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## Much Ado about Nothing?

In controversies over values, the person with the best and most objective arguments doesn't always win.  
PHOTO: OLLY/PHOTOLIA

Philosopher Andreas Urs Sommer says values may provide orientation and security but they actually do not exist.

**We'll start with the good news. What doesn't exist can neither be degraded nor lost, emphasizes Andreas Urs Sommer, a philosophy professor specializing in the Philosophy of Culture at the University of Freiburg. In his book, *Werte. Warum man sie braucht, obwohl es sie nicht gibt (Values: Why They are Necessary although They Do Not Exist)* he attacks the allegedly solid foundation that politicians, the churches, outraged citizens, starry-eyed idealists and other loud-mouths refer to. Rimma Gerenstein asked the researcher about the role values play in society, why they are continually changing, and how people can come to terms with chasing a mirage.**

**uni'life:** Mr. Sommer, everyone is talking about values such as tolerance, freedom, pacifism and respect. Why are you maintaining that they do not exist?

**Andreas Urs Sommer:** Values aren't anything that can be found in physical reality. They are not stones, trees or people. And on the abstract level of intellectual reality, they aren't well-defined quantities like numbers. Values only come to exist in communication, and the longer people listen to a debate about values, the more they will get the impression that those debating are speaking about very different things. Angela Merkel's perception of "Western values" differs from that of Pegida

supporters. Tolerance is another example. You can characterize it not just as a value, but as a stance, political position or virtue. And what does it mean? Where does it start and where does it end?

**So values are negotiated according to the situation?**

That's a significant point. What is really important only appears during the course of communication and in context. During a discussion among students in a lecture hall, freedom may be their premier value, but when they are walking home at night, then safety becomes their most important value because they don't want to be attacked on the next street corner.



Andreas Urs Sommer emphasizes that it is modern societies that debate about values. Different values mean different life frameworks.  
PHOTO: PATRICK SEEGER

**Based on that, present day critics can simply relax. Values cannot be coarsened or lost. They only change.**

It is precisely this change that we can take as evidence that we are not suffering a general cultural decline. In Europe today, you can choose the sexual orientation you wish, there are registered life partnerships, and human rights have been added to the political agenda in many parts of the world. These are all signs of mature civilization.

**So a society that argues about values is modern?**

Absolutely, because values always indicate diversity. There is not just one value. There are many. You have to consider how to organize them in a hierarchy. It was not until the mid-19th century that we began to speak of "Values" as such, and that came at the point when the last metaphysical and religious determinants began to crack. Yet in western tradition, a differentiation was always made between "good" and "evil," but this constellation didn't allow for much gray area. Someone who deviated from the mainstream in premodern society was not only a freak, but also evil and ostracized by the community as a result. Today our society is able to accept differences in values, and along with that, differing life and intellectual frameworks.

**If you look at Pegida demonstrations for example it doesn't seem like peaceful acceptance.**

These are differences of opinion that are fought out in public. It's a gloves-off fight and the means vary. A large newspaper, for example, has nationwide media power, but an internet troll paid by Russia can also reach broad masses of people by making comments on the internet. The negotiations do not take place in a vacuum, either. It's a matter of rock hard political or economic interests, and these are simply not objective "scientific" givens. Instead, they are attached to individual and collective needs.

**When compared with other countries, do particular values make Germans stand out?**

I think so, and through a certain fragmentation. When we think of "German" values, we think of Prussian virtues like punctuality, order or reliability, but obviously, if you look at major, high-profile German construction projects, for example, we really aren't quite conforming to those. What I've determined is that in Germany, due to its own history, what are supposed to be givens are really no longer taken for granted. A high degree of critical self-reflection has dominated in German culture since 1945. People question, analyze and have reservations. When the German chancellor spoke of "the values of Europe," many cultural commentators reacted with a great deal of criticism. By contrast, when Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump celebrate America as "the greatest country in the world," they garner broad agreement.

**On the one hand, values don't exist, yet on the other they are by necessity in constant change. How should people handle this contradiction?**

That's actually quite difficult for us. There's a type of residual metaphysical need – that we've inherited from tradition – namely, we want absolute certainty. In the past and present, we find attempts to establish uniform value structures tending towards totalitarianism. But because human life is characterized by movement, durable, rock-solid value structures are impossible. The clever shy away from committing to absolutes. Needs change continually, that is why no value may be permanently elevated to the most important one. We must always consider what a value means for us. And we need to do that as individuals and in small groups and as entire societies. It will always be that way, and that's good.

**Andreas Urs Sommer:** *Werte. Warum man sie braucht, obwohl es sie nicht gibt. (Values: Why They are Necessary although They Do Not Exist)*

J. B. Metzler Verlag, 2016.  
188 Pages, 19,95 Euro.

# A Firm Line

The University of Freiburg resolutely opposes xenophobia

By Thomas Goebel

The University of Freiburg "decisively condemns any form of anti-foreign activity throughout the entire university. The senate has unanimously made this clear after many nationalistic and xenophobic slogans appeared on campus. The initiative for this resolution came from the students.

"Our main thought was that the university is not a politically neutral place – particularly at a time when refugee hostels are being set on fire," emphasized Julia Müller, a law student. As a member of the senate, she was among those who submitted the draft resolution. "If there are anti-foreign incidents taking place around the university then we must oppose them and support tolerance and diversity," she added.

On 20 April 2016, hackers gained access to several printers of the University of Freiburg and printed out racist and anti-Semitic texts. Printers at other higher educational institutions in Germany produced similar pamphlets. Swastikas were also scratched into window panes of a few university buildings – including the windows of the student council building on Belfortstraße. In addition, stickers with nationalistic and anti-foreign slogans appeared on collegiate buildings, the university library and street signs. These apparently came from the rightist extremist, nationalistically-oriented, identity movement that is being observed by Germany's Office for the Protection of the Constitution.

## Curiosity and candor

"The stickers were distributed around the whole campus and downtown. We're still finding them," said Christian Kröper. As a representative of the



Julia Müller and Christian Kröper are aiming to use educational work and training to take a stance against racism.

PHOTO: THOMAS KUNZ

legally-constituted student government, the student of English language and literature is an advisory member of the senate. Students went on to write a draft resolution and submitted it to the committee for a vote. "I'd expected lots of skepticism," said Kröper, "but the reaction was just the opposite. The idea was welcomed across the board by all status groups." The committee reworked the text slightly and subsequently passed it unanimously.

The senate's resolution makes it "unambiguously clear that universities are places of plurality, cosmopolitanism and international exchange." In the 2015/16 winter semester, more than 16 percent of the students at the university were from abroad. The proportion of foreign academics and researchers has also been increasing for years.

The resolution says that racism and xenophobia have no place at the university. It goes on, "To thrive, research and teaching require a climate that is characterized by curiosity and candor rather than hatred and fear. The University of Freiburg sees creating this climate and fostering it as one of its most important tasks."

Biology professor Ralf Reski is glad about the student initiative. "It's a matter of how the university sees itself," said the senate spokesman for the professors' group. He continued, "We're dependent on international cooperation – scientists and scholars must discuss results freely – without bias based on faith, nationality or continent of origin." He went on to say that exclusion was incompatible with the human tasks of research and teaching.

"Universities should be beacons of enlightenment," said Reski.

"Naturally, differences in political opinion or cultural background could cause tensions in the laboratories and seminars," he added. "But that cannot and may not lead to the restriction of science. We're working here together on possible solutions. This cooperation could even serve as a model for society," he said. "Science only works through discourse," said Müller, "and everyone should be able to take part in that. Kröper elaborated, "Of course the senate can't simply decree that. For that, you need education and training – so exactly what a university is supposed to do in the first place."

> [www.uni-freiburg.de/universitaet/universitaet-und-gesellschaft](http://www.uni-freiburg.de/universitaet/universitaet-und-gesellschaft)

## Key Partnership Expanded

The University of Freiburg and Nanjing University in China have concluded an agreement to expand their cooperation in the area of the science of sustainability. Among the activities the agreement provides for are the organization of joint scientific workshops and the provision of funding and means of transportation for scientists and doctoral candidates. The agreement is a legal annex to the accord the two universities concluded in 2013 to establish their key partnership. Initially this was primarily in the

area of "Modern China Studies. In 2015/16 both universities opened the Nanjing-Freiburg Center of Modern China Studies with subsidiaries in Freiburg and Nanjing. They went on to extend cooperation to a second area in 2015 with the establishment of a joint workshop dedicated to the study of sustainable materials.

> [www.international.uni-freiburg.de/keypartners\\_nanjing-de](http://www.international.uni-freiburg.de/keypartners_nanjing-de)

## University Engages Expert Commission

A commission of experts from the University of Freiburg is looking into an initiative of the city of Freiburg to conduct a scholarly examination of street names to determine the consequences this measure could have for the university. In November 2016, the city council issued a policy decision to rename twelve streets after a majority of the council members said that these street names seemed inappropriate today. The decisions made by the city council are relevant

for the university because many of the affected individuals were linked to the institution. The university has recognized these individuals with, for example, statues or plaques or by naming institutes, buildings or foundations after them. The vice president for research integrity, gender, and diversity, Prof. Dr. Gisela Riescher is heading the commission composed of people with expertise in history, law and political science. The committee began its work in December 2016.

## New Name, Modern Research

The winds of change are blowing along Maximilianstraße 15. The Institute of European Ethnology has given itself a new name. Since the beginning of the 2016/17 winter semester it has been called the Institute for Cultural Anthropology and European Ethnology. The new name heralds more than the institute's upcoming fiftieth anniversary. It also symbolizes the modernization of the discipline and a new institute profile. In future, the scholars here will increase their examination of topics such as popular culture, space, migration, and mobility, including economic activity. This change will also be reflected in teaching. In addition, a professorship dedicated to material and political culture and Europeanization will again be filled in the coming years. The institute at the University of Freiburg was founded in 1967.

> [www.eu-ethno.uni-freiburg.de](http://www.eu-ethno.uni-freiburg.de)

## Sustainable Eating and the City

Waldkirch im Breisgau and Leutkirch im Allgäu are being used as model communities. The University of Freiburg is coordinating a new cooperative project based on the example of district towns in Baden-Württemberg. During the next three years, the project will research and initiate integration of systems of nutrition in sustainable municipal development. The Federal Ministry of Education and Research is funding the program with around 1.1 million euros. The chair of environmental governance, Heiner Schanz; the chair of sustainability governance, Michael Pregernig; and the chair of forestry and environmental policy, Daniela Kleinschmit are taking part in the project.

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## Premiere in the Konzerthaus

The Freiburg Student Orchestra (FSO) is making its debut on 28 January 2017 at the Konzerthaus. The ensemble is performing the 4th Symphony and Song of Destiny by Johannes Brahms and Béla Bartók's Concert for Viola and Orchestra. Norbert Kleinschmidt is conducting the FSO, with Jean-Éric Soucy soloing on viola. Soucy is the viola soloist of the new SWR Symphony Orchestra. The Song of Destiny, arranged by Bernhard Schmidt, will be performed together with the John Sheppard Ensemble, a chamber choir from Freiburg. The performance begins at 8 p.m. Ticket prices range from 8 euros to 20 euros and can be purchased in advance through Reservix and at the evening box office. Founded in 1998, the FSO is made up mainly of students from all disciplines. Each semester it performs a repertoire of mainly classical and romantic symphonies, symphonic poems, overtures and solo concerts.

> [www.freiburger-studentenorchester.de](http://www.freiburger-studentenorchester.de)

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# The Same Procedure as Every Year? – Not Quite!

How celebrating Christmas has changed in religion, society and culture

Chocolate Santas are already on supermarket shelves at the end of the summer, right alongside the Advent calendars and gingerbread. That's when you have to ask yourself: Is there anything still exciting at all about Christmas anymore? Or has it become merely a festival of consumption and commerce? Freiburg theologian Dr. Stephan Wahle downplays this cynical query with a simple "No." Alexander Ochs asked him about the most significant rituals and routines related to Christmas in Germany.

Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Advent – it's entirely conceivable that hundreds of books have been written, particularly in theology, about how the meaning of the holiday has changed over the course of centuries. Conceivable, perhaps, but that's way off the mark. Stephan Wahle's work, however, is an exception. The 42-year-old has been at the University of Freiburg since 2006. He is responsible for liturgical studies within Catholic theology. In his postdoctoral research thesis Wahle investigated Christmas in religion, culture and society. In July 2016, he received the Balthasar Fischer Award for his work. "Scholarly theology barely addresses Christmas at all.

During the Middle Ages, the depiction of Jesus as a child took on a central role.

It always bothered me that there isn't a current monograph on it, and if there is one, then it's only about the early history, but nothing about the processes of transformation," explains Wahle. "As a theologian, I wanted to do something that ethnologists or cultural scholars do, namely, look at culture." One of the things Wahle examined is the question of what people do when they spend Christmas Eve at home.

## Crowded Churches on Christmas

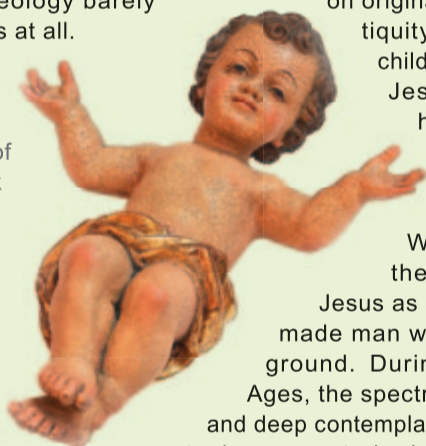
Viewed historically, Christmas came into being in relatively late, in the 4th century. "The first church services and texts that we're relying



People who aren't religious celebrate Christmas, too, because the holiday provides space for existential questions and thought, says Stephan Wahle.



Expression of anticipation: Christmas markets usually get underway at the end of November and end a day before Christmas Eve, so just before the actual Christmas holiday is about to get started. PHOTOS: THOMAS KUNZ



on originated in late antiquity. In those, the child in the manger, Jesus, the small, helpless child, doesn't have any role to play," reports Wahle. Instead, the meaning of Jesus as the son of God made man was in the foreground. During the Middle Ages, the spectrum broadened and deep contemplation of the child took on a central role. Into the 19th century, Christmas remained a religious holiday and revolved around going to church. Protestants pushed Christmas celebrations from 25 December to 24 December early on. For Catholics, the vigil mass at midnight on Christmas Eve was the key service. But the researcher says that in recent times, that hasn't really been the case. He says everything is shifting to be even earlier. Adds Wahle, "Visitor numbers for the service on Christmas day are staying relatively stable. It is the central church service of the entire year."

## Anticipation

Apropos of forward displacement and making everything earlier: Some of the Christmas markets are already open in mid-November and close on 23 December. So on Christmas, the Christmas market has been and gone. Says the theologian, "It's explicitly about a Christmas market. It is not or only rarely an Advent market." According to Wahle, Christmas markets aren't just a big export hit, they are also a cultural component of the celebration. "They've got a long tradition. People offered to sell their wares to the townspeople on the church square.

Nuremberg's *Christkindlesmarkt*, for example, tends to be viewed as one of the oldest and best-known Christmas markets of early modern times. The Christmas market is an expression of anticipation. Regardless of the drinking of mulled wine, the real celebration only comes afterwards, on Christmas day," says Wahle. He continues, "Something is always being anticipated, yet at the same time, it's made clear that what's being anticipated isn't quite there yet. Socially, on 25 December, Christmas is just about over for many people, whereas for the churches, it is only just beginning." According to Catholic ecclesiastical calendars, Christmastide only ends on the first Sunday after 6 January.

## Christmas tree needles fall softly

No matter how early some people put up their blue spruce or nordmann fir – the tree is and remains the most important part of Christmas celebrations in Germany. Nearly 30 million trees are sold in Germany each year. "The tree is the symbol of a German Christmas. You can't do without a tree," summarizes Wahle. "It is the embodiment

of a bourgeois family Christmas as it had developed in the 19th century," he says. Today the custom has gotten as far as Abu Dhabi and Australia – in foreign lands where the climate doesn't suit the tree at all, so it's strictly a decoration. Wahle was born in Sauerland. Even today, he still goes out with his parents and friends to cut down his Christmas tree in the family's own forest. "At my house it's decorated traditionally, with real candles,

apples and gingerbread, not with ornaments or tinsel," he says.

## Naive rituals, deliberate routines

In assigning meaning to the celebration, says Wahle, he distinguishes between the church, private individuals and society. The meal, whether it's carp or potato salad, or if there's meat or it's vegetarian, is an essential part of the holiday for him. He says it's not a matter of how these rituals and routines ever came to develop within

families; the main thing is that they are carried out. Does that guarantee an "ideal world" on Christmas Eve? "No," counters the theologian, "There are different behavior patterns." Most people simply take part in this ritual without thinking much about it. It's a certain type of naive ritual that is practiced. Then there are small groups who simply want to get away from it by going abroad, for example. And there's another small group, that consciously and completely immerses itself in the celebration, continues Wahle. Even people who are not religious celebrate the holiday, because it resonates with existential questions and considerations and it opens up some scope for sorrow. People think about someone who's died or are happy to see children's eyes glowing in excitement. "Christmas is a social and holy holiday, during which the topics of time and eternity play a role and those are religious concepts through and through, even if there isn't any praying or reading of the Christmas story according to the Book of Luke." These are, by the way, also indispensable components of Christmas, he says, as is whether a place is occupied or remains empty. "Everyone says and sings *Alle Jahre wieder* ("Year after Year"), but every year is a little bit different," says the scholar, calling it "collective contingency." And he warns that, "The four or five hours of the afternoon on Christmas Eve and into the early evening are the most intense of the entire year."

Gingerbread, apples and candles: Stephan Wahle decorates his Christmas tree in the traditional way.

PHOTOS: ARS ULRIKUSCH, BY-STUDIO, S.H.EXCLUSIV (BOTH OF FOTOLIA)



# Precious wood

Forest scientists research two forgotten members of the genus *Sorbus* – service and checker trees

By Eva Opitz

When tree branches are bare in autumn, the bright red berries on the rowan trees lining the lanes are particularly striking. The rowan's close relatives, service and checker trees, are less obvious. Also members of the botanical genus *Sorbus* and the Rosaceae family, the two trees are relatively unfamiliar and rare compared to the rowan. Dr. Patrick Pyttel and Jörg Kunz of the chair of forestry at the University of Freiburg want to change that. "We want to know more about how they grow, which locations are ideal for them and how foresters can distribute them in woods," says Kunz. Both forest scientists are convinced that their work will pay off. The service and checker trees produce popular wood, can cope with the stress of drought and their berries can be used, too, in certain foods for example.

Pyttel und Kunz are first trying to find out why the trees have become rare and unnoticed, even by foresters. The checker tree, for example, does best in open stands of oak forest. Yet they are also at risk there, because deer find them a welcome change in their menu and tend to nibble on them. What is more, in the past, oak forests were frequently replaced with coniferous

ones, so the checker's habitat was lost. The service tree also faces challenges. Its berries were once used to clarify ciders or make high quality schnapps, though both practices had already become less common in decades past. Checker tree berries were also once used to treat ailments of the large intestine. Says Pyttel, "All that can be made in the laboratory these days." Lack of knowledge on the part of modern day forest operators has contributed to many omissions in dealing with these trees. There, say the scientists, people "knew very

little about the species of *Sorbus* until a few years ago."

Planting checker and service trees only makes sense where suitable soils are present. Both species deal well with dry conditions. With respect to the consequences of climate change, this makes them possible candidates for inclusion when establishing mixed forests. "The checker tree even manages in places where it's too dry for beech," says Kunz. He adds that they need to know more about these species. They say that the checker and service trees have commercial potential, too. Their wood is very hard and as a result they could, for example, be used as a

sustainable substitute for high quality tropical woods. The scientists estimate that a table made of checker wood could easily fetch several thousand euros, meaning the price for a cubic meter of the fine wood exceeds that of spruce many times over.

The hard wood has always been used to make high quality furniture and musical instruments. Says Pyttel,

"If you hear  
b a g -  
pipes,  
then

there's a very high probability that they are made of *Sorbus* wood. We've got to get away from viewing these trees as curiosities in the forest," says Pyttel. He adds that instead, they should become an important part of the forest economy. He emphasizes, "This is the message that we're touring the world with as we present our work."

The two scientists are taking the results of their top-level, empirical research into forestry districts and the forests are benefitting from it. "People in the field have to know about the species in order to bring them on properly," says Kunz. He adds that knowledge based on simple observation is not enough. An empirical foundation resting on verified results is required. Kunz continues that success ultimately depends on making the correct recommendations for silviculture using many case studies done on different stocks of trees. Says the scientist, "Only then do generally valid statements become established. They are the prerequisite for taking the right measures. And through that, the trees get the attention that they deserve."



Green splendor – the checker tree (left) and the service tree are among rare species of trees – yet their wood is valuable and their berries can be used in foods, drinks and home remedies, for example.

PHOTOS: ZERBOR, JOACHIM OPELKA (BOTH OF FOTOLIA)

Eye of newt and  
toe of frog, wool of bat  
and tongue of dog

What lists tell us about  
people and their world –  
from ancient times to  
the modern day

By Yvonne Troll

Deep in their cavern, the three witches brew a charmed potion which they use to foretell the fate of the protagonist, William Shakespeare's Macbeth, who has already killed the king of Scotland and thus ascended the throne. The witches name the ingredients of the brew as a list, starting with eye of newt and toe of frog, wool of bat and tongue of dog. These magical ingredients make up one of the favorite literary lists of Dr. Eva von Contzen. "The list itself is magical, musical, almost songlike, capturing you in its thrall," she says. Her fascination for lists has led the English scholar from the University of Freiburg to develop a research project. Over the next five years, von Contzen and an interdisciplinary team will study lists in literature from ancient times to the

modern day as well as everyday lists. The project has received a starting grant of almost 1.3 million euros from the European Research Council. "My theory is that lists are exceptionally good at illustrating how people perceive and organize the world, what was important at a certain point in history, and what knowledge was available," says von Contzen.

In one of the first European written works, Homer's Iliad, written in the 8th Century BC, there is a famous list: the Catalogue of Ships. In this, Homer itemizes the ships, their masters, and the origins of the Greek heroes who went to war against Troy. In the epic texts of ancient history, catalogues were the typical form in which historic events were recorded. In the Middle Ages, however, scribes preferred to archive their knowledge encyclopedically. So lists give an indication of the prevailing literary tradition at a certain point in time. By showing how lists have changed over the centuries, von

Contzen aims to show how the presentation of knowledge has developed – and with that also the way in which people cognitively organize and process things.

Everyone wants to be at the top

"In this age of the internet in particular we are surrounded by lists. Today, we have such an excess of information that the list is often the only way of reducing and systematizing our complex world," says von Contzen. One example is the website BuzzFeed, which consists entirely of articles in list form. It offers "seventeen of the worst horror stories about male roommates" or "thirteen of the weirdest polling places in the US." This text form now even has its own name, the "listicle", a portmanteau word based on "list" and "article."

Rankings have another distinctive feature: they are not neutral. They

place a value and a hierarchy on things. In one episode of the Ameri-

can animation series South Park, "The List", schoolgirls create a hit parade of the cutest male pupils. "This drove the boys completely mad, because everyone wanted to be number one," says von Contzen. So lists can be a tool of power and control.

