed by the commitment of ETH members and by what ETH offers its staff."

"I feel proud when I tell someone that I work at ETH."

"For me, ETH is an exciting microcosm and I love the young, dynamic, vibrant environment."

"I've travelled round the world and have encountered all kinds of technologies and people of every nationality. Now I have all of that in one place."

"What I love about ETH is the sense that everyone is setting themselves challenging goals and is working hard to achieve them."

"ETH is the best university in Switzerland. For me, it's an honour to be able to work here."

**Captions for p. 4/5 in alphabetical order:** Christoph Bärtschi, D-CHAB polymechanic; Rita Bättig, Facility Management department; Maria Antonietta Basoli, Campus Info; Simone Bavera, D-PHYS student; Anja Bischoff, D-ARCH student; Nicholas Calen, D-BAUG student; Andrea Frangi, D-BAUG professor; Rudolf Friederich, ITS Service Desk; Nikolaus Gotsch, President's staff; Moritz Hofmann, trainee polymechanic; Joel Jenni, D-CHAB experimental technician; Melitta Kielhauser, Facility Management department; Miro Krieger, D-ARCH student; Heinz Leemann, joiner in the Facility Management department; Thomas Lutz, electrician in the Services department; Jelena Ogrizovic, D-BAUG doctoral student; Boris Sangiorgio, D-MATL doctoral student; Brigitte Schiesser, lawyer; Annina Schmid, D-HEST student; Nina Schüriger, D-HEST student; Olaf Schulte, ITS Multimedia Services; Sandra Helen Skjaervo, D-MATL doctoral student; Clelia Spreafico, D-MATL post doc; Christos Tzikas, project manager in the Services department; Christina van Ligten, ETH Global; Lukas Zurfluh, D-ARCH architectural historian.



ETH Professor Renate Schubert in the roof garden of the LEE building.

# “Stereotypes shape us all”

**Renate Schubert, the Gender Delegate to the President of ETH Zurich and Head of the Office of Equal Opportunities, Equal!, talks to us about how to deal with stereotypes correctly.**





**Text** Andrea Schmits  
**Photo** Oliver Bartenschlager

**Professor Schubert, Equal! is holding more and more events on equal opportunities. In March, gender diversity was the focus of the agenda, and there were also discussions on how to create a non-discriminatory working environment. Is there still work to be done at ETH Zurich?**

We keep hearing that women don't feel a sense of belonging at ETH. They tell us about posters of pin-up girls in the labs or stupid comments – their feeling of

unease mostly comes from small, subliminal things. We cannot let the culture of our institution be shaped by this sort of discrimination, as otherwise it may affect how we develop potential among ETH members. The Executive Board is taking this topic very seriously.

#### **What action is being taken on these findings?**

Together with the Executive Board, we are currently discussing concrete measures we can put in place and we are planning to revive the "Respect" campaign. We also want to compile best-practice examples, to equip ETH members with a kind of toolkit they can use in different scenarios. On top of this, we want to hold more stereotype awareness training sessions in the future.

#### **Are stereotypes a problem at ETH Zurich?**

Stereotypes shape us all, not just the people at ETH Zurich. The problem is not the existence of stereotypes themselves, but rather the fact that they often impact our behaviour on a subliminal level. How often do we think that women or men are not capable of certain actions because they don't conform to the male or female norm? By making these judgments, aren't we simply not doing justice to those involved?

#### **What can each individual do?**

Many people are not aware that they are shaped by stereotypes. We should all be as conscious of them as possible, and be able to stop ourselves and question stereotypes when they affect our behaviour or opinions.

#### **You often hear that women just need to have a thicker skin.**

The scientific world is competitive, so everyone needs a thick skin. However, aside from this element of competition, no one should need a thick skin – and that means both women and men at universities as well as minority groups more generally. Women who have grown up

**"In large groups, men who are in the majority tend to lose respect for minorities."**

Renate Schubert

in Switzerland seem to be almost accustomed to certain discrimination, while foreign ETH members are more sensitive. The USA, for example, has a much clearer code of conduct when it comes to addressing minorities correctly.

#### **Does the low percentage of women at ETH Zurich affect their performance?**

Studies show that stereotypes are dangerous as they cause poorer performance. If someone feels they belong to a minority and it is assumed that they can't do certain things as well as someone else, they often perform worse than they could. Three is the magic number: when a minority reaches one third of a group, they have a stronger feeling of belonging and are less affected by stereotypes. This means they are better able to capitalise on their potential.

