



University of
Zurich^{UZH}

Department of Communication and Media Research



IKMZ – People who make a difference

The department is thriving – both as an internationally renowned research institution and as a much sought-after place for communication studies throughout Switzerland. With the firm establishment of the subject Communication and its upgrade to a major at the University of Zurich, for which the first two department chairs Ulrich Saxer († 2012) and Otfried Jarren (from 1997) were responsible, the department experienced an unprecedented boost in development. The work of Heinz Bonfadelli (full professor starting in 2000) and Kurt Imhof († 2015), who set up a research group on Public Sphere and Society in 2001, marked an important start-up phase. The range of subjects was broadened further with the appointment of Gabriele Siegert in 2001 (Media Economics and Management) and Werner Wirth in 2003 (Media Psychology and Effects). In order to refine the department's profile in strategically important areas, we appointed Frank Esser in 2006 (International Comparative Research), Michael Latzer in 2008 (Media Change and

Innovation), Daniel Süss in 2009 (Media Socialization) and Mike Schäfer in 2013 (Science, Crisis and Risk Communication). Since Heinz Bonfadelli's retirement in 2016, Eszter Hargittai (Internet Use and Society) and Thomas Friemel (Media Use and Effects) have joined the department. Mark Eisenegger took over Kurt Imhof's research area in 2018. Otfried Jarren and Gabriele Siegert, became important "institution builders" beyond our department and rose into university management as vice-presidents. Thanks to all of the individuals mentioned above and the many excellent research and teaching staff (doctoral students and post-docs), support staff (administrative and IT) and inspiring students, IKMZ has evolved into a strong department with an enviably friendly atmosphere.

Frank Esser, Head of Department

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In tune with the times since 1903

The Department of Communication and Media Research was founded in 1903 with the establishment of a professorship for newspaper research. In the course of its history, and particularly since the 1990s, it has evolved into the biggest communication department in Switzerland, and a leading one across Europe. Today, approximately 80 employees work at IKMZ in academic or administrative positions. They work together to find well-grounded answers to current challenges in the field of communication and media, and to bring new approaches to scientific and public discourse. They are supported by external lecturers who further enrich the curriculum, and by student assistants who assist us in a wide variety of projects.

Research – diverse and relevant to society

Our research makes important contributions to the theoretical, methodological and empirical advancement of knowledge within the national and international knowledge community. This means that in addition to our focus on Switzerland, we also cultivate an international outlook and link our findings to the global context.

Our focal points are:

- Political Communication
- Internet & Society
- News & Entertainment
- Strategic Communication

Our teaching – science-based and interdisciplinary

We approach the field of communication and media research from a social-scientific perspective – with interdisciplinary orientation and teamwork. In our Bachelor's and Master's degree programs, we convey the whole breadth of the subject matter and place an emphasis on topics that we currently investigate in the department, and which are being debated in society.

11 professors plus one rotating visiting position

22 post-doctoral research and teaching associates

32 doctoral students

11 technical and support staff (IT, administration, library)

30 external instructors (practitioners)

23 student assistants

1136 students

People at IKMZ (as of January 2018)

Political Communication – Politics, Media and the Public

Political communication is a fundamental component of our democracy: it includes all forms of communication within the triangle of politics, media and the public.

How do political parties, governments, politicians and interest groups communicate? How do various media and political systems influence political communication? How does media and media content influence the opinions, emotions, knowledge and political participation of the population?

In political communication, we focus on examining these questions with internationally comparative and interdisciplinary approaches.

NCCR Democracy in the 21st Century

Between 2005 and 2017, the National Center of Competence in Research (NCCR) was an interdisciplinary research program that strongly shaped IKMZ and has earned it an additional professorship. The research focused on two challenges faced by modern democracy: globalization and the increasing influence of the media on politics.

Media Performance and Democracy

The DACH research project “media performance and democracy”, which is a research association spanning Germany, Austria and Switzerland, explores the contribution of the news media to the well-functioning of democracy.

Recent joint research projects sponsored by the Swiss National Science Foundation

Internet & Society – Influence, Change and Trends

Digitalization has changed the production, distribution and use of media in many regards, and new ways of communication shape everyday life. At IKMZ, we explore the reasons behind those changes in order to find answers to the challenges of digital society.

What does media convergence mean for the production of media content? How are globally operating media and technology companies regulated? Which qualifications do media users need to have in the future? And how are these developments different from previous changes in the media landscape?

These questions can be answered by drawing on theoretical models and empirical findings that have been developed at our department during the past 115 years. Our answers, however, also require networking with scholars from other countries and fields. We therefore collaborate on international projects and interdisciplinary research initiatives.

World Internet Project (WIP)

The WIP is a collaborative long-term study of the social, political and economic consequences of the Internet's development. Since 2011, IKMZ has served as its Swiss partner and conducts nationally representative surveys annually. In public reports and scientific articles, we analyze the use of the Internet and people's attitudes about it across Switzerland.

E-Learning

Digitalization has also changed teaching. IKMZ provides a specialized e-learning coordination center that supports our instructors in the planning and implementation of digital learning platforms and examinations.

