SCHLOSS DAGSTUHL
Leibniz-Zentrum für Informatik

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Dagstuhl and the ability to cycle there

A Development Story

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0 Prolog

The former International Meeting and Research Center for Informatics (IBFI) and current Leibniz Center for Informatics in Schloss Dagstuhl (LZI) has, in the more than 30 years of its existence, acquired a reputation as a breeding ground for ideas and research collaborations in Informatics. It is now an indispensable part of the world of Informatics. I was its first scientific director for 24 years and experienced the founding phase like few others. The development of the IBFI or LZI, here mostly called Dagstuhl after its seat in Schloss Dagstuhl, was not always as easy as the result might suggest. In the initial phase there were certainly different views on the tasks, methods and structures. I think the development of this institution is worth documenting.

The description is not entirely linear on a timeline, as it actually happened, but I have structured it to make reading a little more entertaining by referring to bicycle rides that I took from Saarbrücken, where I live, to Dagstuhl. As many people know, cycling is one of my passions. The number of trips I have actually made is somewhat greater than described here. In order to establish a connection between each trip and the developments in Dagstuhl, the order of the trips has been changed. The essence of the development story has remained unaffected.

I based the title of this story on the title of a book that was once very popular internationally: *Zen or the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* by Robert M. Pirsig.

* Translated to English via Google Translate and polished by Thomas W. Reps.

Figure 1 A proposed bicycle route. © Apple Maps

1 The first ride, a fitness test

Kurt Mehlhorn was the benchmark. He was my role model in many other ways, a professor before one could become a professor under German civil service law, quick in the head and quick in the legs. After all, he had ridden his racing bike to the Mathematical Research Institute in Oberwolfach high up in the Black Forest and had to manage around 200 km with hundreds of meters of elevation. I just rode through the city forest to the university campus every day. Well, there was a small pass to negotiate. I had only cycled with Kurt once. We rode back to university together from an appointment at the ministry. I chatted happily as we rode up my little pass until Kurt groaned slightly and said, “Reinhard, slow down! I can’t go that fast.”

But he had made it to Dagstuhl by bike in two hours. His mark, my benchmark, was: From Saarbrücken to Dagstuhl in two hours. That was to be beaten.

I had already driven to the International Meeting and Research Center for Computer Science in Dagstuhl Castle several times, where I had become the Scientific Director. But I should be able to manage the roughly 50 km by bike. Now I had packed my bike with the essentials for a week. My planned route led through the Rußhütte, soon after left up in the direction of Riegelsberg, then onto the B268, followed this to Lebach, turned left towards Schmelz and then up the nasty slope at the Lebach hospital. Wait a minute! Now I had to get off and push. I had overestimated my fitness and underestimated the topography of the Saarland. For an untrained cyclist, the climb from Saarbrücken to Riegelsberg with a difference in altitude of more than 100 m was already a bit strenuous, then there were descents and climbs again in Riegelsberg, Heusweiler and on the open road. As a result of my overexertion, I now pushed myself up a decent incline on a busy road with no cycle path, sidewalk or shoulder within sight of the Lebach hospital. Having mastered this, I went downhill to Schmelz, from there along the Prims river to a village called Schattertriesch, finally via Nunkirchen, Büschfeld and Bardenbach to Dagstuhl. Duration of the ride? Beyond good and evil!

But how did it come about that I became the scientific director of a computer science center that was founded not long ago?

The model

The Oberwolfach Mathematical Research Institute, founded in 1944, is located in the middle of the Black Forest. It is a world-famous meeting place for mathematicians. For several years, theoretical computer scientists, including Günter Hotz and Kurt Mehlhorn of our department, met there for conferences lasting a week each. Because these conferences bore extraordinarily rich scientific fruit, the idea arose to found a center with a similar concept for computer science. The Gesellschaft für Informatik (GI), the German Association for Computer Science, set up a search committee to find a location and a building. The head of this search committee was Heinz Schwätrzel and one of the members of was Günter Hotz. My story began with this search.

