data+service
Swiss Alliance for
Data-Intensive Services

Newsletter

A warm welcome from the editors Alexander Grimm (left) and René Pfitzner (right)! Alexander is Co-Founder of Aspaara Algorithmic Solutions AG and René is the Lead Data Scientist at NZZ. Both are members of the Swiss Alliance for Data-Intensive Services.

Welcome From The Editors

Welcome to the first edition of the official member newsletter of the Swiss Alliance for Data-Intensive Services! One of the great things about our alliance is the diversity of its members – and this Newsletter aims to be a mirror of this diversity and the spirit of collaboration.

Every eight weeks we will provide you with information from the alliance and the people who shape it. As with every activity in our alliance, also the newsletter is a service from members for members. In this sense: if you like to contribute, please feel free to reach out to us at editors@data-service-alliance.ch.

Happy reading!
Alexander & René

Individual Membership

CHRISTOPH HEITZ

For more than a year we have been building up the Swiss Alliance for Data-Intensive Services. Until now the focus has been on institutional members, companies and academic institutions. They form the strong core of our alliance. At the same time, the heart of our alliance is the intra-personal relations and the activities initiated by persons: We are an active community only because there are so many committed people pushing forward the different initiatives.

I am very proud of what we have accomplished so far in putting together an exciting crowd of data and service professionals, but we want to go even further. So I am happy to announce that effective May 2017 we introduced a third type of membership, that will enable even more people to become part of and shape our already strong alliance: *individual members*. This is a membership category geared toward individuals who are not employees of a member institution but interested in "data topics". This membership category opens a door to our alliance especially for students, self-employed professionals and small companies / start-ups who otherwise would not be able to join the alliance.

Benefits	Industry Membership	Academic Membership	Individual Membership
Be part of a large network of "data professionals"	✓	✓	✓
Benefit from discounts on conferences & workshops	✓	✓	✓
Stay on top of the "data industry" with our regular newsletter	✓	✓	✓
Participate in recruitment events organised by the alliance	✓	✓	✓
Access to "expert groups"	✓	✓	✗
Sign-up employees of your institution as "Individual members"	✓	✓	✗
Participate in research projects	✓	✓	✗
Participate in Data+Service accredited education courses	✓	✗	✗
"Flex Budget": use parts of your membership fee to obtain services from within the alliance	✓	✗	✗
Costs per year	Different membership models, starting from CHF 7,900	CHF 4,000 (only academic **institutions** are eligible)	CHF 100 (CHF 50 for students)

Individual members do not receive the typical membership benefits such as participation at expert groups, support for innovation initiatives, support in education, and so on – this still requires an institutional membership. However, Individual Members will receive our newsletter, they are invited to all public activities of the alliance, and we plan to set up a special program for them. The membership fee is CHF 100 p.a. (CHF 50 for students).

As with every activity in our alliance, the introduction of this new member category has been put forward by current members: Alexander Grimm, Co-Founder of *Aspaara Algorithmic Solutions AG*, and René Pfitzner, Lead Data Scientist from *NZZ*. Within 2017, Alexander and René will roll out a number of new activities that are especially focused on individual members. One of these activities is the *use-case talks* at SDS|2017, about which you can read in a separate article in this newsletter. Another one is this newsletter – in addition of being an instrument for informing the individuals in our member institutions, it will also be an information platform for the new Individual members. Thanks, Alexander and René, for this initiative and your continued support!

Good to know: A limited number of individual memberships is included with every institutional membership! So, if you like to signup yourself and/or further employees of your institution as members, please talk to Alexander and René. Signing up as individual member in addition to the institutional membership of your organisation keeps you in the loop for all special activities for individual members.

We are still in the phase of setting up and shaping this new membership category, If you have any questions or suggestions, please feel free to reach out to Alexander (alexander.grimm@aspaara.com) and René (data@renepfitzner.net).

Most importantly: if you know colleagues of yours who might be interested in becoming an individual member, please point them to the signup form on our website https://www.data-service-alliance.ch/membership. We are looking forward to many interesting discussions and fruitful collaborations with our individual members.

Christoph Heitz is Professor at the Institute for Data Analysis and Process Design at ZHAW. He serves as President of the Swiss Alliance for Data-Intensive Services.

