

## Message from the Editors

The past month was characterized for us at our (virtual) BiBa Headquarters by the completion of the admissions process. And save a couple of applications that are still somewhere in the system, we're pretty much done now. Of our roughly 100 applicants, we were able to select a class of 30-some high-caliber students, each and every one of whom brings something unique to the table to be proud of. As it turns out, there are no more than two from any one country (except the host country, Germany, with 4), guaranteeing a good mixture of nationalities, ethnicities, languages and traditions. The countries span China and Russia, through the Middle East, Africa and Europe, and over to the United States. See the figure below to ascertain the diversity of our group. And we can certainly say: We're proud of you, of every one of you, and looking forward to working with you!



BiBas in the Class of 2028 and where you're from. A pin per country with a BiBa, including the 4 staff members taking care of things (blue pins).

We've also set up a WhatsApp group for the class to get to know one another, and to exchange information about their first steps in Magdeburg. Now we're moving into the next phase of the admissions process: Securing visas for all our international students.

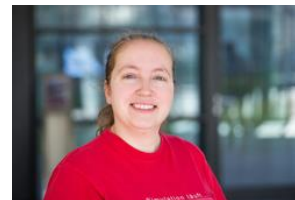
**Please note: Prep-Courses which review high school math and programming skills start on September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2024.**

But for those of our readers who are not among the chosen few getting ready to come to Magdeburg, are you gearing up for admission in 2025? Welcome! If you haven't done so already, do drop us a line to introduce yourself, we'd like to get to know you early on in the process. We're also planning for our future applicants to be able to contact someone who is already at BiBa to ask questions about "how BiBa really is". Our next intake is in October, 2025 (an intake for the Summer term in 2025 is not planned). Therefore, officially, you cannot apply until April 15, 2025. But you'd like certainty earlier? We're looking for a way, so stay tuned or contact us at our hotline [BiBa\(at\)ovgu.de](mailto:BiBa(at)ovgu.de).

In this issue, you will also find out about a new temporary exhibition in Magdeburg on street art (Banksy), and we'll tell you where to go swimming if the weather is too hot and you feel the urge. There is also a preview on our plans for excursions with our first cohort.

Enjoy!

Your BiBa Newsletter Editors



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## Spotlight on Professors: Prof. Dr. Andreas Nürnberger

Andreas Nürnberger grew up in Bad Sachsa, about 50 km East of Göttingen, directly on the former border between East and West Germany.



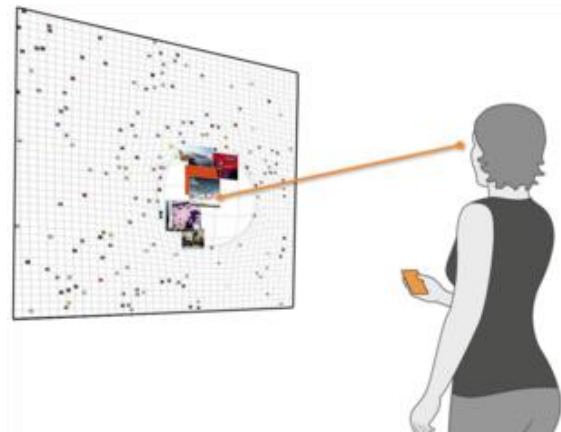
He did his Abitur there in 1987, and – instead of going directly to university due to his strong interest in applied research – first did an apprenticeship as a mathematical-technical assistant with the German Aerospace Center (DLR) in Göttingen. As he realized that also the more theoretical part of computer science can be fun, he joined the Technical University of Braunschweig in 1990 to study computer science, completing his Diploma (Master’s) six years later.

His move to the faculty of computer science at OVGU occurred in 1997 when his mentor and doctoral supervisor, Prof. Rudolf Kruse, moved from the Technical University of Braunschweig to Magdeburg. Andreas earned his PhD (Dr.-Ing.) with Prof. Kruse with a thesis entitled “Recurrent Neuro-Fuzzy Systems for the Analysis of Dynamic Systems” in 2001.

He subsequently spent two years as a post-doctoral fellow working with the founder of fuzzy set theory Lotfi A. Zadeh at the University of California at Berkeley, and was appointed the rank of Junior Professor in Magdeburg in 2003, having secured funding through the prestigious Emmy Noether program of the German Research Foundation (DFG). In 2007, he was promoted to a tenured Professor.

The main focus of his research group, the Data & Knowledge Engineering Group (DKE), is the development of methods for interactive information organization and exploration supported by intelligent (AI) based methods. This involves the development of methods, that mo-

nitor and analyse the behaviour of individual users. The goal is to obtain information about their needs and interests to reorganise the structure and the presentation of the considered information in order to support users individually. Examples of recent research activities are the design of search engines for kids, user behaviour studies e.g. using eye tracking, AI based analyses of medical images and more recently the design of digital twins for mobility research ([www.niimo.ovgu.de/en/IMIQ.html](http://www.niimo.ovgu.de/en/IMIQ.html)).