Schloss Dagstuhl

The Dagstuhl estate had a very eventful history, in which an archbishop of Trier from the von Sötern family, the French revolutionary troops and, from 1807, the de Lasalle von Louisenthal family all played a role. The last de Lasalle to live in Dagstuhl Castle, Baron Theodor, suffered serious health damage in a plane crash in the First World War and suffered from depression and confusion. It is not surprising that the castle was rather run down in his time. In 1959, de Lasalle finally died in the Saarland Psychiatric Hospital in Merzig.

In 1961, a Franciscan nuns order received the Schloss and decided to set up a retirement home there. They passed it on to the Franciscan sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Angels from Waldbreitbach. This order, which is dedicated to nursing and social work, runs about as many hospitals, retirement homes and nursing homes as the Leibniz Association has institutes, i.e., more than 80.

The attempt to run a retirement home in Dagstuhl Castle failed, however, probably because the senior citizens did not want to live so far away from any action. The nuns had commissioned an architect from northern Saarland to renovate the castle, who followed his vision of a German castle and was thereby abandoned by the Blessed Virgin Mary and her angels. The criticism of his stylistically dubious and expensive renovations left him deeply embittered. When the Saarland bought the castle and converted it to be used as an Informatics center, the then state conservator, who had looked on with horror at the renovations approved by his predecessor, advised us to "rebuild gently!" We followed this advice whenever a renovation was due.

The search for a location

At about the time in the late 1980s when the Franciscan sisters had given up on the retirement home plan for Dagstuhl Castle, the commission from the German Informatics Society (GI) was looking for a location for an Informatics meeting center, an Oberwolfach for Informatics. Then, as often happens in this history, chance and Saarland conditions came into

Figure 2 Schloss Dagstuhl.

play. The chairman of the search committee, GI president and head of Informatics research at Siemens, Heinz Schwärtzel, came from northern Saarland. He learned from his mother that Dagstuhl Castle was for sale.

The state government under Oskar Lafontaine at the time was in a spirit of optimism, and computer science played an important role in its plans for the future of Saarland. A small but strong computer science department had developed at the Saarland University. This led to the first Max Planck Institute for Computer Science being established in Saarbrücken. At about the same time, Rhineland-Palatinate and Saarland founded the German Research Center for Artificial Intelligence (DFKI) with the help of a Chancellor from the Palatinate. A computer science meeting center in northern Saarland was seen as a welcome addition.

It helped that the location was in the constituency of Saarland Finance Minister Hans Kaspar. This constituency in turn bordered on the constituency of the then Rhineland-Palatinate Finance Minister and later Prime Minister Carl-Ludwig Wagner. It was easy to discuss joint founding plans over a cup of coffee in the Hochwald. It was possible to win Rhineland-Palatinate as a co-founder and co-sponsor. The Saarland Prime Minister Oskar Lafontaine also convinced his Baden-Württemberg colleague Lothar Späth to help with the founding and sponsoring. In addition to the majority shareholder, the GI, the three federal states designated the following universities as shareholders of the GmbH (Limited Liability Company) to be founded: Saarland University and the universities in Kaiserslautern and Karlsruhe. Unfortunately, the government in

Baden-Württemberg changed, and a new finance minister, who was more concerned with football than science, cut the budget item, co-financing the International Meeting and Research Center for Computer Science, Schloss Dagstuhl, from the budget. Saarland took over the share of the funding intended for Baden-Württemberg.

The Saarland state government then offered Dagstuhl Castle to the GI as the location of the Informatics center. The search committee visited Dagstuhl Castle and several other properties in Baden-Württemberg and Rhineland-Palatinate and recommended Dagstuhl Castle as the location of the center. The German National Science Council agreed with this recommendation under the condition that an extension building was added.

At this point, one must imagine what would have happened if the negotiations had taken place just six months later, in 1990. A highly interesting historical building would certainly have been found in one of the five accession states in East Germany. From the point of view of promoting the East, the center would certainly have ended up there. The founding phase therefore took place within a very tight time frame!

After recommending Dagstuhl Castle as a center for Informatics, Saarland bought the castle and some of the properties in its immediate vicinity in 1989. Some of the properties already belonged to Saarland because the bunker for the Saarland state government was located right next to the castle. The negotiations with the Franciscan nuns were led by the gray eminence of the finance minister, who has had an astonishing series of civil, criminal, and political careers. When he arrived in Dagstuhl for the decisive negotiations, the nuns were already lying in suspense behind the curtains. They were deeply moved that he first disappeared into the chapel to pray, as they suspected, for the success of the negotiations. In fact, he saw nothing wrong with smoking a cigarette in the late Baroque chapel.