It is the same with lists in literature. "No other form has such power to make readers not read a text. Lists can be annoying, boring and drive you insane," says the researcher. They interrupt the flow of reading, don't generally explain things, and are usually a challenge to the reader. The author can use them to control the reading process and deliberately provoke the public. Over the course of the project the aim is to compile information on where in literature lists can be found, and to make this available to the public in an online database. Until then Eva von Contzen hopes to use her work to develop "Listology," the study of lists.



Eva von Contzen says that lists are an exceptionally good way of showing how people perceive and organize the world, and what was important at a certain point in history.

PHOTO: KLAUS POLKOWSKI



PHOTOS: MICHAEL POELCHAU ECORD/IODP

# Bohren nach Erkenntnissen

## Mining culture on the Upper Rhine

A new research partnership is receiving a total of more than 1.8 million euros for the next three years from the European program for cross-border projects, INTERREG V Oberrhein. It aims to examine the roots of industrial culture on the Upper Rhine. To be more precise, the researchers are investigating one of the earliest industries in central Europe, metal extraction along the Rhine rift valley from Basel to Mainz from the 13th Century. Among other things, a historic atlas of the metal-extracting industries will be written and an exhibition is planned. Eighteen universities and scientific establishments from Germany, France and Austria are taking part, as well as three partners from the trinational association, "EU-COR – The European Campus" of the Upper Rhine region with the Universities of Freiburg, Haute-Alsace and Strasbourg. At the University of Freiburg, Prof. Dr. Sebastian Brather from the Institute of Archaeological Sciences (IAW) is leading a team.

## Expedition to the crater of a meteorite strike that changed the world 66 million years ago

By Nicolas Scherger

Dr. Michael Poelchau gladly took on a month of enduring the swell of the sea and engine noise, sharing a cabin with five people, and doing shift work from midnight to noon every day. After all, as part of an international research team, the Freiburg-based geologist was taking part in a scientific adventure. The expedition led to a crater – the site of a meteorite strike 66 million years ago that changed the course of life on earth.

"Until now we've only had a rough idea of what happened back then," says Poelchau about the origin of the 180-kilometer Chicxulub crater in the Gulf of Mexico. What is known is that a 15-kilometer diameter rock slammed into the shallow ocean at a speed of 17 kilometers a second and created a

hole 30 kilometers deep. Heat and shockwaves destroyed life within a radius of several thousand kilometers. Poelchau describes the event: "The sudden release of energy is comparable to exploding an atomic bomb." A third of the rocky mass from the earth's crust was also flung up into the atmosphere. Fine dust darkened the skies around the world, the ecosystem collapsed and many species disappeared. The theory is that this event marked the end of the dinosaurs and enabled the rise of mammals.

### From central mountain to ring-shaped mountain range

But what exactly happened when the meteorite struck? Large strike craters are found at the heart of ring-shaped mountain ranges. When the collision first occurs, a mountain rises in the center of the crater. However this is unstable and rapidly collapses, causing the material to be forced to the edges of the crater and the ring-

shaped mountain range to arise. "You can see a similar phenomenon with a drop falling into water," says Poelchau. The exact forces at work are still unclear. "We haven't been able to simulate the process satisfactorily on the computer yet."

That is the reason for the search for clues in the Gulf of Mexico. A liftboat, a cross between a ship and a drilling rig, brought the team to directly above the ring-shaped mountain range. At the Chicxulub crater, the researchers for the first time took drill cores from depths ranging between 500 to 1,334 meters. This took them down to the upper strata of the ring-shaped mountain range. With the naked eye and geological expertise, Poelchau's job was to provide the initial description of the three meter long chunks that were brought up onto the liftboat, including identifying the rocks and determining the environment in the crater that segments came from. His work created the basis for later geochemical and geophysical investigations.

### 340 samples in Freiburg

Now, the core samples are at MARUM – the Center for Marine Environmental Sciences at the University of Bremen. Poelchau is studying about 340 samples together with Prof. Dr. Thomas Kenkmann at the University of Freiburg. It is time to do the detailed work: for instance, assess the shape and direction of the cracks in the rock that can show the strength and direction of the forces released when the meteorite struck. Researchers are us-

ing the data to gradually determine how the central ring-shaped mountain range was formed.

The team has reported their initial findings in the specialist journal *Science*. The scientists determined that within the space of a few minutes the asteroid first compressed down and then outwards rocky masses located ten kilometers below the earth's surface before they were again pushed back to the center of the crater and upwards. On the earth's surface they piled up into a central mountain and then collapsed into a ring-shaped mountain range. Another finding was that the rock making up this ring is more porous and less dense than expected. It offered microorganisms ecological niches in which they could develop and perhaps provides clues about how the first life forms appeared long, long ago, when the earth was beset by meteorite strikes much more frequently.



Michael Poelchau's job was the initial description of the drill cores. Using just the naked eye and his geological expertise, he had to identify the rocks and determine the segments' environment of origin within the crater.

## University and Employment Agency continue cooperation

They provide extensive advice and information materials on starting a career and the job market. The University of Freiburg and Freiburg Employment Agency are boosting their cooperation, with the aim of providing students and graduates with the best possible support for moving from studying into the employment market. In addition, the Employment Agency is continuing its engagement with the Dual Career *Netzwerk Oberrhein*, which supports the partners of professors and senior administration and technology executives with career ad-

vice. "The Employment Agency has been a close partner of the University of Freiburg for 15 years. We are very happy that we are going to continue this collective success story into the future," says Rector Prof. Dr. Hans-Jochen Schiewer, who signed the agreement together with Christian Ramm, Chairman of the Board of Freiburg Employment Agency.

[www.studium.uni-freiburg.de/service\\_und\\_beratungsstellen/karriere](http://www.studium.uni-freiburg.de/service_und_beratungsstellen/karriere)  
[www.chancengleichheit.uni-freiburg.de/dualcareer/dualcareernetzwerk](http://www.chancengleichheit.uni-freiburg.de/dualcareer/dualcareernetzwerk)

## Wins for two special research areas

The Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft has approved an application to extend a special research area (SFB) of the University of Freiburg and a new application for an SFB/Transregio (TRR) led by Freiburg for the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2020. SFB 1015 "Muße. Grenzen, Raumzeitlichkeit, Praktiken" (Leisure, Boundaries, Time & Space, Methods), is starting its second phase with funding of almost 6.5 million euros. Researchers from various disciplines are studying cultures of leisure systematically, historically and empiri-

cally. The University of Freiburg is receiving 4.5 million euros for the new launch of SFB/TRR "NeuroMac." The project is examining special white blood corpuscles in the central nervous system, which form the immune system of the human brain. Researchers hope this will help to create the basis to improve treatment of brain disorders such as Alzheimer's or stroke, as well as psychiatric disorders such as schizophrenia or depression.

## Second round for research training groups

The research training groups (GRK) "Faktales und fiktionales Erzählen" (Factual and Fictional Storytelling) and "Kohomologische Methoden in der Geometrie" (Cohomological Methods in Geometry) of the University of Freiburg have successfully applied to the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) for an extension. The DFG has already supported both institutions for a period of four-and-a-half years with a total of almost 8.2 million euros in funding. The "Faktales und fiktionales Erzählen" GRK is established in Humanities and Social Sciences and provides an opportunity for up to nineteen students to work on their doctorates. The "Kohomologische Methoden in der Geometrie" GRK, which is established in the Mathematics faculty, offers doctorates for up to 14 students.

[www.grk-erzaehlen.uni-freiburg.de](http://www.grk-erzaehlen.uni-freiburg.de)  
[www.gk1821.uni-freiburg.de](http://www.gk1821.uni-freiburg.de)

### Research on the crater

The expedition to the Chicxulub crater took place from April to May 2016. As part of the International Ocean Discovery Program (IODP) it was led by the European Consortium for Ocean Research Drilling (ECORD) and funded by the International Continental Scientific Drilling Program (ICDP). Costs totaled 10.5 million euros.

[www.ecord.org/expedition364](http://www.ecord.org/expedition364)



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# Everything is a Matter of Perspective

The Archaeological Collection holds an exhibition designed by students

by Stephanie Streif

Archaeologist Jens-Arne Dickmann had a plan when he took charge of the University of Freiburg's Archaeological Collection four years ago. The new curator's idea was that exhibition space in the basement of the Herderbau on Habsburgerstraße would not only serve as a collection for study and instruction but also function as a place for learning, or – to put it more precisely – as a workshop. Since then, the space between enormous plaster casts and display cases full of tiny original artifacts has hosted drawing courses, readings, scenic theater and concerts in addition to the usual lectures, workshops and examinations. And should a student suddenly get the urge to practice setting up a small exhibition in a corner of the collection, then that's allowed, too.

Yet at the moment, Dr. Dickmann is facing greater challenges. A genuine exhibition has been planned and is opening to the public on 24 January 2017. The show, *A Matter of Perspective – Ancient Sculpture Groups in Space* is the finale of a large-scale teaching project that Dickmann developed and for which he received an 85 thousand euro grant from the Essen-based Stiftung Mercator (Mercator Foundation). Students have been preparing for the exhibition for more than a year. The idea grew out of a one-semester writing workshop, explains the archaeologist. It was a seminar in which the students were to approach a single exhibit item by writing about it.



Dr. Jens-Arne Dickmann, Curator of the Archaeological Collection supports the students in shaping and organizing the event. PHOTO: PATRICK SEEGER

They were first to describe the object as vividly and in as much detail as possible. Then, the students had to write up scientific documentation, a catalog item, and an easily understandable information sheet for it. A semester later, the students took part in a seminar which gave them the required basic knowledge of Hellenistic sculpture groups. And because it is to be their exhibition, they are working on curating, organizing, creating, scripting, layout and photography for the event.

They might even have to spend an afternoon or two painting pedestals for the sculptures if need be.

#### Passion takes priority over European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) points

Dickmann describes his aspirations: "I want my students to already assume scientific responsibility during their education." Decisions are made – with a few exceptions – together and democratically, after extensive discussion

within the group. This is the second exhibition to be financed with funding from the grant. In the summer of 2015, *Of Drinking and Carousing – Radical Changes in Ancient Feasting* was the first exhibition to be held. Back then Dickmann had a team of seven students. This time, he's got twice as many. "The concept was very well-received at the Institute of Classical Archeology. The newer students were getting curious, in part because they could do a great deal by themselves, but the

amount of effort involved was nevertheless enormous," says Dickmann.

Assembling a 340-page catalog, in particular, took a great deal of the students' time during the first project. Dickmann says he's convinced that all the students are motivated by far more than the few ECTS points they get for taking part in his project. At the moment, the students are mulling over their texts for the catalog. If the words fail to convince, then the piece goes back for reworking. Texts can be rewritten three, four and, if necessary, five times. The curator says that the young people don't always handle this with ease. Yet they stick with it, he adds. "They want to learn and have shown themselves to be extremely reliable," he says.

The Mercator grant will end during the current semester. It's not yet clear if young archaeologists at Freiburg will have the chance to set up their very own. Hopes are that they will, because those who do things themselves learn best.

#### Opening in January

The special exhibition of the Archaeological Collection, *A Matter of Perspective – Ancient Sculpture Groups in Space* will be open to the public from 24 January until 2 July 2017. It is located in the Herderbau on Habsburgerstraße (entry between Nr. 114 and Nr. 116), 79106 Freiburg. The collection is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m., and on Sundays from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tours are available. Entry is free of charge.

> [www.archaeologische-sammlung.uni-freiburg.de](http://www.archaeologische-sammlung.uni-freiburg.de)

# "If you have fun at it, then you're good at it too"

A new teaching format simplifies career guidance for students

by Verena Adt

Siegfried Weis never expected to be asked about the subtle differences between fee and commission-based advisory services. In mid-November 2016 the independent financial adviser from Waldkirch was in Freiburg facing a group of students who had signed up for a new course. Weis was stunned at how well-prepared many of the participants were. "The level of detail of some questions was astonishing," said the 49-year-old appreciatively after he had talked about his daily work and answered questions for an hour-and-a-half.

