

Meet our first European chapter

by [Sara Carlstead](#)

Down the Road is a regular feature of Crossroads where we highlight the activities of student ACM chapters. In this issue we visit Europe for the first time to meet the Verein der Informatikstudierenden (VIS), of the [Swiss Federal Institute of Technology of Zurich](#) (ETH).

☐ When the Crossroads crew got back from the Big Event (to which I was unfortunately not able to go) I was told about an incredible student chapter in Zurich, Switzerland with 600 members. Hans Domjan and Frank Moehle told the Crossroads crew enough cool and interesting stuff about their chapter that they were a natural choice when it came time to find a chapter for this issue's Down the Road.

VIS has around 600 members. It has nine members of the managing board, each of whom are responsible for different parts of the organization. As you would imagine, they do a great many things. Their homepage explains, "The VIS is the representative body of the Informatik-students in case of problems arising during the course of study." They publish a magazine, *Visionen*, every month during the school year. One of the many features of the magazine is statistics collected about examinations. On top of that, they maintain a collection of exams, solutions, and homework. They also organize study groups and lesson polls and offer the software package Maple at a reduced price to members.

They organize four official parties a year. One, their famous VISKAS 95, just happened this past June at Katensee Lake. They also organize visits to companies, and in the spring they sponsor "Kontakparty" in which companies are invited to meet with the students.



One of the largest projects for this group is their [web server](#). [Daniel Cluge](#), who did most of the preliminary work on the web server and now is in charge of VIS's money, says of it: "More fun and work [than being in charge of VIS's money] is the maintaining of the vis-next and other duties concerning Computer-Administration, this www-Server was mostly my work..." In addition to having lots of information about the club, from bylaws to social events, the server also includes unofficial information about the computer science department at ETH.

Everything from available jobs to newsgroups related to ETH can be found here. Another section features events and social events (not necessarily computer or VIS related) found around Zurich. In addition the server allows members of VIS to create and showcase their own [homepages](#).

As well as the web server, the group's NeXT station (what the web server is running on) also provides VIS's members with study related mailing lists. In addition, the [VISINFO](#) information system is supported by the VIS. It contains sections in which general topics can be discussed and where you can find information on student life at ETH-Zurich. VISINFO is part of ETH's VMS based bulletin board system, EZINFO. VISINFO has a variety of message bases where questions can be asked and answered (be careful visiting, though, most of these are in German).

The VIS sponsors a [Distinguished Lecture Series](#) each year featuring speakers from all over the world. (The 94-95 series featured 6 speakers in all, 2 from the US, one from Israel, one from Paris, one from Munchen, and one from the UK.) They also sponsor and attend ACM programming contests.

This group, with its large membership and many activities, is one of the most dynamic groups we've seen in Down the Road. But even though they are located across the Atlantic Ocean from most (not all) of the other ACM chapters, they seem to do many of the same types of things. It's nice to know you could find a group of computing students in Switzerland that are no different than those you know elsewhere.

I'm always looking for chapters doing interesting things. If your chapter or one you know of is doing anything of note, drop me a line at saracarl@rice.edu.