#### **Does the low percentage of women also have a negative impact on men?**

In large groups, men who are in the majority tend to lose respect for minorities. What's more, some men feel less comfortable as a result, and steer away from options for creative and innovative solutions in mixed teams. For an institution like ETH Zurich, this is a disadvantage we can't ignore. ■

#### **Percentages of women in figures**

The Gender Monitoring report 2014/15 revealed that, in 2014, women made up 12.8 percent of professors and assistant professors, 31.3 percent of doctoral students, 25.7 percent of scientific staff, 30 percent of students, and 26 percent of technical and administrative staff.  
[www.equal.ethz.ch](http://www.equal.ethz.ch) →



Butterflies in the Entomological Collection at ETH Zurich. (Photo: Rupesh R. Kariyat)

# Treasure troves

**Do butterfly collections and archives of handwritten letters still have meaning today? A look into ETH Zurich's 22 collections and archives shows how important it is to have objects that you can touch, even in the age of the Internet.**

**Text** Inken De Wit

It is not possible to cover the whole of ETH Zurich's 22 collections and archives in a single article – after all, each collection and each archive has a story of its own, and each of those stories is exciting and unique. What links all the collections and archives is the fact that each one contains countless individual objects and documents which provide historical evidence, enable chronologies to be created, and make science tangible. Even if some appear at first glance to be simply relics from a bygone era, they are all building blocks for today's research practices. As well as individual objects, entire collections have also been added recently – the youngest just six years old. In 2010, Markus Joachim, Head of the ETH Library at the Hönggerberg campus, began a collection of building materials covering everything from wood to brick. It was developed together with Annette Spiro, Professor of Architecture and Construction, and serves primarily as a collection of teaching aids. "In architecture, you have to translate a theoretical concept of a space into something physical," explains Joachim. "That's why it's important to be able to touch the materials." The collection currently comprises more than 2000 objects – and is growing constantly. The material samples have just been rearranged to make space for new ones. The Material Collection, which was designed as a digital information platform from the outset, is linked with seven other collections across Switzerland. "If you're looking for colour pigments, for example, you'll find them at Lucerne University

In the ETH Library Digitisation Centre, the objects from the Collection of Astronomical Instruments have been digitised. (Photo: Frank Blaser)



In the Geological and Palaeontological Collection magazine. (Photo: Frank Blaser)

of Applied Sciences and Arts on the inter-institutional online platform, [materialarchiv.ch](http://materialarchiv.ch)," Joachim tells us.

### Several million years old

The oldest collection at ETH Zurich dates back to 1746. "The Earth Sciences Collection was founded by the Natural Science Society in Zurich and is therefore a typical curiosity of the Enlightenment," says Stefan Wiederkehr, Head of Collections and Archives at the ETH Library. With rock samples dated as several million years old, it contains what are probably some of the oldest objects in any collection. The Collection of Astronomical Instruments is particularly historically valuable. It includes instruments from the former federal observatory in Zurich and the Institute for Astronomy at ETH Zurich. The collection is based on the portfolio of Rudolf Wolf, who was the first Professor for Astronomy at ETH Zurich (then called "Polytechnikum") from 1855 and also managed the observatory after it opened in 1864. The collection is complete and is the only one of the 22 to be fully digitised: the instruments are digitally accessible as 360-degree views with close-ups.

### Digitisation – the task of the century

Little by little, the objects and documents from the other collections and archives are being digitised. However, this really is the task of the century. "Even if we only needed five minutes per object, it would take one person 150 years to work through the two million objects in the Entomological Collection," Wiederkehr comments. In recent years, digital pieces have also been ▶

► added alongside the physical objects and documents. “It’s predominantly the Image Archive which is growing, thanks to more and more genuinely digital images,” he explains. Meanwhile, the archive is making use of the Internet to determine unexplained image content. For example, using crowd-sourcing, it has been possible to identify the majority of the plane models from the Swissair photo collection.