New Member Newsletter

THE EDITORS

Newsletters are essential tools within an organisation to keep its members up-to-date. This is certainly true for pure organisational topics, such as reports on past and outlooks on forthcoming events. However, a good newsletter for a professional association as ours, also needs to strive to provide professionally interesting content. In order to achieve this goal, we have set up an "editorial office", with the mission to provide high-quality content with real added value to all members of our alliance. The newsletter will be published six times per year.

Clearly we, the editors, will not and cannot produce all the content on our own. Rather our mission is to uncover the diverse expertise that you, the members of our alliance, provide. This is why within the next months we will get in touch with some of you asking for a newsletter contribution. These contributions can be of several types: use case reports, academic research insights, reports on conferences you recently attended, experiences with certain tools/methods, book reviews, etc. If you already have some topic in mind that you'd like to report on in the newsletter, please feel free to contact us at editors@data-service-alliance.ch.

Call for Participation: Use Case Talks @SDS|2017

ALEXANDER GRIMM, JUSTUS SPENGLER

We are organising an interactive parallel session at SDS|2017 which is called *Use-Case Talks*. With this new format, we want to foster in-depth technical discussions and the exchange about an interesting topic among organisations and participants of SDS|2017. We have the idea that these *use-case talks* act as a starting point for networking and potential collaborations.

How does the format look like? Six organisations present their use cases within 15 minutes. Afterwards, within another 15 minutes, participants of the presentations raise questions and brainstorm about possibilities on how to tackle the problems associated with the presented use-case. The format will be rather informal, comparable to a panel discussion. What we expect from the presenting organisation is that they present a challenging case, instigate a discussion and seek answers from the participants. All participants should primarily be interested in the intellec-

tual challenge and be willing to actively contribute to the technical discussion.

We have six slots for participating organisations However, there are still **two slots available**. In case your organisation is interested in one of these slots, please do not hesitate to contact the organisers: gerold.baudinot@data-service-alliance.ch and amrita.prasad@data-service-alliance.ch

Alexander Grimm is Co-Founder of Aspaara Algorithmic Solutions AG, an industrial member of the Swiss Alliance for Data-Intensive Services. Justus Spengler is Co-Founder of Rockstar Recruiting AG.

Must-Reads: Machine Learning

THILO STADELMANN

I usually try to stay up to date in the field of Machine Learning by regularly reading */r/MachineLearning/* on Reddit[1] as well as the Data Machina Newsletter[2]. Here I am listing three of the coolest things I came across in the last couple of weeks.

1. Generative Adversarial Networks
According to Yann LeCun, *Generative Adversarial Networks* are among the best ideas in Machine Learning in the last 20 years – and as such have been one of the hot topics of last year's NIPS conference. The GAN zoo github repo[3] lists a number of works that extend the original idea of Goodfellow et al. (2014)[4]. The sheer number of publications indicates the potential of this powerful idea to train neural networks, which not just classify data, but can synthesise images, videos etc.

2. Ali Razavian et. al (2014)
The paper CNN Features off-the-shelf: an Astounding Baseline for Recognition[5] by Ali Razavian and colleagues (2014) is a good reference on why convolutional neural networks are so important nowadays. The introductory section, written in the style of a dialogue between student and professor, is both unusual and highly readable.

3. Distill Journal
The newly found Distill Journal[6] is worth observing: it is dedicated to *explaining* recent machine learning research.

Thilo Stadelmann is Head of ZHAW Datalab. He is a member of the board of the Swiss Alliance for Data-Intensive Services and co-organises the Machine Learning Expert Group.

Active Expert Groups

AMRITA PRASAD

The board of the alliance has the pleasure to report that there are already seven very active expert groups run by the alliance's members. The topics of these expert groups encompass the wide area of data & service science, ranging from *Machine Learning* to *Data Ethics*. Each expert group has the goal to foster R&D activities and ultimately enable transfer of know-how from academia to industry and vice versa. An overview of the currently active expert groups can be found at http://www.data-service-alliance.ch/activities. New participants in these expert groups are always welcome.

Amrita Prasad is a PhD student at ZHAW School of Engineering and assistant to the Managing Director of the Swiss Alliance for Data-Intensive Services.

[1] https://www.reddit.com/r/MachineLearning/
[2] https://www.getrevue.co/profile/datamachina
[3] https://github.com/hindupuravinash/the-gan-zoo
[4] http://papers.nips.cc/paper/5423-generative-adversarial-nets
[5] https://arxiv.org/abs/1403.6382
[6] http://distill.pub/