The seminar "Mein Kompetenzprofil im Praxis-Check," or "My Skills Profile: a Practical Check," is offered as a joint course by the Center for Key Qualifications (ZfS) of the University of Freiburg and the Southern Upper Rhine Chamber of Commerce (IHK). The course gives students from all disciplines the opportunity to learn about various businesses through direct contact with company directors and the self-employed and at the same time test their own suitability for one industry or another.



Extrovert or shy? Happy with customer contact or prefer to work alone? The students take an in-depth aptitude test to find out their individual profiles. PHOTO: GESTOEBER/PHOTOLIA

"Many students are uncertain what field they want to work in later," says Verena Saller who is head of the ZfS. "So it was natural to offer something to help with personal career orienta-

tion." With the support of the IHK, the ZfS attracted eight companies, each of which planned a double session with the seminar participants. The spectrum ranges from a globally-ac-

tive auditing company, which employs 120 in Freiburg alone, through to a family-run traditional brewery with local roots.

The students have to prepare intensively for the encounters. They must create a corporate profile before each meeting and produce a number of key questions for the discussion. The speakers are without exception operational management and not just sent from the personnel department. This was important to the organizers. "We aren't aiming to gain future employees here, but to present the industry of the region as a whole," stresses the head of the IHK, Dr. Steffen Auer. "For the students it's about finding out: 'What am I suited to and what do I enjoy?' If it's fun for you, then you're good at it too."

#### Curved career paths

First of all, the participants have to assess where their interests, strengths and weaknesses lie. They also have to incorporate someone else's evaluation of them. Then they really get down to it with the vocational aptitude test of the IHK, which takes up a three-hour session. As a result, the students receive a comprehensive aptitude profile precisely depicting their abilities – from motivation and retentiveness to decisiveness and

planning skills. Their individual profile is then compared to the features of more than 300 different professions. Suitability for one job or another can be determined from the extent to which they correlate.

One of the participants, Dominik Mößner, was interested in discovering career opportunities and assessing his abilities better. He is enrolled in a bachelor's program with majors in Biology and Economics and doesn't yet know what direction he wants to take. He was glad to learn first hand that successful careers don't always take a straight path.

He gained this sudden insight from communication coach Lena Sarikaya, who gave up a management position in the pharmaceuticals industry a few years ago to work as a freelance coach. "Some people in the group were very surprised that I can live from my current job," relates Sarikaya. She thinks the new format is a good way of responding to the problem that many students have little insight into working life.

> [www.zfs.uni-freiburg.de](http://www.zfs.uni-freiburg.de)

# Health in the city

A new program of study – Global Urban Health – investigates ways to reduce health risks in cities

by Sarah Schwarzkopf

Air pollution, fast food and stress are just a few of the factors detrimental to urban dwellers' health. The more urbanization increases, the more contagious and chronic diseases, psychological ailments and violence, gain in significance. In the winter semester of 2016/17, the University of Freiburg's Faculty of Humanities began offering a Master's degree program Global Urban Health. The one-year course of study addresses the health challenges posed by urbanization. Its students learn to mitigate the risks and threats to health posed by living in modern cities.

The Center for Medicine and Society is organizing the English-language, interdisciplinary program. In the mornings, students examine theories that they then apply in practice in the afternoon. "There was a statistics course this morning," says Dr. Sonia Diaz-Monsalve, who coordinates the instructional offerings of the Global Urban Health program and is responsible for quality control as well. She continues, "After the lunch break, the students gather data at the cemetery. They can then analyze it and determine, for example, at what average age people died in different decades." Guest lecturers and field trips provide further insight into urban health in real life.

## Bringing knowledge back home

The prerequisites for admission are a university degree and at least two years of work experience. The tuition fee for the course is 12,000 euros. Graduates will have many employment options open to them, for example in development aid, medicine, policy-



New Delhi, India: Students learn how health risks – those caused by polluted air for example – can be reduced in metropolitan areas. PHOTO: KLAUS POLKOWSKI

making, city planning or education. "In future, with the Master's degree I will be able to work at an international level rather than just in a hospital," says student Francesca Tsai of Taiwan. "I would like to achieve that independent of its political situation, Taiwan can take part in World Health Organization events," she explains. Students from developing countries can take the knowledge they've gained back to their home countries as well.

Up to now, the program is the only one of its kind in the world. What's new about it is that it focuses specifically on health in cities with an emphasis on the developing world. "It is nevertheless important to us to examine problems from a global standpoint, because mosquitos don't recognize national borders," Diaz-Monsalve elaborates, referring to the challenges involved in controlling spread of contagious diseases. And in poor and affluent countries alike, chronic disease is becoming more evenly distributed as globalization progresses. Says Diaz-Monsalve, fast food, cigarettes and televisions are everywhere, so heart disease, cancer and diabetes are common everywhere as well. Students learn how to recognize problems and develop solutions

for them. "Freiburg is an optimal location for the program," says its coordinator. The university is located relatively close to United Nations organizations headquarters. Furthermore, there are many green areas nearby and the physical activity level of the population is comparatively high. In addition to theoretical knowledge and methods of empirical analysis, dealing with the media and policy-makers effectively is part of the course curriculum.

In the first year that the course has been offered, three hundred people from different professional fields applied for the 20 available course places. The first group comes from ten different countries – among those are Argentina, Bangladesh and Ethiopia –

and five continents. "The intercultural differences are a wonderful experience for all of us," says Diaz-Monsalve, because the students have first-hand experience with some of the problems being investigated. This can be helpful in terms of developing promising solutions. Says the course coordinator, "In certain regions, mosquito nets are not necessarily an effective means of preventing mosquito bites because their white color is associated with death and people don't like to sleep under them." She adds that this example shows how important it is to approach the problem to be addressed from different perspectives.

[www.zmg.uni-freiburg.de/training/mscglobalhealth/master](http://www.zmg.uni-freiburg.de/training/mscglobalhealth/master)

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## Open for questions

How digital provision of texts is changing

by Nicolas Scherger

New rules affecting the availability of texts that can be called up online on the ILIAS study platform came into effect on 1 January 2017. The university has set up a forum to answer students' and instructors' questions about this because the availability in particular of digital items on course reserve shelves will not be straight forward in future.

The affected texts are those that come under Paragraphs 52a of the German copyright law (UrhG). These are small parts of a single work – up to 12 percent or a maximum of 100 pages, short literary works and articles from magazines and newspapers. In-

structors were required to remove these works from ILIAS as of 31 December 2016 if the university library (UB) had not obtained a use license for them. From that point onwards, instructors may make these materials available in seminar libraries or at the UB in the form of a master copy.

### Download and save

The rectorate recommended that, by the end of 2016, students download and save all the materials available on ILIAS that are relevant for their continued studies. It advised that what students have saved on their personal computers could also be used for their studies into the future.

The amendments date back to a framework contract agreed in September 2016 between the Standing

Conference of the State Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany) (KMK) and an alliance of authors and publishers known as "Exploitation Company – Print" or VG Wort. Like many other institutions of higher education, the University of Freiburg will not become party to this contract. It provides that VG Wort will no longer charge a flat rate for all texts falling under Paragraphs 52a of the UrhG and that all instructors must register use of these texts individually. From the university's standpoint, this would require excessive administrative work. Instead, the university has committed itself to opening up new negotiations with VG Wort as soon as possible.

[www.pr.uni-freiburg.de/go/fragen-iliias](http://www.pr.uni-freiburg.de/go/fragen-iliias)

# Snow White, Sons and Heirs, and an Eight on the Intelligence Scale

How the game Therapy plays with social expectations and self and others' assessments

by Nicolas Scherger

Editorial staff members from the publication *uni'leben* and researchers at the University of Freiburg sat down for a round of Therapy in the German television series *Abgezockt* (Ripped-off). Their aim was to examine the board game from a – tongue-in-cheek, of course – scientific perspective.

## The game

Players use a miniature couch to make their way through infancy, childhood, adolescence and adulthood, and to consider their alter ego. As they go, the players collect pins representing fields of knowledge. The goal is to be the first to garner all six. To proceed, contestants must answer questions correctly or guess what people believe they see in inkblots. They also provide therapy for the other players. This involves determining how people perceive themselves and the influence they have on others. Game sessions can get spicy. Years-long friendships can be made or broken on the game board.

## The players

Prof. Dr. Markus Heinrichs, Dr. Bernadette von Dawans and Dr. Tobias Stächele of the Department of Biological and Differential Psychology and the Out-patient Psychotherapy Clinic for Stress-related Illnesses

Rimma Gerenstein, Public Relations, University of Freiburg

## Therapy sequence

Tobias Stächele draws a knowledge question, "Who visits their retired parents more often? Adult sons or adult daughters?" The psychologist gets it right. According to a 1986 study, women visit their parents an average of 62 times a year, whereas men manage only 47 visits. An amused



Tasks for individual and group therapy are found on the blue cards. During this part of the game, the questions are about how people perceive themselves and the influence they have on others. PHOTOS: PATRICK SEEGER

Markus Heinrichs says, "I wouldn't even get to 47 visits in twenty years. Comparative studies today would in part arrive at very different results." Yet other outcomes dating back some time remain valid. Rimma Gerenstein is to guess whom a father of twins prefers – the firstborn, or the smaller



Tasks for individual and group therapy are found on the blue cards. During this part of the game, the questions are about how people perceive themselves and the influence they have on others.

or weaker twin? "The son and heir – or stronger twin," she answers correctly. The experts explain that can be credited to both evolutionary biology and psychology. Bernadette von Dawans gets an easy question as well, "Whom is it easier to hypnotize? Men or women?" Women, clearly. "Men have more fear of relinquishing control," elucidates Heinrichs.

Stächele provides a bit of variety a few moves and knowledge questions later. He has to guess what most people see in a certain inkblot. The question alludes to the personality test named for the psychologist Hermann Rorschach, who developed it nearly a century ago. Heinrichs says, "Viewed from today's perspective, with regard to its diagnostic relevance it is 'utter nonsense, but entertaining.'" So does the image show two dancing women, two horses fighting or a bow-legged cowboy? "I actually see camels," says Stächele, and chooses

the cowboy. But only two percent of the test subjects saw that. Sixty percent said the blot depicted two dancing women. Says Heinrichs, "What a person recognizes depends on what dominates an individual's character. Medical students could interpret it as an anatomical diagram of the birth canal." Yet it remains a mystery how Stächele arrived at camels.

Finally, the highpoint of the game is reached. Gerenstein ends up in Stächele's office and must subject herself to therapy. The patient is asked: If she had to cast a film with the people with whom she is playing, what film would it be – "Snow White," "Gone with the Wind," "The Godfather" or "Sexy Schoolgirl Report Nr. 8"? "The answer given should actually be honest, but often people choose to give a socially desirable response," comments Heinrichs. Gerenstein writes down her answer on a slip of paper and Stächele must guess which

film she chose. "The Godfather," he answers, missing the mark. "I wanted that first, but then you influenced me," complains Gerenstein, looking over at Heinrichs. "Snow White," is what is on the paper. Says Gerenstein, "I thought that would be socially desirable because we're a friendly group."

A short time later, Heinrichs is faced with a similar problem. He ends up in group therapy and has to write down how intelligent he thinks he is on a scale of one to ten. The others have to agree on a number, but are allowed a margin for error of one point. Stächele sets limits, "He's written down something between five and ten, so we're interested in something from six to nine." Von Dawans takes on the challenge, "Eight or nine. He's certainly doesn't think that we'll put him at seven." "Or six," blurts the professor. The group agrees on eight and they are on target. "Of course," says Heinrichs, "I maintain that 98 percent of all people would choose eight."