Digitalization of research and teaching

News & Entertainment – Content, Use and Effects

The content of media is crucial to understanding modern mass communication. We explore the origin and history of the information and entertainment available to the population as well as its content, use and effects. Only with this holistic perspective are we able to understand current processes and anticipate future developments.

What are the consequences of increasingly commercialized news production? How do news and entertainment impact ideas about reality and the world views of the audience? Lastly, how does media use affect people's well-being and social relations?

In our news & entertainment research, we focus on these and other questions from the perspective of media economics, politics, sociology and psychology.

Research laboratories

IKMZ has several laboratories for experimental research in the areas of media use, reception and effects. They are equipped with modern measuring and recording facilities, and range from a cozy lounge to bigger multiuser laboratories. In order to ensure that researchers can fully concentrate on their work, they and the entire department are supported by a professional IT team.

Library

IKMZ maintains one of the largest reference libraries in the field of communication in the German-speaking world, and offers access to the most important media and professional databases. The team of librarians maintains this central resource and offers research support to students, researchers and other interested parties.

Resource planning and organization

In order to ensure research and teaching projects run smoothly, resources like staff, finances and infrastructure have to be planned in detail and used purposesfully. Our researchers are supported by internal experts in finance and HR.

Research infrastructure and support





Strategic Communication – Organizations, Arguments and Effects

Strategic communication ranges from the delight of seduction to the fear of manipulation. At IKMZ, we focus on strategic communication between organizations and their external stakeholders.

What is the best way to organize the development and use of strategic communication? Which are the most convincing arguments? And how can media effects even be measured?

The methodological tools for the analysis of these questions range from qualitative expert interviews to representative surveys. In our work we focus on fundamental research, on organizational communication and prosocial topics like health communication.

Certificates of Advanced Studies

In addition to Bachelor's and Master's degree programs, IKMZ also offers continuing education to executives from the fields of economics and administration.

Workplace culture – lived values and a firm foundation

IKMZ's culture is shaped by mutual responsibility and thus by the department members. IKMZ is a place of diversity, as is seen in the variety of members' origins and biographies. Transparency, equal opportunity and mutual appreciation are our core values, which shape the dialogue between all community members.

We aspire to offer the best possible working and study conditions to both our researchers and students. Our team of eleven administrative staff are a key component of reaching this goal. They offer stability in an ever-changing organization.



Excellence – as individuals and as an organization

IKMZ and its academic staff aim to combine outstanding research with contributions that are of relevance to society. Our department is able to demonstrate our excellence consistently through good rankings within the university and when compared to international standards. Members of the department have received numerous awards for outstanding research and teaching as well as important prizes and invitations in the fields of science, politics, culture and beyond. In order to maintain this level of quality in the future, we perform regular evaluations and self-assessments, and continue to educate ourselves.

Rankings

The 2018 QS World University Ranking lists the department as the highest-rated communication program in German-speaking countries (Germany, Austria, Switzerland) and in the leading group of all European communication programs. Within the University of Zurich, communication studies, together with anatomy and dentistry, is among the most highly-ranked subjects.

“Excellence to us also means that we seek to be an institute in which all department members and students have room for personal development and advancement.”

Bettina Lennström, General Manager IKMZ

Promoting young researchers – IKMZ as an incubator

The personal and professional development of young academics is a matter of particular interest to IKMZ. We support both undergraduate and graduate students, as well as postdoctoral scholars, by offering them optimal development opportunities and career perspectives. In addition to outstanding working and research conditions, we also encourage our department members to participate actively in national and international organizations and committees.

IKMZ's success in promoting young researchers is evidenced by its wide network and our graduates' successes obtaining professorships both in Switzerland and abroad. IKMZ is also a stepping stone for careers in various fields within the subject area. Many of our alumni are on the management boards of national and international companies as well as public authorities, and have therefore helped shape our society. In 2003, we founded an alumni association to help support networking. Today, the association is active as a chapter of UZH Alumni.



IKMZ Target University Professorship Career path of our postdocs

Dr. Matthias Hofer is familiar with both sides of IKMZ – as a student and as a department member. After having spent two years doing research in the United States, he returned to our department as a postdoctoral scholar. Aside from being involved in teaching, Matthias received a highly competitive and prestigious “Ambizione Grant” from the Swiss National Science Foundation and leads his own project as “Ambizione Fellow” at IKMZ.

Describe IKMZ in three words:

“What springs to mind as a media psychologist is ‘self-determination theory’, according to which effective behavior and satisfaction depend on the fulfillment of three basic needs: competence – autonomy – solidarity.”

What makes IKMZ unique?

“The diverse perspectives. What is also unique is the work of departmental staff, including the IT support staff. Without these people, IKMZ would not be able to perform the research and teaching in the exceptional way that it does.”

What is the special contribution of IKMZ to society?

“On the one hand, we train students to become educated and critical members of society. On the other hand, we produce rigorous research and contribute it to public discourse. This is important so that society can understand itself and all facets of mediated communication, and can react to it when needed.”

