



RESEARCH CENTER
**TRUSTWORTHY DATA SCIENCE
AND SECURITY**

RC Trust Newsletter – May 2026

Dear readers,
dear colleagues,

April brought many opportunities for exchange across RC Trust – from our annual Retreat and strong visibility at CHI 2026 to new publications, talks, team members, and upcoming events. This issue brings together the latest highlights from across the Center in a concise overview.

We hope you enjoy discovering what is currently happening at RC Trust.

New Young Investigator Group



Human Factors in AI Systems

RC Trust welcomes a new Young Investigator Group led by Magdalena Wischnewski. Based at the University of Duisburg-Essen, *Human Factors in AI Systems* will explore how AI shapes the way people think, feel, decide, and trust - connecting psychology, human-computer interaction, and computer science to strengthen human-centered trustworthy AI.

[Read more](#)

RC Trust Retreat



How responsible AI research takes shape

At the annual RC Trust Retreat, early-career researchers, postdocs, principal investigators, and guests came together to discuss how trustworthy AI research develops across disciplines. Poster sessions, excursions, Barcamp discussions, and informal exchange highlighted a central idea: responsible AI emerges where technical, social, ethical, legal, medical, and human-centered perspectives meet.

[Read more](#)

Awards, Conferences & Recognition

RC Trust research at major international venues.



RC Trust research recognized at CHI 2026

RC Trust researchers presented work at CHI 2026 in Barcelona, one of the leading international conferences in Human-Computer Interaction. The contributions covered AI governance, human-AI interaction, user perception, and inclusive design – including a Best Paper Award and several Honorable Mentions.

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AISOC at ICLR 2026

The Chair of Artificial Intelligence and Society (AISOC), led by Bilal Zafar, presented one main conference paper and two workshop papers at ICLR 2026 in Rio de Janeiro. The contributions examine how AI systems move beyond benchmarks – from learning through memorization to generative web search and memory in conversational AI. *Rote Learning Considered Useful: Generalizing over Memorized Data in LLMs*

<https://arxiv.org/abs/2507.21914>

Characterizing Web Search in the Age of Generative AI
<https://arxiv.org/pdf/2510.11560>
The Algorithmic Self-Portrait: Deconstructing Memory in ChatGPT
<https://arxiv.org/pdf/2602.01450>
Agents in the Wild workshop: <https://agentwild-workshop.github.io/>
ICLR 2026: <https://iclr.cc/>



Sassefest celebrates Angela Sasse at UCL

On 31 March, colleagues, collaborators, students, and friends came together at University College London to celebrate 35 years of Angela Sasse at UCL and her contributions to computer science and human-centered security.

[Read more](#)

People & Team News

New colleagues and visiting researchers across RC Trust groups.



Carolina Gerli joins HUAM as postdoctoral researcher

Since 15 April, Carolina Gerli has joined the Human Understanding of Algorithms and Machines lab led by Nils Köbis. Within the Horizon project RESPOND, she explores how AI can support anti-corruption, transparency, and accountability.

[Read more](#)



Manshul Belani joins Compliant and Accountable Systems

Manshul Belani has joined Jat Singh's Compliant and Accountable Systems group as a postdoctoral researcher. Her work brings a strong human-centered design perspective to questions of technology, society, and governance.

[Read more](#)



Javier Enrique Aguilar joins the Causality Chair

Javier Enrique Aguilar joined Alexander Marx's Causality Chair as a postdoctoral researcher on 1 April. His research focuses on Bayesian statistics, prior specification, probabilistic programming, and the role of prior assumptions in causal inference.



Tamara Stojanovska joins Artificial Intelligence and Society

Tamara Stojanovska joined Bilal Zafar's group as a PhD student on 1 May. Her research focuses on assessing genuine understanding and generalization in large language models, as well as the reliability, robustness, and trustworthiness of AI agents.

[Read more](#)



Fiona Lau joins Human-AI Interaction

Fiona Lau has joined Sven Mayer's Human-AI Interaction group as a PhD student. Her work strengthens the group's research on human-centered generative AI and meaningful collaboration between humans and intelligent systems.

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Yu-Chung Wang visits Daniel Neider's group

Daniel Neider's Chair of Verification and Formal Guarantees of Machine Learning welcomes Yu-Chung Wang from Western Norway University of Applied Sciences for a three-month research visit.

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Robin Stecher strengthens RC Trust communication

Robin Stecher supports RC Trust communication by connecting technology, storytelling, and visual design. His role helps bring AI research closer to different audiences inside and outside the Center.