## The analysis

After just over an hour, all the situations the game presents have been tested – but none of the contestants is anywhere near victory, so the group decides to leave the game undecided. Does having studied psychology help when playing the game? About twenty to thirty percent of the questions can be answered with the help of subject knowledge, but the experts say common sense can be applied to many of them. Heinrichs says the game can best be used in private life, rather than for teaching. He elaborates: With a group of new roommates, for example, who want to get to know each other. Or, he adds, for people who have long been friends. "It is interesting to see how one person influences the others – and during a game that lasts for several hours, you are getting feedback again and again," he says.

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## Campus statistics

Student numbers have again topped the 25 thousand mark. In the winter semester of 2016/17, 25,439 students matriculated. Of those, 4,339 have foreign nationality. During the winter semester last year, the University of Freiburg for the first time had more than 25 thousand students. Among them, more than four thousand were foreign nationals. Both records have been surpassed again this year. At the moment 13,499 of the students are women and 11,940 are men. 10,198 of those studying are seeking a Bachelor's degree. 5,199 students are in Master's programs and 5,732 want to complete their studies by taking a state exam. During the current winter semester, for 4,221 University of Freiburg students, it is the first time they have been enrolled at an institution of higher education.

## One gold, four silvers

The University of Freiburg's wine has won five medals at the Austrian Wine Challenge (awc) in Vienna. The competition is the largest recognized wine competition in the world. A gold medal was awarded to a dry, late vintage, 2014 Pinot Noir from the Lorettoberg. Two of the university's Pinot Blanc wines – vintages 2013 and 2015 respectively – each won a silver medal as did a 2015 and a 2012 Pinot Noir. The University of Freiburg first took part in the competition in 2012 and had the honor of taking home two gold and five silver medals for its wine. The endowment administration of the university manages the vineyards. At this year's awc Vienna, 1,900 producers from 41 countries entered nearly 13 thousand wines in the competition. The jury is composed of international oenologists, sommeliers, restaurateurs, wine merchants and



PHOTO: SANDRA MEYNDT

wine journalists. Because the competition is recognized by the EU, the university may use the medals on bottle labels when advertising the wines.

[www.zuv.uni-freiburg.de/service/wein](http://www.zuv.uni-freiburg.de/service/wein)

## Clean-up the environment and donate

By a decision of the rectorate, proceeds from the University of Freiburg's project to recycle ink and toner cartridges will be donated to charity. Two thousand euros have been collected by the project in the last four years. The Sustainable University Work Group is now donating this sum to the Förderverein für krebserkrankte Kinder e. V. in Freiburg. According to its statutes, the organization aids children who have cancer and their families by providing psychological and social support and aftercare. It also supports the Center for Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine at the Freiburg University Medical Center. "We think that this association carries out exemplary and outstanding work in Freiburg," says Dr. Jürgen Steck, who leads the Sustainable University Work Group.

[www.nachhaltige.uni-freiburg.de/projekte/toner\\_kartuschen](http://www.nachhaltige.uni-freiburg.de/projekte/toner_kartuschen)



# Launching a New Life

Refugees Nabil Sifo and Danial Danha are studying at the University of Freiburg this winter semester

by Petra Völzing

The semester is starting. Everyone is milling around outside the University of Freiburg's library. Danial Danha and Nabil Sifo are sitting in a café happily watching all the hustle and bustle. Both have had hard times in the past. Sifo comes from the town of Salamiyah in Syria. He came to Germany via Greece in the summer of 2015 – one of many in the massive stream of refugees. The 30-year-old had already left Syria in 2013. "I had finished my military service in Syria, but they did not want to let me go because of the war," he explains. While he was on leave, he packed a few things and fled to Jordan. "According to Syria I am a deserter," he says glumly. He would face the death penalty were he to return. The decision to go was difficult to make, because he was leaving his mother and three siblings back home. "Killing another person was unimaginable for me, and certainly not for a dictator like Bashar al-Assad," he says. Before he joined the military, Sifo studied geology in Damascus. Now he is starting a Master's program at the University of Freiburg in the same subject.

The men converse steadily in German. Both have taken a language course for refugees that the university has offered since April 2016. "Of course it would be more relaxed if we were speaking to each other in Arabic," says Danha. Both say it is extremely important to learn to speak German well as quickly as possible. They use every opportunity they get to practice. "There are some topics where I still can't find the German words. For example, when I'm talking about a pretty woman," says Danha with a laugh. He has been in Germany since the start of 2015 and has already passed the German Language Test for International Students at German Institutions of Higher Education – meaning he has attained a C1 level and meets



Landing on both feet: Nabil Sifo (left) and Danial Danha really like Freiburg – best of all, the helpfulness of the city and its residents. PHOTO: THOMAS KUNZ

the requirements to begin study. The 22-year-old has been studying medicine since the start of the 2016/17 winter semester. Sifo, on the other hand, does not require Level C1, because teaching is in English in his course of study. "Naturally, that's easier," he says and smiles. Nevertheless, he is still working diligently at learning German.

#### Reaching the required level

This semester a total of nine refugees began courses of study at the University of Freiburg. That is not a large number. Yet students from the affected countries on regular student visas who are not seeking asylum are not included in this figure. "Learning the German language is the biggest hurdle," says Dr. Christina Schoch, the Director of the Student Service Center. Conventional integration courses only take

learners as far as Level B1, which is insufficient for university studies. "There are few affordable opportunities to reach Level C1," says Schoch. Forty refugees can take part in the university's German course. Eighty applied for it. Normally it takes six months to progress from B1 to C1 explains Schoch. She adds, however, that experience shows the refugees need more time. Compared to other students from abroad, they are less prepared and often have to work on the side as well. What is more, they are worried about the right to remain in the country.

Danha was an exception. "Right after I arrived in Germany I bought myself a German book and started on my own," he explains. The Aramean comes from the town of Irbil in the Kurdish region of northern Iraq. In recent years his family's life was made increasingly difficult on account of their

Christian faith. When their house was taken from them, they saw no future in Iraq anymore. Danha does not like to say how they came to be in Germany, only that: "It was difficult and complicated." Before he left, he had started studying medicine in Irbil. Attacks were carried out twice in front of the university building. "I was never certain if I would get back home safely," he says. Now he lives with his parents and two sisters in an apartment in Umkirch. His father has found a job as an engineer. His two sisters attend secondary school.

#### Saying thanks and giving back in return

Both students are happy in Freiburg. "The university's caliber and equipment are far better here than in Irbil," says Danha, who can foresee becoming a cardiologist. Nabil feels comfortable,

too. But he says the need to work on the side makes his studies more difficult. "I need the money, above all to pay rent." He lives with three German students in a shared apartment. Another bitter pill for him is that he had successfully applied for a DAAD scholarship in Jordan. But because he did not have a valid passport, the German embassy refused to issue him a visa and the scholarship offer expired. He applied again in Freiburg, but in vain. "That was a real shame, because then I would have more time to study," he adds. All-in-all, however, he has no regrets.

Neither of them has experienced any discrimination yet. "If anything, I experience positive discrimination," notes a grinning Sifo. He says he is continuing to receive support precisely because he is a refugee. "The social worker at the refugee hostel in Emmendingen helped me a great deal," he recounts. It was she who established contact with the university. But he says the professors support him, too. Danha also has positive reports. "I have at least 30 friends – and all my fellow students are ready to help," he says with enthusiasm. Then the two men become reflective again. "It is really important to us that we are able to say a huge 'thank you,'" they agree. "My town would not have done as much for us as Freiburg has," Danha elucidates. Both say they want to do something in return for society. As a doctor, Danha will help people. And from the start, Sifo has been volunteering as an interpreter at refugee hostels. He says he will continue his social commitments event after he completes his studies.

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## uni'que

**Stationery, bibs, rubber ducks: The University of Freiburg's uni'shop supplies a wide range of goods not just for everyday life on campus but also for every other kind of situation. In this series, uni'life presents a few of its products and there is a prize draw for coupons.**

### Sunshine in the rain

by Martin Jost

Umbrellas are used to having a hard time of it. Usually we treat them badly. We blame them if we don't have them with us, and then if we do, we still complain about them. They're too bulky, too fragile and too small when bad weather whips up. But then, if it's dry, an umbrella is never small enough for us. It takes up valuable space in the bag and is so heavy that it alone is guilty for our bad posture.

In the end, we carry the broolly day in, day out, without ever needing it. And then it doesn't rain for weeks. Until the day comes when we finally take it out of the bag and leave it at home. An umbrella never pleases us, but that probably isn't its fault. It comes into

use when the quality of the weather deteriorates. And so it becomes a victim of the tendency to "kill the messenger." We blame the messenger

for the bad news they bring – for instance, sleet. The first example of an umbrella that could be folded dates back to 21 BC. There haven't been

many changes in umbrella technology in the two thousand years since. More modern materials are used, of course, but brollies still flail around when there's a gust of wind. And whilst their rainproof coating is effective, rain still finds a way to soak into trouser legs and down collars. But nothing can beat the greatest challenge we have with an umbrella – how not to lose it or forget it.

The pocket broolly in the University of Freiburg's design from the uni'shop does what it can though. At barely 350 grams it is lighter than most textbooks. It can open, close, and is water-repellent, so as an umbrella it's pretty much state-of-the-art. But the best thing about it is its brilliant blue color. It's always a good thing to brighten things up when you go out in dull weather.

And the broolly also quotes Elly Heuss-Knapp. When she started studying at



Come rain or shine: the broolly has a quotation from Elly Heuss-Knapp, alumna of the University of Freiburg. PHOTO: THOMAS KUNZ

the University of Freiburg, the wife of the former German president Theodor Heuss said, "I stand in sun and feel myself growing wings." This broolly comes with sunshine included. And so that we Freiburgers can show our sunny side when we are abroad too, the quote is printed in English.

#### Competition

Win one of two 25 euro coupons for the uni'shop. Send an e-mail to [unileben@pr.uni-freiburg.de](mailto:unileben@pr.uni-freiburg.de) before 20th January 2017.

The coupon winners will be drawn from all the entries received.

[www.shop.uni-freiburg.de](http://www.shop.uni-freiburg.de)

# Etiquette Primer for Social Media

A new netiquette and updated guidelines provide orientation for everyone using the internet in the name the university

by Yvonne Troll

Whether it is Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or the rest, the University of Freiburg is active on all major social media channels. The offering on the world's largest social media network, Facebook, is directed at the broadest audience. It provides prospective students, students, faculty, colleagues and journalists a package of comprehensive information about the university. Twitter, by contrast, uses a two-track system. A media account provides journalists with news, while a second channel is dedicated to supplying a wider audience with more general information and reports on the latest happenings. A new Youtube presence is in the process of being launched. The platform provides impressions of the university, including videos of research and teaching as well as tips and information for students. Instagram promises a look behind the scenes at the university. The Social Media Coordinator at Freiburg, Dr. Max Orlich, calls it the "feel good media." He and his colleague, Melanie Hübner, handle everything that has to do with any type of social media. As Public Relations Department staff, they coordinate

and supervise all the university's digital activities.

The business networks XING and LinkedIn are currently being expanded. "There we are in contact with employers, donors and sponsors, and maintain a network of former students," reports Hübner. The duo are getting plenty of response. Says Orlich, "You can tell by the comments and likes that the alumnae and alumni continue to be interested in what is going on at their alma mater."

## Friendly and respectful

The pair says comments, news, discussions and posts are welcome on all channels. Nevertheless Orlich and Hübner emphasize that there are certain rules to follow. Netiquette – a type of collection of behavioral rules for social media users – offers guidance. "You should adhere to certain communication rules when dealing directly with people. The same goes for the internet. But there, many people still find it difficult to have their say reasonably and politely," notes Orlich. He says that depending on the topic, the potential for aggression can rise rapidly and may lead to insults, threats and insinuations. The university disciplines those who make xenophobic, sexist, party-political or religious remarks. Beyond that, users must en-



Good manners are always in style: Netiquette provides tips for Facebook etc.