Negotiations were started on the establishment of a carrier company between the Society for Computer Science and the three founding universities. The negotiations were not easy because both sides had different ideas about the tasks of the center. The university negotiators wanted a meeting place optimized for maximum communication, with a rather

spartan interior, while the GI negotiators envisioned manager training in a noble environment. This was repeatedly symbolized by the question of whether there should be a television in every room. For the university negotiators, this meant isolating the participants and disrupting communication; for the industrial negotiators, it represented an indispensable part of the comfort infrastructure. There was no general agreement about the concept to be implemented. Nevertheless, the International Meeting and Research Center for Informatics GmbH was founded in the spring of 1990. For me, as the founding director and supporter of the spartan no-television approach, the disagreement about the concept meant that I was not sure how long I would be able to carry out this task. The different objectives of the GI and the university side were clarified quite easily; after a short time, it became clear that the concept inherited from Oberwolfach was successful. The GI quickly declared itself the mother of success and all problems were eliminated.

The search for the founding director

How did I become the first scientific director? After the founding of the carrier company, the question arose as to who should set up and manage the center. Everyone agreed that it should be a professor of computer science at the University of Saarland. This reduced the number of candidates, because the computer science department was still very small at the time. In addition, Kurt Mehlhorn, one of the professors, was setting up the Max Planck Institute for Computer Science, and Wolfgang Wahlster, another colleague, was setting up the German Research Center for Artificial Intelligence (DFKI). People looked at me expectantly. I thought I was incapable of doing something like that, given my Sauerlandish, and therefore rather poor, basic diplomatic equipment. The idea of having to be obliging or even friendly towards the expected oversized egos with their unjustified demands among the guests sent shivers down my spine. After some persuasion from my wife, who did not share my concerns, I agreed to become the first scientific director of the center. The technical and administrative management was taken over by Wolfgang Lorenz, the head of the President's Office of Saarland University.

Figure 3 A few of our first hires, Ms Simon, Ms Schneider, Mr Schneider, Mr Schmidt, Ms Paulus, Ms Britz (from the left).

In April 1990 we began construction, decided on renovation measures, selected furniture and, most importantly, hired staff. On the whole, we had a lucky hand, perhaps because we systematically ignored recommendations from the Saarland ministries. I would like to use two examples to illustrate how important people were for the success of the center. Angelika Müller-von Brochowski took over the management of the Dagstuhl office. Her commitment to the cause, her instinct for dealing with guests correctly and her technical competence in setting up the infrastructure are legendary. Josefine Schneider was hired for administration and reception. When the guests were welcomed by her on Sunday afternoons, they felt that it was genuine. Mrs. Schneider radiated this credibility. She also had a skill that made me, who has a chronically bad memory for people, green with envy. Every Sunday afternoon she saw about 40 people for the first time in her life. When a call came in for guest X on Monday morning during breakfast, she would walk straight up to him or her and get him or her on the phone; she actually had 40 name-face connections stored!

An important decision was whether to cook in a kind of tea kitchen in very cramped conditions or to have the food delivered. It was before the time, that one in three Saarlanders did run a catering business as they do today. The only local supplier would have been the kitchen at the hospital in Wadern. Anyone who has ever set foot in a hospital knows the quality of the usual hospital food. Anyone who also knows our American friends'

fear of all kinds of germs can easily imagine how the information about the origin of the food would have affected them. So, the decision was clear: we cooked ourselves, and from the very beginning in the Saarland style, which was wonderful.

