



**Universität
Zürich** ^{UZH}

Digital Society Initiative (DSI)

Digital Society Initiative – June 2026



Dear readers,

This issue will keep you well informed heading into summer. We look back on the retreat of the sixth DSI Strategy Lab, which explores what makes interdisciplinary research units like the DSI successful. Also: new DSI Insights on urban research in the age of data, an interview on the DAVALab, and the final report of NRP 77.

We also welcome DSI Fellow María Vasquez Callo-Müller, who is researching digital trade in the age of AI – and we look forward to her workshop at the end of June. We invite early-career researchers to submit contributions to the 2nd DSI Community Education Conference. Also in this issue: two congratulations and recaps of two panel discussions.

We hope you enjoy this issue.

Your Digital Society Initiative team

News



SIXTH DSI STRATEGY LAB

What makes interdisciplinary research successful?

The sixth DSI Strategy Lab explores a question central to institutions like the DSI: **Under what conditions can interdisciplinary research units achieve measurable impact** – in research, in teaching, and in university structures.

To this end, the Lab developed various dimensions of impact and examined them using the DSI as a case study. [On June 2 and 3, 18 representatives from research, funding institutions, and science policy met in Herzogenbuchsee](#) to discuss the findings and identify the conditions for the success of interdisciplinary research.

The insights will feed into a **position paper** outlining what interdisciplinary units at universities need to succeed. It is scheduled to be published after the summer.

[More on the sixth DSI Strategy Lab](#)

DSI INSIGHTS

What digital data reveal about our cities

More data does not automatically mean better insights. In the latest [DSI Insights](#) (in German), **DSI Professor Esra Suel** shows why digitalization has transformed urban research – yet left many pressing urban questions unanswered. And why the real strength lies not in new data alone, but in its targeted **combination with classical research methods**.

In the «DSI Insights» column series, the DSI showcases its expertise and interdisciplinarity on topics of **digital transformation**. The columns by authors from the DSI network also appear in the online magazine [«Inside IT»](#).

[All DSI Insights](#)



RESEARCH AT THE DSI

3 Questions about the DAVALab

Teodora Vuković presents the DAVALab project – a project in the «**DSI Infrastructures & Labs**» series.

What is the goal of DAVALab?

DAVALab (Digital Audio-Visual Annotation Lab) is a web-based infrastructure enabling automatic annotation of text, audio, and video data without programming skills. It provides the latest models for audiovisual and textual analysis in an accessible and scalable way, democratizing AI and empowering its users. Its basis is TIB-AV-A, cutting-edge software made at TIB Hannover. At UZH, we are upgrading it with state-of-the-art AI annotation models.

How does your platform analyze text, speech, and video data, and who can use it?

DAVALab provides advanced multimodal analysis through an accessible web interface. It includes speech transcription, speaker recognition, text-to-speech alignment, syntax, and video analysis (face, pose, gaze, emotion). Researchers and students across disciplines can upload data, select annotations, view results in the app timeline view, or export for further analysis.

What potential do you see for research and teaching?

DAVALab lowers entry barriers by providing easy access to advanced AI tools that otherwise require programming skills. It enables reproducible multimodal research workflows from linguistics and digital humanities to psychology, law, film studies, and AI. It also supports hands-on courses on AI methods, and digital skills, using real-world speech and video data in a scalable infrastructure.

Learn more about the DAVALab and Teodora Vuković [here](#).

All projects in the series

DSI IN THE MEDIA

NRP 77 presents its final report

The National Research Programme «[Digital Transformation](#)» (NRP 77) has presented its final report. **DSI Director Abraham Bernstein**, president of the steering group, reflects in an [interview with UZH News](#) on five years of research – and why AI is already ushering in the next wave of digital renewal that Switzerland must prepare for.

The topic generated broad **media coverage**. A selection of articles can be found [here](#).

DSI FELLOW

Welcome to the DSI, María

We are pleased to welcome [Dr. María Vasquez Callo-Müller](#) as a DSI Fellow of the **DSI Community AI & Law**. The legal scholar and expert advisor is at the DSI from May to December 2026, researching the **regulation of digital trade in the context of AI**.

María brings extensive experience advising international organizations – including the WEF, IDB, UNESCAP, and GIZ. Her book *Intellectual Property in the Age of AI: Data, Copyright and Trade Secrets* (Edward Elgar, 2026) was recently published.



Her research at the DSI asks how trade frameworks can remain effective and adaptable in the face of AI transformation and geopolitical pressure. Next week, María is organizing the workshop «[Digital Trade in the Age of AI: Rebalancing Openness and Control](#)».

[All DSI Fellows](#)

DSI COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Call for contributions: 2nd DSI Community Education Conference

The **DSI Community Education** invites early-career researchers to submit contributions to the [2nd DSI Community Education Conference](#). The interdisciplinary forum on **AI and digital technologies in education and teaching** takes place on **December 11, 2026**.

MA and PhD students as well as postdocs will discuss how AI and digital technologies are transforming learning and teaching. Contributions are presented as posters – **only 20 will be selected**. Participation fees and poster printing costs are covered by DSI Community Education. Submissions undergo double-blind peer review; outstanding posters will be recognized at the conference.

Abstracts (400–500 words, PDF, without author details) should be submitted by

[Further information](#)



SUMMER BREAK

DSI managing office closed

As every year, the DSI managing office will take a two-week summer break. The office at Rämistrasse 69 will be closed from **July 20 to August 2, 2026**.

From the week of **August 3**, our team will be back – with the exception of a few individual holiday absences.



MORE NEWS IN BRIEF

DSI Shorts

In this section, we highlight more news from the DSI universe.

- The **Apéro Digital** project has successfully [concluded](#) after seven events bridging innovation, policy, and civil society around digital transformation.

- Experts gathered at the DSI under the title «[ChatGPT zieht in den Krieg?](#)» to discuss what it means when tech companies like **OpenAI cooperate with the military** – from ethical, legal, and security policy perspectives.
- On May 8, clinicians, researchers, and industry experts came together for the panel «[Shape responsible clinical AI](#)» to discuss why AI tools in healthcare so often fall short of their **clinical potential**.
- We congratulate **DSI Professor Nadine Zurkinden** on her **appointment as Associate Professor** as of June 1, 2026, and **Dr. Sintieh Nchinda Ngeek Ekongefeyin**, doctoral student in the DSI Excellence Program, on receiving a **UZH Graduate Campus Career Grant**. More information on both achievements can be found [here](#).

Events

Today

Digital Health Interventions: The Role of Cultural Adaptations

A DSI Community Health workshop on the role of cultural adaptation in digital health interventions, bringing together experts from DSI, UZH, and beyond.

[More information](#)

Today

LGBTQ+ in Games

Queer digital games to play and explore: in the Digital Library Space of the University of Zurich, visitors can play themselves, accompanied by background information on the games.

[More information](#)

Today

Plenary Assembly DIZH

The annual plenary assembly invites researchers from all DIZH partner universities to reflect together under the theme «Digital Futures» on what cross-university collaboration can look like beyond 2029.

[More information](#)

24.06.

Digital Trade in the Age of AI: Rebalancing Openness and Control

A workshop by DSI Community AI & Law and the University of Lucerne on how AI is reshaping the foundations of digital trade and its governance.

[More information](#)

25.06.

Workshop: Introduction to Data Donation

The UZH Data Donation Lab introduces data donation as an emerging research method: fundamentals, a live demo of the open-source Data Donation Module, and practical guidance for designing your own project.

[More information](#)

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