

“I was simply relieved”

Gerard Meijer, Director at the FHI, talks about the DEAL project and negotiating with Wiley

He played a leading role in bringing the negotiations between the DEAL project and publishing company Wiley to a successful conclusion: Gerard Meijer, Director at the Fritz-Haber-Institut in Berlin since 2017, has long been an advocate of Open Access. The Dutch scientist gave our interviewer a look behind the scenes of the three-year negotiating marathon.

DEAL project spokesperson Horst Hippler described the conclusion of the agreement on January 15, 2019 as “a milestone.” How did you feel that day?

Gerard Meijer: I was simply relieved. The weeks before the deal was closed cost a lot of time and nervous energy. I remember saying to my wife, “If this doesn’t work out, all the work I’ve done over the last two months will have been a waste of time.” But once the deal was done, everything was forgotten (laughs).

So you were afraid that the deal with Wiley might fall through right up until the agreement was about to be signed?

Yes, we wrangled over details right up to the finish. After all, this was the first agreement of its kind in Germany – and there was a lot of money involved. We didn’t manage to conclude the negotiations before Christmas. After that, Brian Napack, President and CEO of Wiley, and I were of one mind: “We have to set ourselves a deadline no matter what. Either the deal will be done by January 11 – or it will all be over.”

How did you manage to turn things around?

During the week before January 11, Brian Napack flew over from the U.S., especially

so that he could sit in on the negotiations. For two days, we sat at the negotiating table discussing the details right up until midnight – nine hours on one day and 15 hours on the other.

Two days of marathon negotiations...

Yes, we really got down to brass tacks. But the results were worth the effort. After the second day, it was clear that we had done it. On January 11, I had a very pleasant phone conversation with Brian Napack, in which we both said, “Now everything’s fine!”

Let us take another look back. The MPG delegated you to start negotiations at the beginning of 2017. How did that happen?

Well, it wasn’t my first time at the negotiating table. Before I came back to Germany in 2017, I was involved in similar negotiations at home, in the Netherlands, as President of the Radboud University in Nijmegen.

That means you’re probably the first scientist to take part in negotiations for a national license in two different countries.

How far did this contribute to your success? That was a clear advantage. In the past, the large publishing companies had things all their own way. They increased their prices by about five percent every year. Nobody knew exactly how much was paid in the other countries and why. Negotiations didn’t take place on an equal footing for a long time.

In what respect?

The publishing companies always send the same people to the negotiating table no matter where they are in Europe – or possibly even the world. They are really tough



Gerard Meijer

negotiators and know exactly what’s happening in each country. The academics, on the other hand, have a different negotiating team in every country. That’s what made it all the more important to exchange experiences with other countries over those three years.

Three years of negotiations – what took so long?

The agreement with Wiley broke completely new ground. There had never been a national license of this kind in Germany before. We had to get to know each other, build mutual trust, learn to respect the other side’s ideas. That takes time and was the only way to establish a true partnership from which both sides would benefit. This is something else that the last three years have shown: publishing companies and academics need each other if they are to move towards Open Access.

What was the highlight of those three years for you personally?

Without a doubt the birth of MPDL Services GmbH. It was already clear by the beginning of September 2018 that we’d agreed all the most important details with Wiley. A consensus had also been reached within the DEAL negotiating group.

That sounds like a big “but”...

Yes, although we had come a long way in terms of content, we found that we didn’t have the structure necessary to actually conclude a contract. We had no idea which of the people involved in the DEAL project had the mandate to sign the agreement.

What happened next?

I emailed an urgent appeal to President Stratmann and Secretary General Willems

The most important points agreed by DEAL and Wiley

- For an annual fee, all institutions represented by DEAL will have access to all the scientific journals published by Wiley as far back as 1997.
- Researchers at these institutions can also publish their articles in Wiley’s journals as Open Access publications.
- The authors will retain the copyright rather than ceding it to the publisher, as was previously the case.

that same evening: "If the Max-Planck-Gesellschaft doesn't intervene, the DEAL project will be a disaster. The MPG has to save it – for DEAL and for the whole of Germany."

The birth of MPDL Services GmbH ...

Yes, although it wasn't an easy process. The MPG's funds are meant for basic research – not for founding limited liability companies. For that reason, we needed the consent of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the Joint Science Conference (GWK). Because things had to move quickly, our request was fast forwarded through the GWK – for the first time in 15 years.

So in the end, the agreement came into being because all the cogs fit together.

Yes, and thanks to the tremendous personal commitment of the staff members at the MPG: Stratmann, Willems, Prugger, Schleier and with him the entire Legal Department, MPDL – all of them pulled together! And the dedication shown by Ralf Schimmer and Frank Sander can't be commended highly enough. Sanders took over the management of MPDL Services GmbH and signed the agreement on January 15. All in all, a great example of what the MPG can achieve!

So the first deal has been done. Where do things go from here?

I hope that the contract will have a signal effect and encourage the other major publishing companies to get on board. We also want to conclude national agreements with the smaller publishers. What's more, we will be setting up an interdisciplinary Open Access journal in cooperation with Wiley. Closing the deal is one thing, but making Open Access public is at least equally important!

Interview: Petra Maaß

Public access to the full agreement is available online:
www.projekt-deal.de/about-deal

Cyber Valley reaches the next level

Cyber Valley is continuing to take shape. Most of the leadership positions in the ten research groups set up as part of the business and science initiative have now been filled. This is one of the central goals of the research alliance, which aims to advance the development of artificial intelligence (AI). The cooperative venture set up by the MPG, the state of Baden-Wuerttemberg with the Universities of Stuttgart and Tuebingen and the industrial partners aims to facilitate the establishment of start-up companies in Cyber Valley.