Source: <https://dl.acm.org/doi/10.1145/1983302.1983303>

In the courses offered by his DKE group, students are conveyed a fundamental introduction in current technologies and have manifold possibilities for collaboration in current interdisciplinary research projects.

Andreas Nürnberger served the FIN as Vice-Dean from 2012–2014, and as Dean from 2014–2020. During this time, he broadened the interdisciplinary co-operations especially with the Engineering and Humanities Faculties and improved the study and working atmosphere e.g. by establishing meeting spots like the Cafebar and the terrace in front of the faculty building.

Andreas wishes the new first year students of our BiBa – and also those in the FIN’s other degree programs – Good Luck in your first steps. His advice to you: Never get behind on your homework because you’d have to skip bits so as to catch up!

## Want to Go Swimming, Anybody?

Many a student's home town either lies by an ocean, a lake, a river, or other bodies of water, and you're used to going swimming when the weather gets hot. What about swimming in Magdeburg?

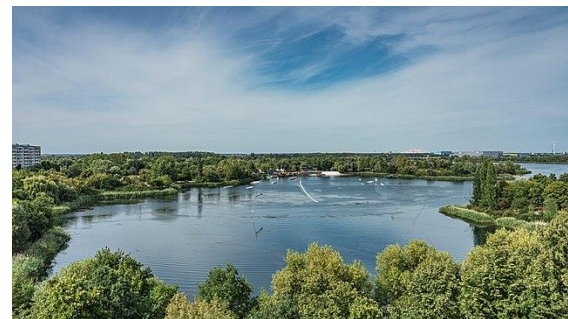
Well, first off you can go to the public swimming pool called the "Nemo", very close to the university. It has everything you would expect or hope for, from large slides, whirlpools, to fun pools and saunas. Its outdoor pool with a large adjoining meadow for sunbathing is perfect in the Summer.

But maybe you just want to find some water, don a bathing suit and jump in? Magdeburg and its surroundings has a number of nice places to go which all can be reached easily by public transportation. For example, "Barleber See" (Lake Barleben) lies due north of Magdeburg, a couple of Kilometers from the University. Neustädter See (New Town Lake) lies even a tad closer to town. Both have sand beaches, and shady places to have a picknick.

Finally, a short note about skinny-dipping: Magdeburg is in the former East Germany, and some things didn't change when the Berlin Wall fell. Among these is East German's attitude toward skinny-dipping, which to this day is socially acceptable.<sup>1</sup> Many beaches have special sections, called "FKK", for "Freikörperkultur" for those who want to hang around without clothing. Watch for the signs – and if

in doubt, do what everyone else is doing, or find a part of the beach where other folks are doing what you want to do! In the former West Germany, things tend to be more prude than the former East – if in doubt there, keep your cover!

In any case, please make sure that you are not offending any of your fellow students by how you yourself dress or behave.



Panoramic View Neustädter See  
Photo: A. Savin, Wikipedia



Water Skiing at Neustädter See. Photo: micadoX, Flickr



Barleber See.

<sup>1</sup> In my (Prof. Thomas') country of origin, Canada, there's a law against skinny-dipping, indeed it's called "indecent exposure" and you can go straight to jail for it! This is deeply entrenched in my soul.

Hence, you're unlikely to find me doing any FKK, and won't any time soon (well, except maybe when it's pitch-dark). But I still enjoy going swimming outdoors, albeit "properly" dressed.

## BiBa Excursions

*Just suppose you are working for an important German IT Company after graduation, and your boss invites you to her home for dinner with her family one evening. She's likely testing you, you want to leave a good impression.*

This is not an unlikely scenario in which your language skills aren't everything, you will need to know what to say and what to do. After three years of BiBa, you should feel comfortable even in such situations. We will show you elements of German society to enable you to understand what Germans talk about – not just from a linguistic point of view, but from a societal one, too, and how they do it.

### Understanding Germany

One of the goals of BiBa is to enable our graduates to integrate into German society, both on a professional level, as well as on a personal level. The basis for this is of course a certain fluency of the language, but it goes further: Understanding Germans' likes and dislikes, how they live, and how they spend their time are also elements of this integration.

As a BiBa graduate, you will be able to handle even such situations as the one described above. "When in Rome, do as the Romans do" is an old saying: When in Magdeburg, you certainly don't have to do everything the locals' way, but you should understand why they do what they do.

Conversely, German students in BiBa will have the chance to explain typically German things to our international BiBas, thereby becoming more aware of their own customs and traditions, while learning about the differences to those of the Internationals.

### Excursions to Experience Germany

To this end, the BiBa Team plans to organize a series of extra-curricular excursions

throughout the year – some in Magdeburg and its environs, like Dessau or the Harz Forest, some to other places in Germany like Berlin and Hamburg. Some of the excursions will be accompanied by an event leading up to it, or one thereafter. For example, when the class goes to a professional sporting event, we will try to reserve the University's gym to play a bit of the sports among ourselves.

After each of the events, the class will meet for a traditional "Nachsitzung", a Post-Event-Meeting, in a nearby pub. Indeed, it's an old academic German tradition that you meet to chat after the close of business. This "Nachsitzung" is part of the excursion.

