software/cloud engineer; AI Masters Student
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IT:U Summer School Motivation Letter

Submitted with resume
… and I see my 2023 *application video* **for IDSAxArs Electronica FL still online!**

I look back with glee and excitement at my time at the Found Lab, in Post City and at Ars Electronica Festival 2023: the learning, international and intercultural exchanges, as well as collaboration with the artists, in the fantastic venue (!) remains such a singular experience in my life, with real learning outcomes, I want to propose: as I look back on my work and accomplishments since, I cannot help but see how the lab changed my mindset for the better, be it more rigorously inclusive, louder and ambitious in scope, and more daringly technical without sacrificing vision.

I want to make this concrete: I come out of my Update Social LIFT_C project (with research feed) after delivering the final presentation and project code repository to go with an entire concept for a service model at Johannes Kepler University (JKU) for making each and every single document (screenreader) accessible, serving the members of the community who need it most, indeed establishing a new community of practice around this idea. The technical prototype continues to be promising and I have taken it up as my masters thesis at not one, but three institutes at JKU, the Institute of Machine Learning, the Institute for Applied Knowledge Processing (FAW) and the Institute of Integrated Study (Integriert Studieren). My timeline for completion of the thesis scientific evaluation work of the prototype is spring 2025.

But it is the main lesson from the summer school back in 2023 that emerges for me just now: I don't think I would have led a team of four students to address such an ambitious topic without the experience in PostCity, challenging me not just for intellectual rigour, but actually inclusive leadership to cut across disciplines and create something that is new and better for society than what exists now, all the while maintaining openness and dialog. This is the transformative idea of IT:U, I am pretty sure I am discovering day-to-day and again and again.

I see this new 2024 summer school and particularly the data lab as not only the collaborative and ideation starting point as I go into the grind of doing the necessary legwork, after focussing on my Machine Learning Masters degree for the interim year, but a summer breather in exchange with an entirely new university next door and most importantly, ambitious people from all over the place, not just geographically speaking, poised to capture the spirit of the (Summer) Founding Lab 2023.

A particular point of interest for me is also the scouting of potential PhD placements in 2025, as this next leg of my academic journey emerges in the near future. I remain committed to the transformational ideals being pioneered by IT:U in the local context of Linz and would be honoured to be selected for this program. (Links to the project I discussed in this letter provided in the text.)

Thank you for your consideration. See also https://heseltime.github.io/ for a portfolio