[Read more](#)

Leon Krömker supports AI and language technology research in Bochum

Leon Krömker joined RC Trust on 15 April as a technician supporting both Bilal Zafar's Chair of Artificial Intelligence and Society and Ivan Habernal's Trustworthy Human Language Technologies group in Bochum.

Upcoming: Enes Ün joins Markus Pauly's group as ERASMUS intern

From June, Enes Ün from Istanbul will join Markus Pauly's Chair of Mathematical Statistics and Applications in Industry as an ERASMUS intern, working in the area of applied functional data analysis.

Upcoming: Raju Dey joins through Research Explorer Ruhr

Also from June, Raju Dey from IIT Kharagpur will join Markus Pauly's group as a postdoctoral researcher within the Research Explorer Ruhr program.

Research & Publications

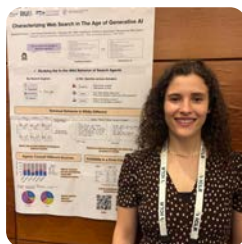
New papers, preprints, and accepted conference contributions.



RC Trust presents research at ACL and ACL Findings 2026

Ivan Habernal and collaborators will present MONETA at ACL 2026. The work shows how AI can verify information about companies by combining language, images, and geographic data.

[Read more](#)



The full paper *Characterizing Web Search in The Age of Generative AI* from Bilal Zafar's Chair of Artificial Intelligence and Society was accepted to Findings of ACL 2026. The work examines how generative AI changes information access and web search behavior.

[Read more](#)

Causal inference under selection bias and confounding

Marlies Hafer and Alexander Marx had their paper *Regression-Based Estimation of Causal Effects in the Presence of Selection Bias and Confounding* accepted at ECML PKDD 2026 as part of the Machine Learning journal track.

Paper: <https://arxiv.org/abs/2503.20546>

Conference: <https://ecmlpkdd.org/>

Skewness-robust causal discovery at ICML 2026

Daniel Klippert and Alexander Marx had their paper *Skewness-Robust Causal Discovery in Location-Scale Noise Models* accepted at ICML 2026. The work contributes to robust methods for causal discovery under challenging statistical conditions.

Paper: <https://arxiv.org/abs/2511.14441>

Conference: <https://icml.cc/>

Meltem Aksoy presents at ICST 2026

Meltem Aksoy will present the paper *When Less Is More: Monolingual Fine-Tuning of Language Models for Industrial C# Code Review* at ICST 2026 in Daejeon, South Korea. Co-authored with Igli Begolli and Daniel Neider, the paper examines how language- and domain-specific fine-tuning affects automated code review in industrial C# repositories.

[Read more](#)

New paper from Markus Pauly's group

Paavo Sattler, Markus Pauly, and Merle Munko published *Quadratic form based multiple contrast tests for comparison of group means*. The work contributes to statistical testing methods for comparing group means in complex settings.

[Read more](#)

New preprint on climate extremes and plant productivity

Moritz Adam, Elisa Ziegler, Björn Gonzalez, Nils Weitzel, and Kira Rehfeld released a new EGU sphere preprint on how Earth system models represent local plant productivity responses to temperature–moisture extremes. The study shows that models perform well globally but can deviate locally, especially due to challenges in modeling soil moisture.

[Read more](#)

Talks, Research Visits & Public Engagement

RC Trust researchers in dialogue with academic, public, and professional communities.



AI Colloquium with Leonard Papenmeier

At the AI Colloquium on 16 April, Leonard Papenmeier discussed why simple methods can perform surprisingly well in high-dimensional Bayesian optimization. His talk connected technical insights with broader questions about benchmarking, scalability, and real-world optimization.

[Read more](#)



Inês Terrucha at the Institute for Advanced Study in Amsterdam

During her IAS Fellowship in Amsterdam, Inês Terrucha explores how AI reshapes everyday human connections. Her project investigates whether interactions with AI may function like social ties and how this could affect well-being, belonging, and human relationships.

[Read more](#)



Research exchange on HCI in Canberra

Lisa Townsend from Sven Mayer's Human-AI Interaction group recently completed a six-week research visit with the ANU Games Group at The Australian National University in Canberra. The exchange connected her work with international HCI research on human-AI teaming, human-robot interaction, and XR for health, highlighting how research visits can open new perspectives across disciplines and application areas.

[Read more](#)



Research and networking in Willingen

From 25 to 26 March, the Human-AI Interaction group and the HCI Group from the University of Duisburg-Essen met at the Essener Skihütte in Willingen. The offsite focused on research exchange, collaboration opportunities, and strengthening links between the two groups.