ILLUSTRATION: SVENJA KIRSCH

sure that they respect copyrights and the privacy of others and do not post advertisements. People who fail to comply with these guidelines can be warned – or in extreme cases – be reported to Facebook, banned or reported to the police. The University of Freiburg is legally responsible for content on social media channels and websites that appear on the internet in its name.

Even staff members who are using social media for university institutions are being given a helping hand. Orlich and Hübner have updated and expand-

ed already existing guidelines. New, for example, is the tip that legal information is obligatory, as is eliminating the "like" or "share" buttons of social networks on external websites because these transfer user data without authorization. Staff members have the opportunity to use a forum on the university's intranet to share their experiences. The team furthermore offers social media courses for beginners and advanced users through the university's internal further and continuing education programs. Orlich and Hübner say they are also available for direct contact at all times.

## Netiquette schooling

**Netiquette and Guidelines**  
www.pr.uni-freiburg.de/publikationen/soziale-medien

**Introduction to Corporate Design**  
www.zuv.uni-freiburg.de/service/cd/cd-manual/socialmedia

**Contact**  
socialmedia@pr.uni-freiburg.de

# Working out at work

Students and office workers often spend hours sitting motionless with their eyes fixed on their computer screens. As deadlines and examinations approach, the time for relaxation shrinks to nil. It's no wonder, then, that back pain, stiff necks, headaches or simply a general sense of being unwell caused by sluggish circulation, can set in over time. Finding relief for these aches and pains isn't difficult. The staff of the Fitness & Health Center (FGZ) of the University of Freiburg has presented a series of exercises that can easily be done at your desk at any time.

## Take a load off your back – stretch your hip flexor

By Petra Völzing

Most people are likely barely aware of the existence of their hip flexors. Yet the muscles have a key function. They link the upper thigh with the pelvis and the lower section of the spinal column. The hip flexors provide stability for the torso and transfer force from the legs to the lower spine. Sitting bent at the hip for long periods of time keeps the muscles in a shortened position. This can lead to the lower back pain of which many people complain. Using a simple exercise to stretch the hip flexors periodically can help to avoid this discomfort. Sit up straight and on the edge of your chair. Put your left leg out and bent to a 90-degree angle. Place your right leg under the chair or to the side of it. Rest it gently on your upper instep and extend the leg as far behind you as you can. This stretches the hip flexors and the muscles at the



Caption: Using the chair as a support Valentin Stark demonstrates a hip flexor stretch.

PHOTO: KLAUS POLKOWSKI

front of the thigh. Putting the pelvis in an upright position and straightening the back intensify the stretch. Hold the position for twenty to thirty seconds, then repeat the exercise on the other side. Repeat the stretch two or three times on each side. People who want a more intense exercise can do it without the support of a chair, but remember that more strength and balance are required for this.

## Move it!

Anyone who wants to get moving is welcome to come and explore the range of activities and advice the FGZ offers, or they can book an office visit from PausenExpress to be put through their paces on the spot.

> [www.fgz.uni-freiburg.de](http://www.fgz.uni-freiburg.de)  
[www.gesunde.uni-freiburg.de/angebote/projekte/pausenexpress](http://www.gesunde.uni-freiburg.de/angebote/projekte/pausenexpress)

# Individual standard

The Web-to-Print service can create visiting cards, flyers, posters or calendars in the university corporate design to suit your needs

by Rimma Gerenstein

Aristoteles draped with snow over his shoulders, a wall of bright green lockers that store secrets in Collegiate Building III, vibrant yellow daffodils on the Mensa cafeteria lawn – the university calendar makes 2017 look appealing. And if you don't like one picture or another, you can choose a picture of your own – or simply create an entirely new calendar.

That doesn't work for you? Then make your very own from scratch! You could say that's the slogan of the Web-to-Print platform. It enables every member of staff of the University of Freiburg to design and order print materials directly from the University Printing Office and then have them sent by internal mail to their workplace. Items that can be produced include posters, flyers, visiting cards and invitations, folders, calendars or certificates.

The key feature of Web-to-Print is that it only stocks templates that are designed in accordance with the corporate design (CD) rules of the university. "The advantage is that you don't have to rummage through a manual when you are creating a flyer about an institute, for example," says Marcel Oettrich from Knowledge Management, who oversees the service. "You don't have to spend ages thinking whether the university logo should now go at the bottom left or right or how big it should be. The program sorts all that out for you."

**A saved document can always be reworked**

The platform came into existence all of eight years ago, when the university introduced its corporate design. "Our goal was to provide staff with guidelines for use of the CD, but at the same time show them that corporate design absolutely doesn't have to mean that everything looks the same," remarks Oettrich. The platform is popular. About 5,000 orders are sent to the program each year. Besides the simplicity of the in-house process, it

also pays off financially, as print jobs are only charged at equipment and materials costs.

Web-to-Print has gradually expanded its offering, and from the start of 2017 there will be another new service:



Brightening the office: The calendar makes the new year look appealing – and can also be decorated with personal photos. PHOTOS: UNIVERSITY OF FREIBURG

edly access old projects, which remain stored as templates and can be reordered or adapted at any time.

If at some stage the layout no longer meets requirements, Oettrich is there to help find an individual solution.

"Sometimes the space available is too small, for instance on visiting cards. If someone has a long name we can adjust the layout appropriately." About those visiting cards: The first person to send in an order for visiting cards to Web-to-Print after this edition of uni'life comes out – i.e. after 8 December 2016 – will receive a gift of a keyring. In the CD, of course. But there is still room for individuality. The color is up to you.

serial documents. Now, to print personalized invitations or certificates you just have to upload an Excel file with the names and the program does the rest. Oettrich says that it's especially practical because every employee can repeat-

[www.webtoprint.uni-freiburg.de](http://www.webtoprint.uni-freiburg.de)  
Kontakt: [webtoprint@zv.uni-freiburg.de](mailto:webtoprint@zv.uni-freiburg.de)

# Unwanted advice

The *Glücksatlas* isn't intended as a guide to happiness – but there's still a lot to learn from the study

by Martin Jost

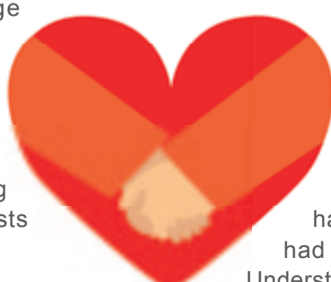
We humans strive to be happy. Maybe being happy or at least the drive to be happier is the meaning of life. So it's a pity that we know so little about what makes us happy in the long term. Published by *Deutsche Post*, the 2016 *Glücksatlas*, or *Atlas of Happiness*, is the sixth edition already looking into the happiness of the German people and their satisfaction with their standard of living. Its main authors are Bernd Raffelhüschen, professor of public finance and director of the Intergenerational Contract Research Center at the University of Freiburg, and Reinhard Schlinkert, founder and CEO of the Institute for Market and Political Research – dimap, in Bonn.

The authors of the *Glücksatlas* stress that it is not suitable as a guide to a happy life. Presumably this is a disclaimer of liability, so it shouldn't stop us from taking the study at face value. We want to learn from the happiest Germans: What are they doing right? What does us good? And what can put a damper on our happiness? Below are a few well-meaning pieces of advice which you should take with a pinch of salt.



**Move to Schleswig-Holstein.** With 7.41 satisfaction points from a possible 10, the people of the federal state of Schleswig-Holstein are the happiest. The average for the Federal Republic as a whole is currently 7.11. However, if you prefer to live in the south-west either as a matter of habit or on principle, it's far from the worst anyway. **But then please choose Baden.** Of the 19 regions surveyed, Baden came fourth in the satisfaction rankings – 0.06 points and five places ahead of Württemberg.

Good friends and pleasant colleagues are important, but the happiest people also have a **permanent partner**. Married people are meanwhile still 0.1 points happier than people who are living together without a marriage certificate. Find a religion and practice it, that makes everything better. Catholics rate their marriages as far and away the most satisfying. On the other hand getting married hardly makes atheists any happier.



**Find a secure job.** Losing a job is no good for anyone. On the other hand, this isn't so much because of the loss of income but because of the loss of social contacts. In other words, you can't do without other people.



Otherwise, as far as family planning goes, you only move into the top league of happiness when you have children. The first child contributes the most to the balance, but each additional child does increase satisfaction with life at least a little. However, **three or more children are required** to offset the negatives of living in the former East Germany. Unfortunately, living in the former GDR will bring you down a lot, with Mecklenburg-Vorpommern being the absolute nadir.



The most satisfied people on average are those who **have found a new partner after the death of their first**. They are almost 0.3 points more satisfied than those who are married for the first time. The first marriage doesn't achieve this. Perhaps this is because you only really know what you had with your significant other once you've lost them. Understandably, contentment drops by a whole point immediately after being bereaved. But one year later it is back where it was before the loss.

But if you are honest with yourself, you already know what else does you good: not watching too much television, playing more sport, voluntary work and donating to a good cause. But don't give blood if you are paid for it. This doesn't affect your satisfaction levels. The bad news, however, we've kept until last. More than half of your tendency to be happy is determined genetically – so we hope your parents have passed on a good basic level of satisfaction.

As a child, Sarah Adler already found skeletons, graves and all sorts of creepy stories exciting. In her book, she expresses her fascination in a humorous way.

PHOTO: KLAUS POLKOWSKI

## When death has doubts about life

### Student Sarah Adler publishes her first novel *Knochenjob*

by Sarah Schwarzkopf

Nobody likes him. So he decides to finally do something to change that. In her debut novel published in October 2016, Sarah Adler tells a story of death and his efforts to improve his image. The 22-year-old from Köndrin-

gen is in her fourth semester at the University of Freiburg. She is studying archeology and English language and literature. Writing has always been Adler's passion. Now that's paid off. Her novel sold out two weeks after it was released.

Says the author, "Death finds it unfair that no one can stand him and that everyone clings to life. So he tries to

find friends by using several methods which unfortunately all go horribly wrong in some way." His annoying colleagues life and fate keep throwing a wrench into his work. The three follow animals and humans through evolution, starting with the first cell. Death has to adapt to things too, because different forms of life die in different ways. He asks himself if he is really as bad as everyone thinks he is.

Adler goes beyond western mythology in her depiction of death. She includes other concepts as well. The young author says the cross-cultural thought she's experienced in her studies helped her do this. Adler continues that it is no coincidence that she is studying archeology and has tackled the topic of death in her first novel. "I always found everything that has to do with dead people fascinating – with skeletons and gruesome things," says the young author and laughs. There is an Alemannian burial ground in Köndringen. Says Adler, "As a child I often walked by the old bones that were sticking up out of the clay. I would imagine how long ago that was and how cool it would be to dig them out myself."

#### Ten pages a day

*Knochenjob* is the first story that Adler has written through to the end. Despite the complex plot – which features many strands and jumps around in time – Adler wrote the book in just two months. It all started in the summer of 2015, when she played the part of death in a theater piece and at the same time was preparing for her first aid course in her skeleton costume. "At one moment, I was studying cardiopulmonary resuscitation and in the next I had to go out on stage and do someone in. The idea came to me at some point during that time," recalls Adler. From the start it was clear that the book would be funny. Says Adler, "I love plays on words and humor suits me best. Besides, I wanted to do something new. That's difficult when death is the topic."

Adler says literature inspires her. "I enjoy reading just about anything. I like modern universes with a touch of fantasy – everything that's a little bit quirky, where ideas are turned on their head and reinterpreted," she explains. Among her favorite authors are Walter Moers, Jonathan Stroud and a few British writers with whom Adler shares dry humor. "You only learn how stories work by reading a lot," she says. The thing Adler likes best about writing is that it's a quiet and relaxing pastime.