With this in mind, the partners have now signed contracts that lay down rules for dealing with issues such as intellectual property. "Scientists from academic research facilities are invariably permitted to use inventions developed while working on the Cyber Valley project for new spin-offs before they are used for anything else," says Linda Behringer, press officer for the MPI for Intelligent Systems.

Meanwhile, all five Research Group Leaders at the MPI for Intelligent Systems and their three colleagues at the University of Tuebingen have now started work. The two remaining Research Group Leaders at the University of Stuttgart are currently being selected. Moreover, Matthias Hein and Philipp Hennig have taken two of the professorships additionally created in Cyber Valley.

Meanwhile, numerous events such as forums, lecture series and a science slam have been organized in Tuebingen and Stuttgart with the aim of engaging the public in dialog on AI research and the Cyber Valley initiative in particular. These events are the researchers' response to the criticisms of Cyber Valley expressed in public, for example with regard to possible military applications of AI. "But it goes without saying that no weapons research is conducted in Cyber Valley!" says Linda Behringer. Many of the scientists in Cyber Valley are against autonomous weapons.

There are also reservations about collaborative endeavors with commercial organizations such as Amazon. "Both sides can benefit from the dialog between application-oriented industrial research and curiosity-driven basic research," says Bernhard Schölkopf. The Director at the MPI for Intelligent Systems is also



Breathing life into avatars: researchers in Tuebingen are developing ways of creating realistic, animated 3D models of the body.

working as an Amazon Scholar within the 20 percent timeframe allowed for researchers to perform ancillary activities. Collaboration with commercial partners promotes the translation of basic research into applications, while academic researchers gain insight into the problems that companies are trying to solve besides obtaining inspiration for their work.

The commitment of Amazon in particular has helped Cyber Valley achieve great international visibility, as a result of which the initiative now attracts talented AI experts from all over the world – a central goal for Schölkopf. "It is a matter of personal importance to me that the Cyber Valley region remains a leading European and global center in the field of artificial intelligence."



Wolfgang Gass and Leonhard Schilbach in the documentary series "Ich, einfach unvermittelbar?". Wolfgang Gass passed all the cognitive tests with flying colors (left to right).

When your colleague is a little different

People with autism often have astonishing abilities from which companies can benefit

Patients with a diagnosis of autism usually have difficulties finding a job. The Day Clinic for Disorders of Social Interaction at the MPI for Psychiatry helps them look for work – and adopts unconventional methods in doing so.

A timetable written on an enormous whiteboard: blood tests, morning rounds, various individual and group therapies – all the details are noted clearly and concisely. This timetable serves as orientation and provides support and structure, from 8 am to 4 pm, Mondays to Fridays for a period of six weeks.

At the day clinic in Munich, adults with high-functioning autism learn to deal with the challenges of the working world, which often seem to them to be beyond their control. "From the application process to getting started in the new company and making small talk: our job-oriented training helps them get started or find their way back to work," says social worker Sabine Kieseewetter. Interpersonal communication in particular is an obstacle for many autistic people. Greeting, brief conversations in passing, maintaining eye contact during interviews – they practice all this during individual coaching sessions.

"People with autism perceive their world in great detail but find it difficult to intuitively interpret the emotions of the people around them," explains Leonhard Schilbach. The psychiatrist is the Director of the Outpatient and Day Clinic for Disorders of Social Interaction at the MPI for Psychiatry in Munich. Imprecisely formulated work instructions can easily give rise to misunderstandings at work. As an example, Schilbach tells the story of a patient on work experience who, after printing a set of documents and being asked by his superior to print another set ("And now the same in green!"), printed them out in the color green. These job seekers rarely lack intelligence; their difficulties are with the unwritten rules of society. Many of them have an exceptional eye for detail, a gift for recognizing patterns and are excellent logical thinkers.

Like Wolfgang Gass (46), who completed his Master's degree with an average grade of 1.9, studied electronics and

trained as a mechanical engineer. Despite all this, the highly gifted Gass was unable to find a job. "Why am I in this world if nobody wants me and my skills and talents are useless?" he asked in the Vox TV series "Ich, einfach unvermittelbar?" ("Unemployable Me?"). During the series, which was broadcast at the end of 2018 and was nominated for the Deutscher Fernsehpreis (German Television Awards) and the Grimme Award, people with diagnoses such as autism and Tourette syndrome got to know their true strengths by undergoing specialized diagnostic procedures. Gass now works near Zurich.

While the series was being filmed, he made the acquaintance of Leonhard Schilbach – "a pleasant, busy man," as Gass describes him. The psychiatrist had also been cast for the series but took a long time to decide whether he should take part. "Although the MPI for Psychiatry was already forging unconventional paths in its cooperation with employees such as Auticon and BMW, appearance in a television series is not really one of the tasks of a doctor and scientist." However, it was the opportunity to lift the taboo on the diagnosis of autism that finally persuaded Schilbach to take part in this experiment. His task was to find out the strengths of the autistic protagonists.

The psychiatrist soon realized that Wolfgang Gass had great potential. "He knows a lot about his autism, is open about it and has remarkable intellectual abilities." Schilbach was therefore delighted when Gass was offered a job with a spin-off of the Goethe University in Frankfurt before the series came to an end. The two men are still in contact.

Most former patients do not stay in contact with clinic staff after spending time at the day clinic in Munich. And yet touching scenes still happen, as assistant physician Judith Gollmitzer explains: "Most of our patients have years of suffering behind them. Here they notice that they are not alone with their problems." This is an experience that can have a lasting impact on the patients – on their way towards a more satisfactory working and private life.