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Universität Zürich[UZH]

Digital Society Initiative (DSI)

Digital Society Initiative – October 2026



Dear readers,

Ten years DSI: On November 24, we are celebrating this anniversary in the Aula of UZH, and you are cordially invited. The event is open to the public, and seating is limited: Register now. Until then, the «Decade of Impact» campaign continues to share one story a week from ten years of the DSI.

We want to hear from you: Which digital topics need regulation? Together with the Parldigi association, we are conducting a survey. It runs until November 6 and takes only a few minutes.

Also in this issue: two new DSI Professors, a new Excellence Program cohort, the DIZH Founder Call, and a column on what higher education can learn from aviation.

We hope you enjoy this issue.
Your team at the Digital Society Initiative

News



10 YEARS DSI

Join the Celebration: «A Decade of Impact»

Ten years of the Digital Society Initiative (DSI) call for a celebration. On **Tuesday, November 24, 2026, from 6:30 p.m.**, the DSI opens the Aula of the UZH Main Building for its anniversary celebration **«10 Jahre DSI – A Decade of Impact»**.

What has the DSI achieved in a decade, and what comes next? Prof. Dr. **Urs Gasser** (Technical University of Munich) looks ahead in his **keynote «Digitale Gesellschaft gestalten»**. The evening also features welcoming remarks from representatives of the federal government, the Canton of Zurich, and the university. The program is hosted by **Kathrin Hönegger** (SRF Einstein) and DSI Director **Abraham Bernstein.**

And afterwards? An apéro riche in the Lichthof, with time for conversations, encounters, and a toast to the next ten years. The event is open to the public and free of charge; seating in the Aula is limited.

Save your seat

10 YEARS DSI

Decade of Impact: Ten Stories About Ten Years

Urs Gasser will look ahead on November 24. A look back is available now: In ten years, the DSI has built far more than projects: teaching formats, funding programs, professorships, labs, and communities.

The **«Decade of Impact»** campaign tells ten stories about what has emerged and what these «impacts» continue to make possible. Since September 14, 2026, exactly ten years after the DSI was founded, a new story has been published every week, leading up to the anniversary celebration.

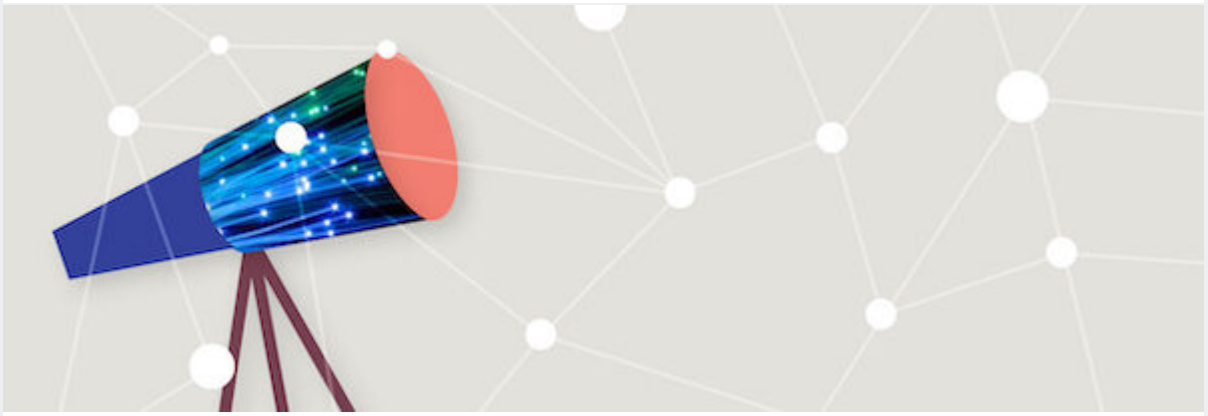
Already online:

- DSI Postdocs: Rethinking research – open, self-directed, impact-oriented
- DSI Strategy Lab: Where science meets social responsibility

- DSI Minor / LAO Digital Skills: A study program that crosses boundaries
- Digital MasterClass: Digital literacy for policymakers – well-founded, neutral, practice-oriented
- DSI Infrastructures & Labs: Researching together, shaping together
- Excellence Program: A doctoral program that brings together different disciplines
- DSI Dialog: Digital transformation – from every perspective, for everyone

The final **three stories** follow in **November**: DSI Professorships, the sixth DSI Strategy Lab, and the DSI Communities.

