

## Patrons Safeguard Excellence

■ **Giving** – The two wealthiest men in the world are planning to combine their good works: this summer, American investor Warren Buffet announced that he was turning over part of his vast fortune to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The Foundation is dedicated to preventing the spread of disease and epidemics worldwide. Much of its funding is devoted to the development of new medicines and vaccines, and thus, in effect, to science – and among the recipients is the Max Planck Institute for Infection Biology. But America is not the only place where patrons like Gates and Buffet can be found. Here in Germany, likewise this summer, private donors established the Excellence Foundation to promote the Max Planck Society (page 82f.). This private funding cannot replace public sector financing – nor is it intended to – but it does open up new opportunities and give us greater flexibility. It helps us safeguard our ability to compete in the international contest for the best minds and results. Many thanks indeed to all who are supporting us!

■ **Strengthening** – One of the principal concerns of the Max Planck Society is to offer optimum conditions for research. That naturally also includes the ability to combine research and family. Especially in the world of science, parents can't afford to be out of the game for too long – otherwise, in light of the pace of scientific progress, they would soon lose touch. For this reason, it is essential that they be able to quickly return to their institute after their child is born. We have set ourselves the goal of enabling our staff, at least at all of the larger Max Planck institute sites, to access childcare facilities for even the smallest infants. Such services are already available at 22 of our institutes. In order to further improve conditions for our researchers, the Max Planck Society voluntarily underwent a family-friendliness audit by the *berufundfamilie* (job and family) organization this year (page 85). Once again, we are taking a pioneering lead in the German scientific community. We have already

received our initial audit certificate – and with it, the confirmation that we are on the right track. We now also have new ideas and suggestions as to how the Max Planck Society can become even more family friendly in the future. After all, we aim to be an innovative organization, and not just in research.

■ **Restricting** – Innovative is a term that ought to apply also to the revised rules on copyright that, after years in preparation, are now before the German parliament. Given the present capabilities of computers and the Internet, there is no question that reform is needed. However, the draft on the table is far removed from the interests of education and science. In view of the potential of existing technology, the way in which public libraries will be permitted to offer the use of their electronic reading stations and transmit copies of articles is anachronistic and serves to benefit commercial providers. Above all, however, the draft presented by the government fails to provide for any secondary exploitation rights that benefit scientific authors. In other words,

scientists still can – and in practice frequently must – sign over exclusive rights to their publishers in order to get their findings published. As a result, they are then prohibited from posting their own scientific papers, either on their own Web sites or in a shared database such as the Max Planck Society's eSciDoc. The fact is overlooked that this supposed protection for small German publishing houses in fact benefits primarily large foreign publishers – companies that are already making huge profits. Together with universities and other scientific organizations, we continue to work toward a science-friendly reform of this legislation – and we encourage our researchers to publish their results in the spirit of open access. To read about the opportunities that are already being taken advantage of, turn to page 26.



Peter Gruss, President of the Max Planck Society

*Fig. 11*

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