Not only did business operations get up and running very quickly, but the spirit of Schloss Dagstuhl, which is now famous around the world, was created. This spirit consists of largely invisible helpers ensuring that the participants in the research seminars at Schloss Dagstuhl lack nothing that is necessary for their successful work. In addition, we had employees from the very beginning who thought for us and knew what was important. I always like to tell an anecdote about this. A well-known computer scientist from New York City took part in one of the first Dagstuhl seminars, its topic was Algorithmic Geometry. On the registration letter he had not stated that he was a diabetic, although we had explicitly asked about dietary restrictions. When cleaning his room on the first day, our staff found his diabetic medication. At the next meal, a diabetic meal was in front of him. He sat in front of it and couldn't believe what he saw. Moved to tears, he called his colleagues together to show them how the well-being of guests was taken care of at Dagstuhl Castle. This event spread like wildfire through the Informatics world. When I look back today, it seems to me that this good spirit of Dagstuhl made and still makes a decisive contribution to the success.

The guests also felt the friendliness of the Saarlanders on several occasions. At one of the first seminars, a guest flew overnight to Frankfurt and decided to wait in Dagstuhl for the house to open at 3 p.m. instead of at the airport. He got into conversation with someone on the train via Mainz and said that he wanted to go to Dagstuhl, but that the house didn't open until 3 p.m. He was then put in the waiting car in St. Wendel, invited to Sunday lunch, and delivered to Dagstuhl at 3 p.m. sharp.

A Frenchman wanted to spend his Sunday afternoon going for a hike. He got lost, it was getting dark, and then he saw the lonely, distant light that is familiar from many fairy tales. He went towards it, found a house and knocked on the door. It was opened for him, he was greeted in a friendly manner, and driven to Dagstuhl and dropped off there.

The concept

Figure 4 The Mathematics Research Institute in Oberwolfach.

What we wanted to achieve was set out in an exemplary manner by the Mathematical Research Institute in Oberwolfach (MFO), a place for optimal communication between scientists. The MFO had found a few mechanisms for this that were easy to copy: Completely free scheduling, i.e., not the typical 25-minute lecture + 5-minute discussion scheme of usual conferences. Rather more time for discussions and also many rooms for discussion in smaller groups. We could not copy a concept for computer access from the MFO. There was only one PC there that was connected to the Internet. It was clear from the start that computer scientists needed computer access. We concentrated the workstations in computer rooms to counteract isolation. In fact, the computer rooms became places of intensive communication until, sadly, the era of the laptop ended our ability to influence things.

The randomly determined seating arrangement, which changed at all main meals, was adopted from Oberwolfach in order to get as many participants as possible talking to each other over the course of the week. Also the wine cellar for the important evening discussions, the hike or excursion as a break on Wednesday afternoons and also the hall for making music. These social activities promote communication and for many are part of the Dagstuhl experience.

Wolfgang Lorenz and I received valuable advice from the long-standing director of the MFO, Martin Barner. We visited him before we started our work. He warned us in particular against allowing hereditary conferences to develop, i.e., series of conferences that continue despite the declining relevance of the field, although they should actually make room for better motivated conferences given the limited capacity. Barner did not just mean weeks that were regularly dedicated to specific topics, but also long-standing organizer teams as it was common in Oberwolfach. One of the consequences of the lack of change at the top was a lack of exchange among the participants. The motto could be "Old chaps meet." We heeded Barner's advice and from the beginning took more control over our conferences, which we called Dagstuhl Seminars. Teams of organizers had to renew themselves, at least in part, when the topic was repeated; a certain continuity was definitely desired. This rule was noted with some grumbling by colleagues with experience in Oberwolfach. The suggested lists of proposed participants were examined and modifications were often requested when reviewers or members of the Scientific Directorate knew people who were missing. This sometimes went so far that the directorate ordered a few "troublemakers" to attend a seminar that wanted to bring together a very homogeneous group on a highly controversial topic, with the explicit task of questioning the group's basic assumptions. The reactions to this were often, "Whom is Dagstuhl forcing upon us?", but reactions after the Seminar were almost always positive.

A typical mistake, especially among younger applicants, was and is that they wanted to enrich their list of participants by listing all the gurus from their own and neighboring areas. Experience shows, however, that a real guru, at least a German guru, cannot participate because every week he has a fireside chat with the Chancellor of the Federal Republic, a meeting with the Federal Minister for Research, two project assessments, and several cooperation meetings with industry and is therefore unfortunately unable to attend.