[Read more](#)



Paula Ebner in WDR documentary on emotional bonds with AI

Paula Ebner contributed to the WDR documentary *Unser Leben mit KI – Nie wieder einsam?*, which explores how AI systems increasingly enter emotional and relational spaces in everyday life.

[Read more](#)

Bilal Zafar at AWS StatML Workshop in Berlin

Bilal Zafar gave a talk at the AWS StatML Workshop in Berlin. The workshop brings together PhD students from Oxford and Imperial College's StatML Center with Amazon researchers to connect machine learning and computational statistics.

[Read more](#)

Meltem Aksoy at Rutgers University

Meltem Aksoy visited the Department of Computer Science at Rutgers University from 20 March to 19 April. During her stay, she collaborated with Prof. Yongfeng Zhang on moral and cultural biases in multilingual large language models and AI agents.

Nils Weitzel at the Geoinformatics Forum Münster

Nils Weitzel gave an invited talk at the Geoinformatics Forum of the University of Münster on 28 April. His presentation focused on the spatio-temporal structure of temperature variability in models, observations, and reconstructions of past climate.

[Read more](#)

Ivan Habernal at the Teaching NLP Workshop

Ivan Habernal participated as a panel member in the Seventh Workshop on Teaching NLP, co-located with EACL 2026 in Rabat, Morocco. The workshop focused on building a community for sharing teaching resources and practices in NLP.

[Read more](#)

Marco Saponara on cognitive biases and fairness

Marco Saponara from ULB Brussels visited HUAM in Duisburg to discuss how cognitive biases, fairness judgments, and prosocial behavior shape decision-making in uncertain social interactions. His talk also connected these questions to agentic AI and hybrid human-machine ecosystems.

[Read more](#)

Raluca Rilla on bot detection in online experiments

Raluca Rilla joined the HUAM monthly meeting to discuss bot detection in online experiments. Her talk highlighted how LLM-generated responses can threaten the validity of survey research and why multi-layered detection approaches are needed.

[Read more](#)



Upcoming: Ivan Habernal invited talk at CALD-pseudo 2026

On 12 May, Ivan Habernal will give an invited talk at CALD-pseudo 2026 in Palma de Mallorca. His talk, *Privacy and anonymization in NLP: Are we barking up the wrong tree?*, addresses sensitive data, anonymization, and the assumptions behind current privacy practices in language processing.

[Read more](#)

Calls, Events & Community Notes

Upcoming opportunities and relevant external events.



Call for papers: ExTraSafe workshop on explainability, transparency, and safety

Daniel Neider contributes to the 1st Workshop on Explainability, Transparency, and Safety, which will take place in August 2026 in Bremen as part of KI 2026. The workshop invites research on how AI systems can become more understandable, transparent, legally compliant, and safe in real-world applications. Submissions are open until **15 May 2026**.

[Read more](#)



Call for papers: AI Ethics from a psychological perspective

Nils Köbis co-edits a Special Issue in *Computers in Human Behavior* on how AI shapes human ethical judgment and behavior. The call invites empirical work on how people evaluate, follow, resist, or emotionally respond to AI in ethically relevant situations. Submissions are open until **31 May 2026**.

[Read more](#)



Save the Date: Digital Democracy conference in Düsseldorf

The 6th conference of the Cluster Integrierte Forschung will take place on 18–19 June in Düsseldorf under the title *Digitale Demokratie gemeinsam gestalten*. The event focuses on participation, trust, and responsibility in digital transformation, with a keynote by Hendrik Heuer from CAIS.

[Read more](#)



Human-AI Interaction group now on LinkedIn

Sven Mayer's Human-AI Interaction group now has its own LinkedIn channel. The channel offers updates on research, events, publications, and activities from the group at TU Dortmund University and RC Trust.

[Read more](#)

The international HCI conference *Mensch und Computer 2026* will take place from 30 August to 2 September at the University of Duisburg-Essen, Campus Duisburg. The conference is expected to bring together 600 to 800 participants from academia and industry.

[Read more](#)

German Statistical Society

The German Statistical Society advertised two events for ECRs which might be of interest for young researchers:

<https://scads.ai/event/summer-schools/summer-school-2026/>

<https://statistische-woche.de/en/young-scientists-workshop>

Registration deadline: 20th May

[Read more](#)

Thank you for reading. We hope you enjoy exploring these highlights from RC Trust.