Adler works translating English into German in addition to her studies. Later, she says she would like to pursue a Master's degree or perhaps work for a publisher, but she favors above all earning her living as an author and translator. "I've got a great many ideas that I'd still like to implement," she says, adding that it's a good reason to keep writing ten pages a day. Adler says that's not difficult at times when she has good ideas. "Then, it's like I'm possessed," she elaborates.

The reception her first work received has been wholly positive up to now. "I'm curious to see the first bad review. I want to know what exactly it is they'll take issue with." She's already has a contract for her second novel. It takes place three thousand years in the future in a parallel universe. And it's not as if Adler is resting on her laurels. At the moment, she's working on her third book, which is directed at an audience of young readers.

## With rope, cable and fire extinguisher

### Benjamin Schätzle coaches the German youth national tug-of-war team, he also inspects electrical equipment and provides fire safety at the university

by Jürgen Schickinger

Benjamin Schätzle likes taking back steps – but only during a tug-of-war. As the coach of the German national youth tug-of-war team, he encourages it. To win an event, a team has to pull their opponents four meters in their direction, meaning that backwards in tug-of-war means going forward to success. Recently, Schätzle's team won second place in the world championships. At the Safety Office of the University of Freiburg, he is responsible for the organization of the fire safety program and inspection of electrical equipment. There, just as elsewhere, the man from Elztal prefers going forwards to backwards, even if barriers need to be overcome in the process.

"You should never give up, even when it looks as if you're on the brink of defeat," says Schätzle. He says sports have taught him this lesson, but it's applicable everywhere. Schätzle used to be a member of the Waldkirch Volunteer Fire Department and was an active tug-of-war team member in the Simonswald Tug-of-War Club. But back problems put an end to both of those hobbies, so he continued to pursue his interests in another way. At the Simonswald Tug-of-War Club he took on the job of youth coach. Later, he became the club's coach and recently was promoted to coach the youth national team. "I stumbled into it," says Schätzle. But he didn't miss a step. At the start of September 2016, in his first year of coaching, he and his team won second place at the world champion-



Keeping fire under control: Benjamin Schätzle gives seminars on fire safety basics. PHOTO: KLAUS POLKOWSKI

ship in Malmö, Sweden. "That was a surprise," says a pleased Schätzle.

The 34-year-old can't stay away from fire, either. "Firefighting was always my hobby," he says. After he stopped working as an active fireman, Schätzle began providing early fire safety education courses in kindergartens and schools. He started work at the university in 2005, first in Facilities Services. Then, in 2015 he qualified as a fire safety officer. A short time later, Schätzle began working in the Safety

Office, where he and head fire safety officer Roland Birmele form the fire safety team. Batteries ignite now and then at one or the other of the technical institutes, says Schätzle. "We haven't had any major fires in my time here," he adds. Nevertheless, reports Schätzle, there's plenty to do – for example, organizing emergency drills, holding fire safety seminars or drawing up safe seating plans for events. The priority for events is ensuring that fire exits and firefighters' access routes remain clear. Space is at a premium in

many places on campus. Occasionally, tables, cabinets or machines stand in the halls. "Most of the time that's not allowed for safety reasons," says Schätzle.

A qualified electrician, Schätzle's second area of responsibility is inspecting electrical equipment. He can look at anything from small, mobile devices to table lamps, electric kettles and table centrifuges to ensure they are safe. He says that if you take a close look at many items, you will find

plenty of worn cables, exposed contacts or bare wires. There can also be cracks in housings or other types of damage, he adds. "At the moment we're working on structural improvements to ensure that all electrical devices are inventoried and tested regularly," says Schätzle. This means that soon every institute will have its own officer for testing electrical facilities. The Safety Office will make the necessary testing devices available. It also offers training courses on how to use them. The course only takes an-hour-and-a-half because the measurements are almost fully automated.

#### South Baden home to most of Germany's tug-of-warriors

Fire safety regulations have become stricter. "Fortunately, the university cooperates very well," praises Schätzle. It would be good, he says, if staff members would simply reflect now and then about what to do in an emergency. Where is my exit? Are there any barriers that I would have to help a disabled person over? In tug-of-wars, competitions are when things get serious. But Schätzle says there are few risks, "It's true. It's a strength sport, but there are very few injuries." The national youth team coach speaks enthusiastically about the atmosphere at practice sessions and competitions – of team spirit, power, technique and synchronicity. "It's a really great sport!" he says. With one exception, all the clubs in Germany's national league come from South Baden. "There are plenty of really high level competitions where we are. I recommend to everyone that they should come by and watch one," he says.

## Achievements

The University of Freiburg has awarded Prof. Dr. **Alain Beretz** its University Medal. As the President of the University of Strasbourg, France, he received the award at his farewell party – on 16 September 2016 Beretz became Director General for Innovation and Research at the French Ministry of Education. The University of Freiburg gave him the award in honor of his extraordinary contributions to the establishment of the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EVTZ), "Eucor – The European Campus," and his significant work on the project of a European university for the Upper Rhine.

For the discovery of an inhibitor for the enzyme Sirtuin 2 (Sirt2), the working group headed by Prof. Dr. **Manfred Jung** from the Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences at the University of Freiburg received the PHOENIX Pharmaceutical Sciences Award together with an endowment of 10,000 euros. Sirtuins are associated with a range of age-related diseases such as cancer, diabetes and Alzheimer's. In future, it may be possible to use this inhibitor to counteract the occurrence of these diseases or find new therapeutic approaches. The pharmaceuticals trader, PHOENIX Group, awards the prize each year for outstanding performance in basic pharmaceutical research.

Forest scientist Prof. Dr. **Christian Messier** of the University of Quebec, Montreal, Canada, has received a Humboldt Research Award. The Alexander von Humboldt Foundation's distinction honors scientists for career

achievements that have made a substantial impact on their areas of expertise. Award winners are invited to realize research projects at an institution of their choice in Germany. Messier intends to continue to develop concepts at the University of Freiburg for the management of forests as complex, adaptive systems. Among other things, these approaches are designed to improve the capacity of forests to adapt to climate change. His host is Prof. Dr. **Jürgen Bauhus** from the Institute of Forest Sciences.

The German government has called on Prof. Dr. **Ulrich Schraml** to contribute his professional knowledge to the implementation of its national sustainability strategy for the next three years. Chancellor Angela Merkel has appointed the Freiburg-based researcher to the Council for Sustainable Development. At the University of Freiburg, Schraml deputizes for the Professor of Forestry and Environmental Policy and heads the Woodlands and Society department at the Baden-Württemberg Forest Testing and Research Institute. The role of the council is to develop concrete options for action and projects for sustainable development and to raise public awareness of the issue.

Prof. Dr. **Andreas Urs Sommer**, who teaches in the department of philosophy at the University of Freiburg and heads the "Nietzsche-Kommentar" Research Unit of the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences, has been awarded the *Geisteswissenschaften International* special prize for his book *Werte. Warum man sie braucht, obwohl es sie*

*nicht gibt*. The *Börsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandels*, the Fritz Thyssen Foundation, VG WORT and the German Foreign Ministry present the honor twice a year for outstanding works in the humanities and social sciences, and finance their translation into English.

The *Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft Freiburg* is honoring the Freiburg-based chemist Dr. **Michael Sommer** for his scientific work in the field of macromolecular chemistry with the Helmut Holzer Research Prize 2016, which includes an endowment of 10,000 euros. Sommer's area of research is the synthesis of innovative organic polymers, known as functional materials, which are capable of sustainably storing and converting energy. Potential areas of application include organic solar cells.

The Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece, has made Prof. Dr. **Bernhard Zimmermann** of the Department of Greek and Latin Philology at the University of Freiburg an honorary doctor. The degree is in recognition of Zimmermann's accomplishments with regard to Greek culture, in particular Greek literature from ancient history to the present, and his contribution to academic cooperation between Germany and Greece. Zimmermann's research focuses mainly on Greek literature of the pre-classical and classical period and the reception of ancient culture in the modern era.

## Appointments

### Faculty of Law

The rector has named an attorney at the Freiburg legal practice of Sparwasser & Heilshorn and lecturer at the University of Freiburg since 2002, Dr. **Torsten Heilshorn**, an adjunct professor.

Effective from 1 October 2016, the rector has named lecturer Dr. **Jan Felix Hoffmann** of the University of Heidelberg, a professor of Civil Law and Civil Procedure Law at the Institute of German and Foreign Civil Procedure Law.

### Faculty of Economics and Behavioral Sciences

Effective from 1 November 2016, the vice president has appointed Dr. **Bastian Schiller** of the Institute of Psychology to be a lecturer for a three-year term.

Effective from 1 October 2016, the rector has named junior professor Dr. **Tamar Voss** of the University of Tübingen a junior professor of Empirical School and Instructional Development at the Department of Educational Science.

### Faculty of Humanities

Prof. Dr. **Gregor Dobler** of the Department of Ethnology has declined the appointments offered him by the University of Fribourg, Switzerland, and the University of Bayreuth.

Effective from 1 October 2016, the rector has named lecturer Dr. **Tim Epkenhans** of the Oriental Seminar a professor of Islamic Studies, focusing on Central Asia, at the same institute.

Effective from 1 November 2016, the rector has appointed Dr. **Valerie Schoenberg** of the Institute of Archaeological Sciences (IAW) to be a lecturer for a three year period.

### Faculty of Mathematics and Physics

Effective from 27 October 2016, the rector has appointed Prof. Dr. **Angelika Rohde** of the Ruhr University Bochum, professor of Mathematical Stochastics at the Institute of Mathematics.

Effective from 31 October 2016, the rector has appointed Prof. Dr. **Giuseppe Sansone** of the Polytechnic University of Milan, Italy, professor of Experimental Physics at the Institute of Physics.

Effective from 31 October 2016, the rector has appointed Prof. Dr. **Marc Schumann** of the University of Bern, Switzerland, professor of Experimental Physics, with an emphasis on astroparticle physics, at the Institute of Physics.

### Faculty of Chemistry and Pharmacy

The rector has named the chairman of Roche Pharma AG Germany and CEO of Roche Deutschland Holding, Dr. **Hagen Pfundner**, an adjunct professor.

Effective from 1 November 2016, the rector has appointed Dr. **Andreas Walther** of the DWI – Leibniz Institute for Interactive Materials a professor of Functional Polymers at the Institute of Macromolecular Chemistry.

### Faculty of Biology

Effective from 1 October 2016, the rector has appointed Prof. Dr. **Thomas Ott** of the University of Munich professor of Cell Biology of Plants at the Institute of Biology II.

Effective from 1 November 2016, the rector has appointed Dr. **Matthias Wittlinger** of the Institute of Biology I to be a lecturer for a three year period.

### Faculty of Environment and Natural Resources

Effective from 1 November 2016, the rector has appointed Dr. **Jochen Fründ** of the Institute of Earth and Environmental Sciences to be a lecturer for a three year period.

Effective from 1 October 2016, the rector has appointed lecturer Dr. **Stefan Hergarten** of the Institute of Earth and Environmental Sciences professor of Near-Surface Geophysics at the same institute.

### Faculty of Engineering

Prof. Dr. **Kristof Van Laerhoven** has accepted a post at the University of Siegen. He is leaving the Professorship in Embedded Systems here at the Department of Computer Science.