Our responsibility for the participant lists has a relieving effect on the organizers; it relieves them of the obligation to invite colleagues who are no longer active and to whom they may have personal obligations. Dagstuhl, the scientific directorate and ultimately the scientific director have a broad

back and can survive toxic reactions from colleagues who (justifiably) were not invited more easily than an organizer who is presented with a bill at an inopportune time.

This is perhaps a good place to return to my initial concern that I would be unable to deal with the oversized egos of some colleagues. I was amazed to discover that Dagstuhl's success and general appreciation gave me an authority that made discussions, even with the biggest egos, much easier. I would like to add a telling anecdote to this. An organizer of a Dagstuhl seminar annoyed the head of the Dagstuhl office, Angelika Müller-von Brochowski, by claiming that he knew everything better than her, even though she had been very successfully managing the logistics behind the Dagstuhl seminars for several years. No matter what the problem was, he knew it better than Angelika. Eventually, this even exceeded her actually endless patience. She drew my attention to this problematic gentleman and his annoying behavior and asked me to make him aware of the inappropriateness of his behavior during my weekly visit to Dagstuhl. So, I drove out to Dagstuhl and thought about how I should confront this obviously oversized ego. You may remember that, according to my self-perception, this was not my strong point. As fate or the organizers would have it, they asked me to talk for 10 minutes about the Informatics center and the Dagstuhl seminars before dinner. So, I stood up at the front and started to talk about our company goals, but unconsciously I switched to explaining to the participants in the seminar why our processes, as they were carried out, were well thought out, useful and successful. At dinner the big ego sat at my table and I didn't even have to discuss our problem with him anymore. He had understood!

Messages to the guests

We quickly learned how important it is to send messages to guests. The first important message is that the center has no money to waste. If that message is not understood expectations grow indefinitely, and dissatisfaction will follow. When we looked for furniture, Wolfgang Lorenz and I were driven to a furniture store and confronted with quite exquisite and very costly furniture. I said that there were too classy for our purposes.

The answer was, “We were told international top of the line.” I said, “In research yes, not in furniture!” Another example, guests at Dagstuhl Castle did not have keys to their rooms for a long time. This caused uncertainty among guests from New York, for example, who secure their doors there with several bolts and latches. But they quickly understood the message that all guests should trust each other. In fact, there were never any problems with theft. Another sign of trust in guests was the evening supply of drinks. There were and are open shelves and refrigerated counters from which you can take your drinks. You note your consumption on a checklist that you receive at reception and hand in for payment when you leave. Colleagues from Southern European countries have repeatedly assured me that it would never work for them. But look, it still works wonderfully today!

Mentalities

My Sauerlandish character led to interesting conflicts. I always used the excuse that the Sauerlanders and the Saarlanders are at opposite ends of the scale of need for harmony. When we started our business, the Saarland politicians saw great opportunities for promoting the regional economy. The local supermarket stocked a brand of wine, Schloss Dagstuhl, which was of course to be sold as a souvenir. The tobacconist wanted to put up a vending machine. My objection that such measures would indicate a conflict of interests was met with incomprehension by the politicians and was only accepted with grumbling. In addition, the local branches of the political parties naturally wanted to meet in the well-kept surroundings of the castle for their evening meetings. After all, it was their castle. The director’s lack of flexibility was met with incomprehension.

First seminars

How do you start a business like the one designed for Dagstuhl? In other words, how do you get the first events to Dagstuhl? Not entirely surprisingly, it was colleagues from the inner circle who brought their communities to Dagstuhl. Wolfgang Paul, who had recently returned to Saarbrücken from the USA as a convert from theory to computer

architecture, suggested a Dagstuhl seminar on computer architecture. The date was so early that we had not yet finished with the renovation and furnishing, so he and his group had to move to a conference hotel. Since I was working in the field of functional programming languages, I managed to bring a well-attended seminar to Dagstuhl. This was the first one that actually took place in Dagstuhl. During the seminar week, the ordered furniture arrived and the temporarily purchased chairs were exchanged under our butts. At the time, the executives responsible for financial control were a little skeptical about the price of the chairs in the lecture hall, that we had selected due to their apparent quality. But when you consider that they are still in use now, 34 years later, you can definitely say that it was a wise decision for quality.