See all impacts



SURVEY

Which Digital Topics Need Regulation?

Which **digital topics** are particularly **relevant**, and where is **regulation** needed? The DSI is conducting a **survey** on these questions together with the Parldigi association, supported by the Mercator Switzerland Foundation. Participants rate **twelve topics**; the results will show where science, politics, and civil society agree and where they differ.

Researchers from the DSI network have already received an invitation. Anyone who has not yet taken part can do so until **November 6, 2026**. All other interested readers are also warmly invited to share their views.

Participation is **anonymous** and takes **5–10 minutes**. All participants will receive access to the results.

Take the survey



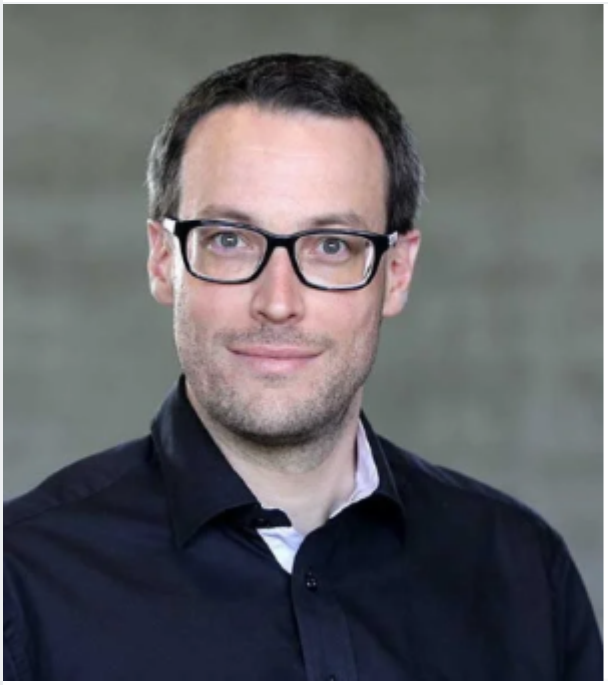
DSI INSIGHTS

What Higher Education Can Learn from the Cockpit

In the latest column of the **«DSI Insights»** series, DIZH Bridge Professor **Joshua Weidlich** explains why generative AI can undermine learning when it takes work off students' hands, and what solution aviation offers for this problem.

The columns from the DSI network also appear in the online magazine «Inside IT».

Read the column (in German)





NEW DSI PROFESSORS

Welcome, Eva and Ivo

With **Eva Bittner** and **Ivo F. Sbalzarini**, the DSI welcomes two new professors who approach artificial intelligence from different directions.

- **Eva Bittner** is **Professor of Information Systems** at UZH. She studies how AI systems support human creativity and problem-solving in collaboration, and what social, cognitive, and ethical consequences this has. She previously conducted research and taught at the University of Hamburg.
- **Ivo F. Sbalzarini** is **Professor of Scientific Machine Learning** at the Department of Mathematical Modeling and Machine Learning (DM3L) at UZH. After earning his doctorate and serving as assistant professor at ETH Zurich, he was Professor of Computer Science at TU Dresden, Dean of its Faculty of Computer Science from 2021 to 2025, and also a research group leader at the Max Planck Institute of Molecular Cell Biology and Genetics.

DSI Professors conduct research on the **causes**, **consequences**, and **future scenarios** of the **digital transformation** of society and science.

All DSI Professors



DSI EDUCATION

Welcome: The New Excellence Program Cohort

The DSI welcomes the new cohort of the **Excellence Program 2026–2028** and wishes the **twelve doctoral candidates** every success and enjoyment in the two-year program.

The Excellence Program prepares doctoral candidates from all disciplines for **interdisciplinary collaboration** on questions of digitalization.