## Anniversaries

### 25 YEARS OF SERVICE

Dr. **Volker-Henning Winterer**, IT Services  
**Heike Kölblin**, Central University Administration  
**Anja Kury**, Department of German  
**Brigitte Stertz**, University Library

### 40 YEARS OF SERVICE

Prof. Dr. **Achim Aurnhammer**, Department of German  
**Birgit Erhard**, Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences  
 Prof. Dr. **Rainer Glawion**, Institute of Physical Geography  
**Rolf Heisch**, Central University Administration

### VENIA LEGENDI FÜR

Dr. **Anda Degeratu**, Mathematics

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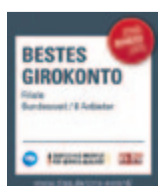
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## Probed

### uni<sup>life</sup> asks – alumni answer: Michael Sladek

#### Where were your favorite places to study, dance and eat in Freiburg?

When I'm studying I like to listen to classical music. The best place to do that was the *Studentenbude*. Because I'm a bit lazy when it comes moving around, dancing wasn't really my thing – with the big exception being the university balls. I'm passionate when it comes to eating, but I can't cook at all. I was perfectly satisfied with the food they had at the mensa, and Ursula – we finished secondary school and got our Abitur together and married in Freiburg in 1969 – is a genuine world champion when it comes to cooking. A secret tip back then was the *Wolfshöhle*. It was good and hearty food at prices students could afford.

#### Which discoveries from your time as a student have made a lasting impression on you?

When I was studying, especially when I was writing my doctoral thesis at the Institute of Biochemistry, I became acquainted with new abilities which I didn't know I had until then.

#### What advice would you give to students?

Studying is indeed important and you need to do it to finish with good grades. Still, the conversations you have with fellow students from all disciplines are just as important. The ability to communicate and feel empathy is decisive for life later on.

#### What do you regret about no longer being a student?

Having the freedom to enjoy time.

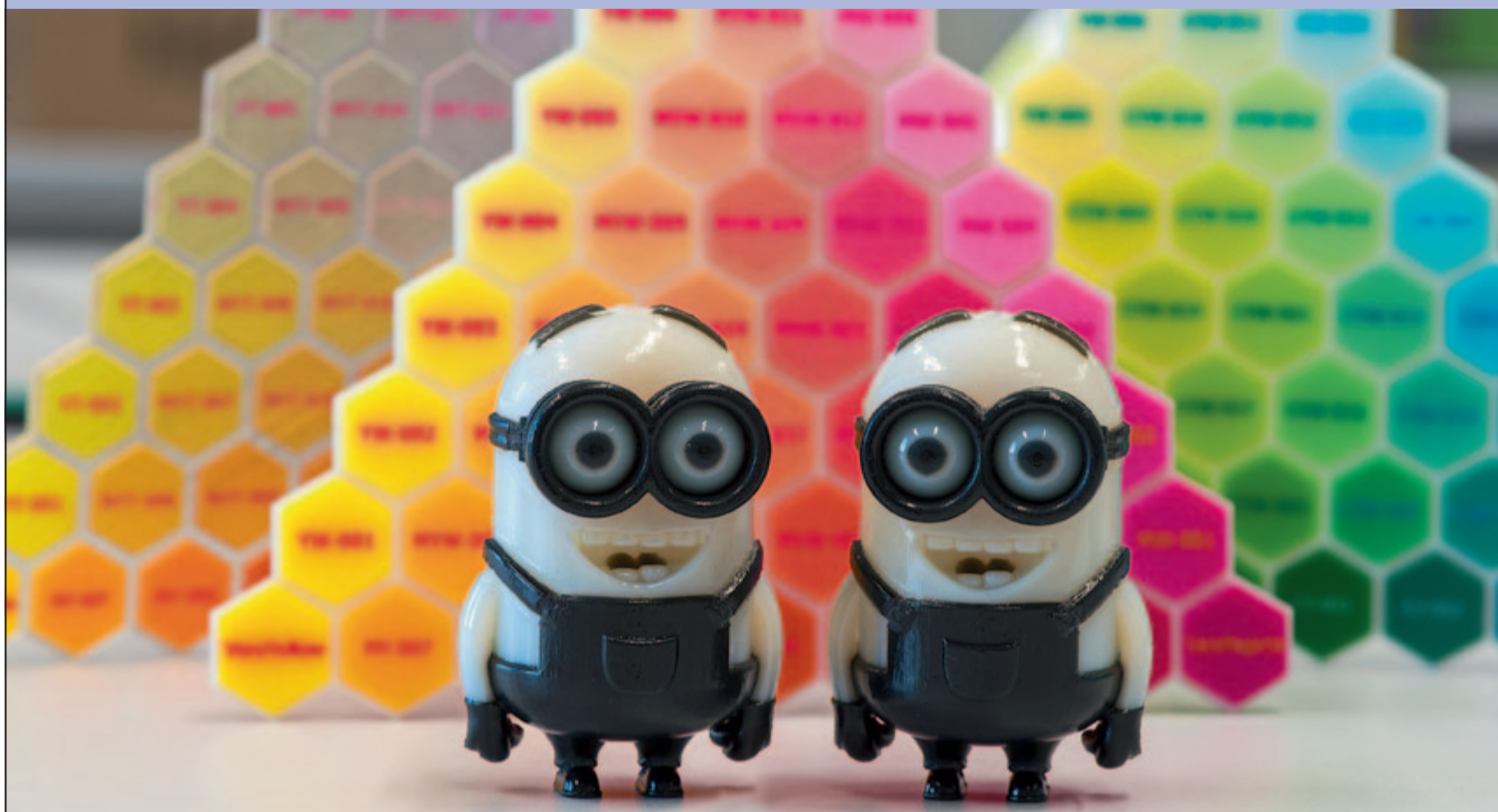
#### In my days, students typically ...

... skipped classes and instead spent time discussing with other students Germany's past and the role our parent's generation played in it. The memory of these chats took a decisive turn in my and Ursula's lives after the Chernobyl disaster in 1986.

Born in 1946, Dr. Michael Sladek studied at the University of Freiburg from 1966 to 1972. He then went on to complete medical training and become a general practitioner. His office has been located in Schönau since 1977. In 1986, he and his wife Ursula Sladek together founded the citizens' initiative "Parents for a Nuclear-free Future" (*Eltern für atomfreie Zukunft*), which originated within the Schönau Power Plant (*Elektrizitätswerke Schönau (EWS)*). In 1997, the EWS became the first citizens' owned enterprise that was able to "wrest" a power grid from a monopoly. Since 1998, the EWS has been generating and supplying environmentally-friendly power throughout Germany. The EWS currently has 175 thousand customers. Sladek was on the board of the EWS cooperative until 2014. Today he is a member of different committees to implement decentralization of the supply of electricity. He is also a co-organizer of the Freiburg seminar series "Climate Change causes Flight" (*Fluchtgrund Klimawandel*).

## Pictured

PHOTO: PATRICK SEEGER



**Cute little helpers in black and white:** They gained fame by starring in US animated films. The minions are six centimeters tall. These little guys popped out of a 3D printer at the Freiburg Center for Interactive Materials and Bioinspired Technologies (FIT) at the University of Freiburg. They're here for testing purposes. At FIT the minions are taking part in the center's investigation of how different plastics that are cured with ultraviolet light can be used in 3D printing processes, in order to imitate structures found in nature, for example..

## Pronounced

by Rimma Gerenstein

### Soft and socially incapable

They've earned top marks, have degrees from famous universities and linked in profiles that shout, "Young and hungry!" Personnel executives today view as underpowered the vehicles people once used to launch themselves into high-paying careers. A new ranking of universities on employability has announced that employers nowadays value not only expertise in a discipline, but also and above all, pay attention to a candidate's soft skills.

Don't interrupt the boss, boast to much about your own promotion to a colleague who was passed over, and above all, do not boo loudly during team brainstorming sessions. The modern working world celebrates soft skills as characteristics that most everyone has who hasn't been raised by a pack of wolves. Still, you need to pay attention to the rankings, because they

often proclaim that latest truth. And besides, they put the onus on the universities to act. After all, no one wants to have said of them that they are providing material for future episodes of the "Big Bang Theory." The University of Freiburg is reacting and has a program planned to improve its students' soft skills. The first measures have come to light – success seems likely.

**Time management:** Every day has 24 hours – but not if you want to make a big splash in the globalized working world. The students are managing a project in fifteen time zones in order to make reliable statements about the past, present and future.

**Stress management:** The lotus represents the tranquility of spirits that are known to inhabit healthy bodies. When their inboxes are overflowing and the

telephone is ringing off the hook, outbursts of rage can be prevented by doing yoga exercises like the "one-legged crow," followed by the "falling rain drop," and topped off by performing the "knotted lizard." You can do them in fashionable office clothes – provided that stretch material is included with the style.

**Team players:** Meerkats are the kings of efficient cooperation. While a few watch out for foes, others search for food or ensure reproduction of the species. Students in small groups mimic this highly-refined social organism and reflect on their role in the team. A certificate of intercultural competence is issued – an added plus after all that. Anyone who's capable of placing themselves in the role of a mammal belonging to the mongoose family has demonstrated that they possess the ultimate in empathy.

## Picked-up

by Nicolas Scherger

### The Competition of Cups

The city of Freiburg is taking measures against throw-away cups with the "Freiburg Cup" and a deposit system. It's been a real hit: The first five thousand of them were snapped up quickly, and even international media reported on them. Cafés and the mensas of the Studierendenwerks Freiburg-Schwarzwald took part – even though there an environmentally-friendly alternative to one-way cups, the thermos cup, had been around for quite some time. How popular is that cup now? Nicolas Scherger went to find out.

**uni<sup>life</sup>:** Hello, thermos cup. Is your future leaking away?

**Thermos cup:** No, not at all. There's nothing leaky about me. After all, I'm made of quality materials. Aluminum and plastic are easy to clean. And above all: I'm for sale. Deposits are a hassle.

**So how do you explain the success of your new counterpart, then?**



PHOTO: MAX OHRLICH

Hold on. Of course it's the latest thing, so the eco-hipsters are swarming to get them. But I'll bet that I last longer. First of all my design is a timeless classic in black or red. I'm almost sorry for the new guy, because he's been defaced with a corny, green silhouette of Freiburg.

**Could it be that you're using aggression to disguise your insecurity?**

Could it be that you're one of these media muckrakers who has already formed an opinion on a topic before

you go out and do your research and speak to people? Just you watch out. I know far more about you than you know about me.

**How so?**

You own one of my brothers. He says you're a complete coffee junkie. An anachronistic purist who still filters by hand. And who can't get into gear without some java. My poor brother is on the brink of a burnout.

**He'd better keep working, otherwise I'll get myself a Freiburg Cup.**

Fine, go ahead. That won't bother me a bit. Not one iota! After all it's more suited to you, because you don't deserve us! Wait, where are you going? Why are you getting out your wallet? Wait, stop – could we not talk about it? It wasn't meant that way... really, please no, NOOOO...

#### Masthead

uni<sup>life</sup>, Newspaper of the University of Freiburg, five issues published annually

#### Publisher

University of Freiburg, Rector, Prof. Dr. Hans-Jochen Schiewer

#### Content:

Rudolf-Werner Dreier, Head of Public Relations

#### Editorial

Rimma Gerenstein (Editor-in-Chief), Nicolas Scherger, Yvonne Troll

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Public Relations, University of Freiburg, Fahnenbergplatz 79085 Freiburg, Telephone: 0761/203-8812, Fax: 0761/203-4278, E-mail: unileben@pr.uni-freiburg.de

#### Circulation

14,000 copies

#### Design, layout

Kathrin Jachmann

#### Advertising

Gregor Kroschel, Telephone: 0761/203-4986, E-mail: gregor.kroschel@zv.uni-freiburg.de

#### Printing and processing

Freiburger Druck GmbH & Co. KG

#### Marketing

Office of Public Relations, Annual subscription price: €9.00, ISSN 0947-1251

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Uni<sup>life</sup> can be found online at [www.leben.uni-freiburg.de](http://www.leben.uni-freiburg.de)



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