At this seminar, some of the principles were tried out, for example the changing seating arrangement at every lunch and dinner. Weighed it up and found it to be good! Also the hike on Wednesday afternoon. It took us to Münchweiler Castle and the cafe there. We had ordered cake for the large group well in advance, but unfortunately it was still frozen inside when we arrived. The route to Münchweiler was unknown to me, and the spring storm Kyrill had also changed the tree cover significantly compared to the hiking map. I wasn't quite sure of the route – at the time without Google Maps – but I was able to answer anxious questions like "Reinhard, where are we? Are we lost?" in a reassuring way. We actually found our way to Münchweiler and back. However, the journey there and back together was about 20km long, so that seminar participants who never normally hiked began to show various signs of wear and tear, blood blisters on their feet, and complete exhaustion. However, everyone seemed very happy, disappeared straight into their beds after dinner and mostly reappeared late the next morning.

Another very influential seminar was the seminar on algorithmic geometry mentioned above. Not only did the Dagstuhl staff show that they had a good feel for the needs of the guests. Another development demonstrated the advantages of the direct communication typical of Dagstuhl. A participant, my later successor Raimund Seidel, showed in an open-problems session that the proof of a very frequently used theorem was actually wrong. Many of the participants turned pale because they

had used this theorem and saw their results go down the drain. A young, striving participant pulled out a paper that proved a slightly weaker version of the theorem. Two of the participants, among them again Raimund Seidel, then proved the strong version after all. In the "normal" scientific world, one participant would have published his observation that the proof was wrong at a conference or in a journal, which would have taken several months for submission and review, and then the community concerned would have taken note of this counterexample with dismay. Months later, someone would have a proof for the theorem and published it again months later. So, you have to compare a few months following a Dagstuhl Seminar with many months, possibly years, in the normal scientific publication world.

2 The second trip in which a colleague fails

Anyone who knows scientists in computer science, but also in other disciplines, knows that they are often not completely free of ambition. My desire to complete the route from Saarbrücken to Dagstuhl in under two hours is proof of this. However, I agree with myself that my ambitions are quite modest compared to that of other colleagues. A colleague with particularly strong ambition had heard about the two-hour mark to be beaten and, invited to an event in Dagstuhl, also got on his racing bike, absolutely certain that he would succeed. We awaited him with great excitement. After several hours, definitely more than two, he arrived in a taxi, angry and with oil-smeared hands, his bike in the trunk. After the second flat tire, he had given up.

Art in Architecture and Art Exhibitions

Not everything went smoothly in the Informatics center either. The reasons were not dirty paths with sharp stones or broken glass, but often dirty processes. Such a process led to an extraordinary conflict with an unexpected outcome. When the castle was extended with a new building, an "art in construction" process was initiated. As a new building in public space, a certain part of the construction budget was available for

furnishing it with art. As a member of the jury – the state art advisory board plus the architect of the new building plus a user representative – I sat in amazement at the jury meeting. The two external members, the architect and I, had to experience how little we were taken seriously, especially when they did not want to accept the already "well prepared" decisions. The venue of the competition in this process was the newly built restaurant, an extremely communicative place, as anyone who has ever been a guest at the Leibniz Center for Informatics can confirm. According to one of the submissions, this was to be "furnished" with visual and acoustic animations. It was explicitly suggested that colleagues should look for eight out of eighty switches on a fretwork representing the continents and use these eight to turn the lights on and off for their colleagues while they were eating. This gave rise to fears of massive disruptions to communication. The jury did not let me deter them from damaging the room and the majority voted for this adolescent joke – lights on and off, aha! 0 and 1, so computer science! – with a very short half-life. I said a friendly Sauerland-style, "That's not coming into this house!", which I had no right to do. Because the user has no right of veto in these procedures. In response, the jury called me an art philistine, unable to recognize the value of this creation. Months of back and forth followed between supporters and opponents of this decision. Because the corruption in this procedure – the jury chairman had provided for his own students – was too obvious, the procedure ended with the then responsible Minister of Culture rejecting the jury's decision. That was the worst-case scenario for the State Art Advisory Board; the user representative had, or so it seemed to outsiders, exercised a right of veto. Therefore, to punish the impertinent user representative, the Board sent the art budget remaining after the winners had been awarded back to the construction budget and left the new building in Dagstuhl with empty walls.