Learn more about the Excellence Program



10 YEARS DSI – 1,600 MEMBERS

DSI General Meeting 2026

At the annual **General Meeting**, DSI Director Noah Bubenhofer presented the communications series marking **ten years of the DSI**, the new **DigitalTransfer** platform, and the upcoming position paper from the **sixth DSI Strategy Lab**. With the election of new members, the **DSI network** now counts nearly **1,600 people**.

The first **DSI Quiz** was won by **Ziggy O'Reilly**, **Selina Scherrer**, and **Serhiy Kandul**. Congratulations. With their prize of UZH mugs, socks, and organic tea from the Engadine, they're already well-prepared for winter.

Learn more

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

DIZH Founder Call

The DIZH Founder Call supports **students and employees of the DIZH universities** in developing early-stage entrepreneurial ideas in the field of digital transformation. Start-up funding of up to **CHF 75,000** is available for proof-of-concept projects.

The call is aimed at people who have not yet founded a spin-off or start-up and now want to carry out an initial proof-of-concept phase. Applications can be submitted until **January 13, 2027.**

View the call



MORE NEWS IN BRIEF

DSI Shorts

This section highlights further news from the DSI universe.

- An **international research team including three DSI members** shows in a study published in «Nature» how combining satellite data with text-based data provides a more complete picture of armed conflict.
- **AI and democracy:** In the DIZH podcast «Schampar digital» (in Swiss German), DSI Director Abraham Bernstein discusses how algorithms shape public opinion and why dealing with AI is a question for society as a whole.
- **Disinformation, cybersecurity, electronic health records:** Ten DSI members serve on two advisory bodies of the Swiss federal government.

Events

Today

The Use of AI in International Investment

Arbitration

This guest lecture of the DSI Community AI & Law explores the opportunities AI offers in international investment arbitration and where it runs into legal and structural limits.

More information

04.11.

AI, Culture & Society Reading Group

An event in the «AI, Culture & Society Reading Group» series on the article «The next Turing tests: Reimagining conceptions and measures of AI» by Jose Hernandez-Orallo et al., published in «Science». Organized by the DSI Community AI, Culture & Society.

More information

9.–12.11.

Project Management in the Digital Humanities

This four-day workshop series of the DSI Community Digital Humanities guides humanities scholars with little experience in computational methods through the entire life cycle of a digital humanities project, from data collection to visualization.

More information

11.11.

The subjective values of choices when we make decisions alone, with humans, and with robots

This public lecture of the DSI Community Ethics examines the subjective value of decisions we make alone, with other people, or with robots.

More information

11.11.

Computational Approaches to Cultural Heritage Image Collections

This workshop of the DSI Community Digital Humanities shows how European cultural heritage image collections can be analyzed with computational methods such as semantic search, and where the limits of such algorithmic readings lie.

More information

12.11.

Towards an All-in-One Media Forensics Tool

Reliably detecting deepfakes in video, audio, and images: What do intelligence services, journalists, and forensic experts need? Drawing on studies with practitioners, Matthew Wright makes the case for a comprehensive, transparent media forensics tool in his keynote, hosted by the DSI Community Cybersecurity.

More information

13.11.

Newspapers, Technology, and a Shared Western Identity. Overcoming the problem of geolocating «The West»

This talk of the DSI Community Digital Humanities presents a research project that used big data and computational methods to analyze newspapers from eight Western countries over almost 200 years, revealing a shared «Western voice» on technology.

More information

24.11.

Jubiläumsfeier «10 Jahre DSI – A Decade of Impact»

An evening not to be missed: The DSI celebrates ten years with a keynote, welcome addresses, and an apéro riche – open to the public and free of charge.

Register now

26.11.

AI & Assessment: From Guidelines to Practice

In the interactive workshop hosted by the DSI Community Education, instructors test a new guideline on the use of AI in assessment on one of their own assessment tasks and develop practical approaches for their teaching.

More information

01.12.

DSI Community Work Film Evening: On Falling

The Reading and Film Group of the DSI Community Work screens «On Falling», a film about the human cost of online convenience shopping, followed by dinner and discussion.

More information

11.12.

2nd DSI Community Education Conference

The second conference of the DSI Community Education, titled «Smart Education: Shaping the Future of Learning with AI and Digital Technologies», brings together early-career researchers who discuss in poster sessions how AI and digital technologies are changing learning and teaching.

More information

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