The university will subsidize, though not fully pay for, the events. We will attempt to restrict the



cost per excursion and student to at most 10 € including a drink or two during the Nachsitzung.<sup>2</sup> This represents a fraction of the actual cost of taking part in the excursion. Attendance is not mandatory; however, we do hope that everyone will want to go out together and experience the building block of German society which we want to show you.

### The First Three Excursions

The table shown on the next page lists which excursions are currently being planned between the start of term and Christmas.

First, we plan to attend a handball game at the end of October. Magdeburg has an excellent team that was first in the premier league last year, and won the Champion's league in 2023. The stadium seats about 7,000 fans and can easily be reached by public transportation – or even by foot from the University.

<sup>2</sup> If a BiBa class member is so strapped for cash that whatever amount remains to be paid is still too

much, don't worry. Please come to see Prof. Thomas in this case, we'll find a solution for you.

Why is attending a handball game a worthwhile excursion for a bilingual computer science undergraduate program? Well, what do you think the talk of the office and the town is the next morning? And if you've never been to a game in your life, you really can't contribute to the conversations. And we want you to be able to participate when your hosts start talking about this. So: You don't necessarily have to go to the games every week (though who knows, you might turn into a season ticket holder ...), but once in a lifetime is part of being an educated academic in Germany.

Believe it or not, Christmas is approaching quickly, and one of the special things in Germany are the Christmas Markets which spring up all over. At the end of November, we'll visit the one in Magdeburg just as soon as it opens, and taste some traditional mulled wine and Lebkuchen.

Finally, classical concerts are linked to Germany like elsewhere peanut butter to jam. After all, Germany has produced many important composers, like Johann Sebastian Bach, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, Georg Friedrich Händel, Georg Philipp Telemann (btw a native son of Magdeburg), Richard Wagner, Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, and Ludwig van Beethoven of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Concerts also unite folks who aren't fluent yet in each other's languages. Hence, the 3<sup>rd</sup> excursion, also marking the last day of BiBa-lectures for 2024, will be to a concert, albeit of composers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### Future Excursions

At the beginning, our excursions are focusing on societal value. But as our BiBas become more proficient in computer science, we will visit more companies working on specific tasks, labs or other scientific institutions. The following list gives you an idea of the excursions which are considering.

- Production: VW assembly line
- Data Centers: e.g. Quantum Computer at IBM; Chip Production: INTEL, IT Start-up hub in Berlin
- Sports: Go to a soccer game of the German premier league ("Bundesliga").
- Music: Attend a concert in the Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg and a performance at the age-old State Opera in Berlin.
- Museums: visit the Magdeburg Museum of Cultural History, and the important museums in Berlin, including the one for German History and the Technical Museum.
- State Institutions: Visit the parliament of the City of Magdeburg, the State of Saxony-Anhalt, and the Bundestag / -rat. Try out the "Einbürgerungstest" just for fun.
- High Society: Take part in the OVGU University Ball with a dance course beforehand; take a one-day golf course.
- Hiking as a great German pastime: Walk up the Brocken from Schierke; move on to the alps and hike from one Alpine Chalet (Hütte) to the next.
- Partake in a German passion: Spend a day looking for mushrooms in a nearby forest.

BiBa Excursions Fall 2024	When ( <u>tentatively</u> )	What	See also
	Sunday, October 20, 2024, 4:00 pm	Handball game in the German premier league, Magdeburg versus Leipzig	
	Friday, November 28, 2024, 7:00 pm	A Stroll through the newly opened Magdeburg Christmas Market	
	Thursday, December 19, 2024, 7:30 pm (we'll be celebrating the last day of classes of 2024)	Magdeburg Philharmonic Orchestra, with music of important 20 <sup>th</sup> century composers including George Gershwin (Rhapsody in Blue), Paul Dukas and Maurice Ravel	

### Culture in Magdeburg

If you are interested in modern art and interesting architecture, the “Hyperschale” (or “Hyperbowl”) may be the place for you. It’s located in Rotehornpark on the island in the Elbe River. You’ll stumble across it when exploring the area around the River by foot some day (20 minutes from the university).



Magdeburg Hyperbowl. Photo: Mirco Ziegner

The building itself was designed in the 60’s by the architect Ulrich Müther, and features a saddle roof, or a hyperbolic paraboloid, which the name of the building references.

Forgotten for many years, it was recently completely renovated by the high-power architects von Gerkan, Marg und Partner (gmp) and is now a spectacular venue used for events for between 200 and 500 attendees.

The first exhibition depicts a collection of works of Banksy, arguably the world’s most famous street artist. You can see the exhibition “Banksy, a vandal turned idol” in Magdeburg until Nov. 10, 2024 (tickets are a tad pricy, 16 € or so for students) before it moves elsewhere, and at the same time get an impression of the unusual architecture of the Hyperbowl. The building is worth a visit in its own right, even without an event!



Photo gallery of Magdeburg’s newly renovated Hyperbowl

Barsky exhibition of street art



### About us, your BiBa Editorial Team

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Date of publication: August 14, 2024