3 questions – 3 answers



Collaborations – rooted in Switzerland with an international network

IKMZ's work in research and teaching is closely linked to other Swiss universities; for example, in the supervision of doctoral candidates and in training lecturers for media studies. There are numerous research collaborations with international partners. In addition, each year, IKMZ members contribute to scientific discourse with around 140 publications and 130 presentations at national and international symposia.

There is also a long tradition of visiting professors at our department. They strengthen both the international dimension of teaching and our research network.

"The most difficult part about being at IKMZ for me is the thought that my visiting professorship is limited to five months. This institute shows such great appreciation for research and teaching. I am going to leave it with mixed feelings, because ideally you would like to spend a lot more time here."

Prof. Dr. Lea Hellmüller, University of Houston, visiting professor 2017/2018

"It is hard to imagine a better working environment than IKMZ. The research is cutting edge, the academic environment intellectually nourishing, and the support staff super-efficient and helpful. I will leave IKMZ with a heavy heart."

Prof. Dr. James Painter, University of Oxford, visiting professor 2017/2018

Studies at IKMZ – research oriented and relevant to society

The courses offered at IKMZ range from Bachelor's and Master's degree programs to several specialized Master's degree programs and doctorates. We convey the breadth of the subject matter to approximately 1,100 students and place emphasis on topics that are currently explored in the department. We also promote explorative teaching and learning by involving students in ongoing research projects. Our students acquire methodological and theoretical skills that enable them to describe and analyze mediated communication. Each year, approximately 260 graduates of this subject are equipped for both a scientific career and a career applying their skills and knowledge in various fields of communication.

"I particularly value the open culture and the mutual exchange between professors, junior scholars, and us, the students. You quickly come to realize that you as a student are the focus of teaching and that people are always open to your ideas and concerns. The commitment, helpfulness and support of the lecturers are top notch!"

Rafael Schwab, BA & MA student

Our courses are regularly awarded with teaching prizes and enjoy an excellent reputation among students and colleagues. This is all possible thanks to our administrative staff and the curriculum coordinator. They function as an important hub and support students and lecturers in organizational, technical as well as personal matters.

"During my studies, what I have found the most inspiring is the variety of topics: sometimes I would deal with the subject of political communication on social media, then with the effects of strategic communication, then again very specifically with communication over climate change."

Anna Staender, MA student and project collaborator

Social responsibility – a bridge between research and practice

We at IKMZ embrace social responsibility by addressing relevant topics from the field of media and communication across Switzerland as well as globally. We bring new, scientifically-backed findings on these topics into public discourse, we offer forward-looking degree programs and continuing education courses, and we consult with institutions to help shape society in the future.

Yearbook "Quality of the Media"

Since 2010, the yearbook has contained publications on quality analysis, developments in the use of, and the financial base of the most important Swiss media. The findings on press, Internet, social media, radio and television help strengthen the awareness of media quality and provide an important foundation for debate in media policy.

JAMES/MIKE studies

The two studies JAMES (an acronym in German for Jugend, Aktivitäten, Medien – Erhebung Schweiz) and MIKE (an acronym in German for Medien, Interaktion, Kinder und Eltern) explore how children and teenagers use media. These studies, which are conducted at the ZHAW, help refine the steps that are needed for media education.

Science Barometer Switzerland

The Science Barometer Switzerland analyzes which scientific information is available to Swiss citizens and how often they make use of it. This allows us to understand better the present dramatic change in science communication and its audience.

Our commitment to a media society



Centers and initiatives – opportunities for innovation

IKMZ is the largest department for communication studies in Switzerland and is dedicated to make a significant contribution to the further development of the subject. IKMZ, therefore, contributes to various centers and initiatives.

Digital Society Initiative

Within the scope of the Digital Society Initiative at the University of Zurich, IKMZ focuses on the communicative challenges of digitalization and is a leading participant in the challenge area “Communication”. In order to be able to initiate innovative scientific approaches, we count on interdisciplinary cooperation. In addition, public lecture series and events create a platform for exchange with a wider public.

www.dsi.uzh.ch

“fög” – Research Institute for the Public Sphere and Society

The “fög” institute systematically observes communication events, because public communication is the most important medium that regulates and integrates our society. The fög institute pursues research projects in the fields of political communication, business communication and media quality.

www.foeg.uzh.ch

CHESS – Center for Higher Education and Science Studies

The center of competence CHESS supports the interdisciplinary exchange of university research and science studies at the University of Zurich and beyond. The center organizes events, publishes research findings and policy documents, consults organizations, and offers courses in continuing education. With all of this, it engages in scientific discourse and actively contributes to shape its transfer.

www.chess.uzh.ch

Ulrich Saxer Foundation – supporting young academics

In 2000, professor Ulrich Saxer (1931-2012) established this foundation to promote media and communication science among young academics in Switzerland. It aims to strengthen the subject’s national development potential. The foundation carries out annual events for young academics across Switzerland, and in particular promotes international exchange.

Imprint, contact and map

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