### City of insects

With its endless rows of drawers full to the brim with butterflies, moths and beetles, the Entomological Collection is a decidedly traditional collection at first glance. In fact, the insects are still collected in the same way today as they were 200 years ago – yet despite this, they help researchers answer the very latest questions in areas such as climate change. “Our butterflies have been collected by regular people all over Switzerland for 170 years,” explains Rod Eastwood, Curator of the collection. “These chronologies show how species are moving to higher regions or retreating to spare land due to climate change and changes to land use, as well as how new species migrate and others are dying out,” adds Consuelo De Moraes, Professor in the Department of Environmental Systems Science. “This also allows us to make predictions about future changes in biodiversity.”

In order to store the two million delicate insects as efficiently as possible, the collection was moved to the basement of the WEV

building two years ago. At 18 degrees Celsius and 40 percent humidity, Rod Eastwood refers to this underground space as the “city of insects”. The collection will now be made accessible online all over the world, and selected insects will be digitised in high resolution.



Photo: Giulia Marthaler

**“Even if we only needed five minutes to digitise each object, it would take one person 150 years to work through the Entomological Collection.”**

**Stefan Wiederkehr,  
Head of Collections and Archives**

### Literary history treasures

Alongside the natural science collections, there are also literary treasures to discover, including the Thomas Mann Archive and the Max Frisch Archive. In 1979, while still living, Max Frisch transferred his literary assets into a foundation. Since 2008, the archive has been incorporated into the ETH Library for administrative and organisational purposes; a reference library on Frisch’s work and an exhibition area are also housed there. “We are currently exhibiting his work as an architect,” says Manager Margit Unser. And, despite the author’s death in 1991, this archive continues to grow too. “We are adding letters between Frisch and other authors, new

editions and commentaries have appeared, and his plays are being staged,” Unser tells us.

Meanwhile, part of the archive has been digitised – including unique items such as an original manuscript of “Homo Faber”. As well as students and researchers, interested individuals and school groups also visit the Max Frisch Archive: just like the other collections, it regularly opens its doors to the public so that they too can delve into ETH Zurich’s treasure trove. ■

[www.ethz.ch/collections-archives](http://www.ethz.ch/collections-archives) →

Plaster samples in the Material Collection at ETH Zurich. (Photo: Photo Björn Sigrüst)





**As part of a series of pilot projects, the Language Center has developed an English writing course tailored to the course content and academic practice of individual disciplines.**

**Text** Alice Werner

In its penultimate lesson, the course goes a little deeper: using example texts from their field, the students have to work out which structure to use for a scientific paper. How should they organise the introduction? How are references integrated into text in the correct format, and in a way that supports the argument? And what is the difference between the “discussion” and “conclusion” sections typically found in scientific articles?

#### **Tailor-made courses**

Called “Academic Writing for Specific Purposes”, the course can be taken by students in preparation for, or alongside their Master’s in Environmental or Geomatic Engineering. It aims to tailor what it teaches to a student’s specific field of study and corresponding degree programme. This is a sensible approach, given that each discipline group follows different standards and rules for the structure and format of scientific papers, whether conference papers, research articles or Master’s theses.

As a result, the joint Language Center of the University of Zurich and ETH Zurich has been offering bespoke English writing courses for students, doctoral and post-doctoral candidates from individual departments, faculties and institutes since 2010. Due to the positive response and high demand, in recent years staff from the Language Center have developed similar courses for other disciplines who are interested in this approach.

As part of pilot projects and in close collaboration with the relevant lecturers and programme directors, it has been possible to launch a total of four seminars for ETH members on “Academic Writing for Specific Purposes” – two for the Bachelor’s and Master’s degree level and another two for doctorates.

