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INSIDE|OUT

IT Services at ETH Newsletter

Deutsch

Dear Reader

I am pleased to present you with the first edition of our newsletter "inside|out". The newsletter appears 3 to 4 times annually, in German and English, covering current topics concerning the IT Services and IT at ETH Zurich.

This is a non-recurring mailing. To ensure you continue to receive a copy of "inside|out" please click here to subscribe.

To launch our newsletter we are introducing a novelty: "Polybox.ethz.ch" – the ETH answer to Dropbox-similar storage options. Included in this newsletter is also some background information on the ETH Zurich Wi-Fi service and an overview of IT Procurement & Portfolio services, available to all ETH employees. In the next issue we will present the new division "Scientific IT Services" which will provide increased IT-support for ETH research.

Wishing you an interesting and enjoyable read,

Reto Gutmann
Director of IT Services

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→ Polybox – new "Dropbox-similar storage"

There is a growing demand at ETH for a "Dropbox"-similar storage medium which would simplify and secure data exchange for all ETH members. Consequently use of ETH-external (uncontrollable) storage media shall be prevented. The ETH is one of the world's first universities to offer its members "ownCloud" service.

ETH departments have turned to the IT Services with the need for a "Dropbox"-similar storage medium at ETH. ITS, in collaboration with representatives of the Departments of Mathematics and Physics, evaluated current market trends and chose the company "ownCloud" as their partner. ITS System Services (ID SD), as the internal service provider, will provide "polybox.ethz.ch" service with 5 GB of storage on the ETH storage facilities. The following simple formula describes the use case very well: "Polybox - Use it as a logical memory stick - store your data on the ETH campus". Polybox meets the requirement to store and exchange data on ETH storage facilities which helps prevent (current) use of external (uncontrollable) storage media (like Dropbox). Starting May 2013, the service will be available to all ETH members free of charge. For more information please visit the ITS blog.

Dr. Tilo Steiger, Manager Storage, ITS System Services

Julian Senn and Tilo Steiger: Responsible for Polybox Service

→ Exponential growth in use of wireless technologies

A common scenario at ETH: You are trying to connect your mobile device to the ETH network. Why does the connection take forever? What causes abrupt disconnection? The growing popularity of smart phones and tablets has led to a significant WLAN overload at ETH. While in 2009 we had about 1,000 to 2,000 simultaneously active Wi-Fi devices we hit a new record in the current spring semester with 9200 simultaneously logged on devices.

WLAN or Wi-Fi services is an offshoot of the ETH World project. Since the year 2000, IT Services, commissioned by ETH Zurich, has been continuously expanding WLAN coverage at ETH. Lecture halls, meeting rooms and public areas are now all covered by wireless network. Wi-Fi was originally intended as a supplementary service without high availability. However, perception and demands of the service have changed considerably in the last three years. This was triggered primarily by the new category of smart phones and is being currently reinforced by a new generation of tablets and eReaders. While in 2009 we had about 1,000 to 2,000 simultaneously active Wi-Fi devices we hit a new record in the current semester with 9200 simultaneously logged on devices. The increased load in terms of bandwidth on the core network doesn't pose much of a problem, however the load on the authentication and authorization infrastructure and at times high concentration on certain access points, result in increased stress for a shared medium.
Want to find out more on the challenge a packed auditorium poses and the counter measures the ITS has taken? Visit our ITS Blog for more information on the subject.

Dr. Armin Wittmann, Head ITS ICT-Networks

Thomas Lier, Armin Wittmann and Derk-Jan Valenkamp make every effort to ensure optimal WLAN reception at ETH Zurich.

→ IT Procurement

In 2012, the IT Services established the "IT Procurement & Portfolio (PPF)" division. Task of the division is on the one hand, the optimization and automation of administrative procurement processes, and on the other hand, the seamless integration of IT procurement in the management of all IT service lifecycle. PPF provides legal and technical assistance for procurement of hardware, software and IT services to all ETH employees.

The following statement is often found in any future-oriented procurement strategy: "The procurement strategy of a company determines its framework conditions. The former ensures that funds used for the entire service portfolio add value and contribute to the overall success of the company". Inevitably the question arises: "What do portfolio management and procurement have in common? More specifically, what is the connection between IT portfolio management and IT procurement? When talking about IT procurement, we do not necessarily think of an IT process. At first glance the term seems to be referring to administrative procedures which help establish certain routines and automated processes. However, IT procurement is much more than that and represents one of the key processes that are necessary for the administration within the context of the entire IT portfolio. Read more on this subject on our ITS blog.

Dordaneh Arangeh, Head ITS IT Procurement & Portfolio

Dordaneh Arangeh offers ETH- wide support in IT procurement

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