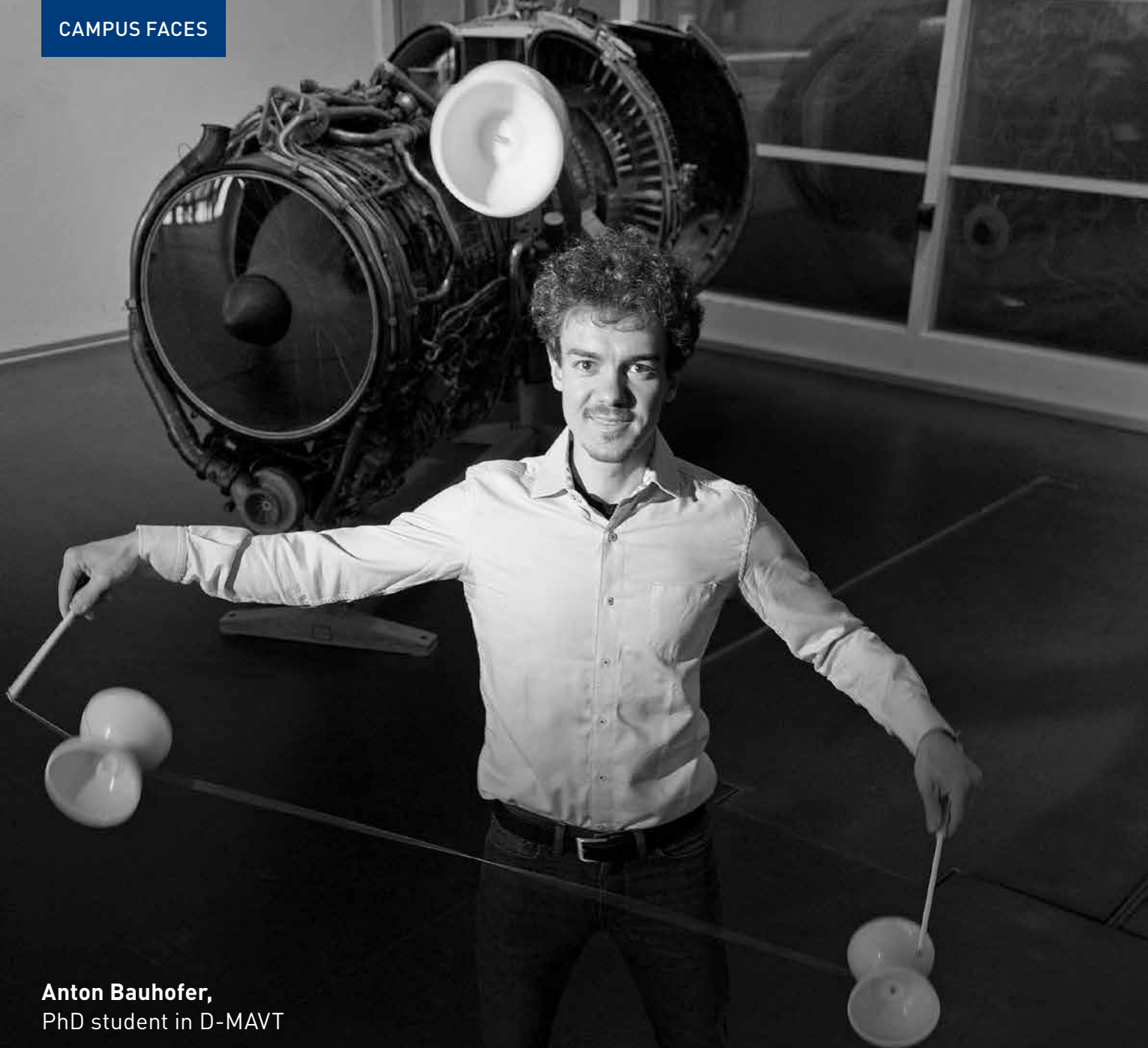
These seminars are managed by Simon Milligan, who himself teaches the pilot course, created together with the Department of Civil, Environmental and Geomatic Engineering. The teaching units, which run for five weeks and are coordinated with the timing of the Master’s programme, are designed to provide

a kind of handbook. The participants learn and practice how to plan, execute and write a Master’s thesis one step at a time. They benefit immediately from this approach, with successful results that are clear to see: “The students carry over tips and recommendations from the course directly into their work,” explains Milligan.

#### **Positive feedback**

The first of the four pilot projects – a seminar for doctoral candidates from the Department of Materials Science – has just finished, and the feedback from participants is positive across the board. After the overall evaluation planned for autumn, possible follow-up courses will be discussed with the current project partners. It will then be clear whether and how the new language courses can be implemented permanently in study programmes and curricula. “And of course, we are open to other departments and institutes who are interested in bespoke language programmes for their own students.” ■

[www.sprachenzentrum.uzh.ch](http://www.sprachenzentrum.uzh.ch) →



**Anton Bauhofer,**  
PhD student in D-MAVT

## Devilishly good

**Text** Isabel Nägele **Photo** Florian Bachmann

The diabolo dances through the air and, when it lands with precision on the rope, it seems as though exact calculations are at work. Anton Bauhofer is a successful engineer, artist and comedian. In both science and art, he aims for the highest level of precision: "If something tiny isn't right, it ruins everything else."

A finalist on the talent show "Die grössten Schweizer Talente", Bauhofer wows on stage by combining artistic perfection with mock ineptitude. With careful hand movements, he makes the diabolo zigzag wildly – but then he suddenly does

the splits instead of the intended step, and the masterpiece is transformed into slapstick. Bauhofer mimics human misfortune in an over-the-top way and, with his furtive glances, he gets a lot of laughs. "Laughter is liberating. Even a small wink can stimulate inspiration and ideas."

Bauhofer believes that you must immerse yourself in a project until you master it; for him, it is this sense of enthusiasm and perseverance that forms the link between science and art. After his talent show success in Switzerland, the 27-year-old is now turning to his doctorate at ETH Zurich – with just as much passion and energy. ■

**Matthias Töwe**  
Head of Digital Curation  
at the ETH Library



Illustration: Kornel Stadler

## Digging through and sorting data

In the past, we moved stacks of paper back and forth over our desks; now, we hoard data on our hard drives. Unlike wobbly stacks of paper, these masses of data are not obvious – but they do raise the same questions. How do I stay abreast of my information? How do I find and use it again later?

The key is data management, and it is particularly vital in research. In cases where large quantities of data are being processed intensively and over long periods, those carrying out this task are usually keenly aware of the necessity to maintain their own data. However, the small quantities that we all accumulate – in research projects, at the office or at home – are ultimately subject to more risks.

At ETH Zurich, we are lucky enough to have access to a wide range of services and infrastructure, such as the ETH Data Archive, which help researchers store, publish and archive their data with a view to the long term. Unfortunately, there is no service which can transform disorganised data into an orderly archive; this would require masses of information of the kind that we note down in our lab journals or even keep in our heads. Data can only be of any use if it is in a complete package containing this extensive contextual information – which in most cases, only the person who has created or edited the data can document.

Is this just another task which we don't really have time for in our day-to-day research? As Head of Digital Curation at the ETH Library, I have come across some striking examples from research groups which show that data management is not a luxury; it is vital to the quality of scientific work; it contributes to transparency and traceability.

Does that all sound too abstract? Imagine you find an exposed film – something the older ones among us will remember – in the cellar. When you look at the photographs without any other information, you might wonder when and where they were taken: was it in Crete in 1998 or in 2000 – or actually, wasn't it Cyprus?

We can start to speculate in a similar way when we go back to our own or someone else's data after some time – whether we want to just take a look or use it for new projects. It is therefore worth putting some thought into how we deal with data. That goes for research, day-to-day office work – and even your family photo album. ■

**Matthias Töwe**  
[www.library.ethz.ch/  
Digitaler-Datenerhalt](http://www.library.ethz.ch/Digitaler-Datenerhalt) →

VSETH

## How involvement helps shape our university

ETH Zurich works a little differently to other Swiss universities – for example, there is no senate to keep an eye on what's going on, as there is in traditional institutions. Instead, our relatively young University Assembly represents our highest committee with involvement. In the hierarchy, the Assembly – which gives equal representation to the four university groups – is right next to our Executive Board. It carries out a range of tasks: for example, taking measures such as joint representation with its Lausanne counterpart to ensure that the university groups are involved in the ETH Board, giving its views on regulatory decrees which affect the entire university, and monitoring general involvement in the university.

In order to fulfil this monitoring function, the university recently conducted a survey on involvement, carefully scrutinising the current state of affairs from departmental committees right through to the University Assembly itself. The findings from the survey were summarised in an involvement report which was adopted by the Assembly this spring and has been freely accessible since then.

What now must be done is to draw conclusions from the report: in what areas is our university already running like a well-oiled machine, and where could we help the cogs mesh more effectively? We are keen to see the direction in which we will all move in the future.



**Kay Schaller, VSETH president**  
[www.vseth.ethz.ch](http://www.vseth.ethz.ch) →



## Knigge is back

Believe it or not, in 2016, Felix Gottschalk – ETH PhD student in the Department of Management, Technology and Economics – met Adolph Freiherr von Knigge personally and became his housemate. Together with Knigge, Gottschalk rewrote his work from 1788 using the pseudonym Felix Goda, bringing its language into the modern day. The new edition is available in book and e-book form.

[www.kniggeundgoda.wordpress.com](http://www.kniggeundgoda.wordpress.com) →