In order to fill these gaps, I, the punished user representative, became a gallerist. We organized exhibitions all year round, mostly by artists from the region, but also by artists from outside of Saarland. I had a hard time imagining the Informatics center as an attractive exhibition venue. To my surprise, I had no problems at all finding artists for exhibitions and did not even have to compromise on quality. What attracted the artists? Creating publicity for their work is always a motive. But the hope of sales also motivated them.

In order to finance purchases, I came up with a method of exploiting the gratitude of our guests towards Dagstuhl for donating works of art. I selected works from the exhibitions that we wanted to purchase, divided their prices into manageable-sized shares and then asked our friends and guests on a website to donate shares of these works to us. Since the gratitude towards Dagstuhl was and is great, a quantitatively and qualitatively impressive art collection was put together over the years. Of course, a certain appeal also came from the fact that the names of the donors were listed both on the donated object and on a website. Dagstuhl has now established itself in Saarland as a good address for exhibitions.

Music in Dagstuhl Castle

Computer scientists, like mathematicians, have a certain affinity for music. It was therefore clear that we had to provide an opportunity to make music. The beautiful Baroque hall, known as the White Hall, was ideal for this. We looked for a grand piano. The responsible ministry vetoed the idea: "The guests should do research and not make music." I knew a way out. In the early days, as the newly appointed scientific director, I had met Donald E. Knuth, one of the pioneers of computer science, at a conference. I told him about the development of the center as a copy of Oberwolfach. He was very taken with the idea and wrote me a letter a short time later, a letter on paper, mind you, not an email! He had always enjoyed coming to Oberwolfach, among other things because of the grand piano and the extensive music library. I copied this letter and sent it to the stonewalling official with the comment that if you wanted to bring people like Don Knuth to Dagstuhl, you would need a grand piano. He grumbled and agreed to the purchase. The grand piano was accompanied by a violin, a cello, and a guitar.

The next problem was obtaining sheet music. Sheet music is expensive, and we needed a lot. At the time I was playing violin sonatas with a Hungarian pianist. In the Eastern Bloc and only for the Eastern Bloc there had long been cheap licensed editions of sheet music from West German publishers. So, I asked my companion to bring as much sheet music as possible on his next visit to Hungary. One of his friends came to visit and

got the job and brought a whole trunk full of sheet music for just 1000 DM. I was very worried about how he would get this cargo of sheet music across the border. In fact, he was checked at the Hungarian-Austrian border and had to open his trunk. The customs officers discovered a carton of cigarettes on top of the notes that had not been cleared for duty. He had to pay duty on these. We generously paid the duty. This anecdote makes it clear why the music library in Dagstuhl has a slight eastward lean.

As a result, there was a lot of music, some of it professional. There were also regular seminars in the field of computer science and music. Scientists who were professionally trained on some instrument often came and gave their colleagues a concert on the last evening. These are sensual experiences that remain unforgettable for the guests.

At one of these seminars in the field of computer science and music, we had a journalist from the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ), a leading German newspaper, as a guest. This is worth mentioning because it was and is always very difficult to get journalists to the remote Saarland countryside. First, this journalist sat in on a session of the seminar, which was about defining a benchmark for measuring the performance of a method for the automatic processing of music. Everyone agreed that it should be called the Dagstuhl Benchmark. His respect for Dagstuhl grew because of Dagstuhl's obvious importance in this field. He stayed overnight and, in the evening, experienced one of these semi-professional concerts given by the guests for their colleagues. Our journalistic daughter characterized his article in the FAZ about his experience at this seminar as "That's not FAZ!" In other words, it contained too much enthusiasm.

Summary of the confrontation between art and science

If you were to ask guests at Dagstuhl seminars after some time what they remembered best, many would say that the sensory experience of the beautiful landscape, the music and the visual arts would play a significant role. Even if creating this constellation, as described above, was not entirely painless, it was certainly worth it.

Computer equipment

Another bitter conflict arose over the center's computer equipment. When we were discussing the concept, we heard a rumor that IBM and Siemens were willing to provide 2 million DM for the computer equipment. I called the person in charge at IBM to introduce myself as the person in charge and to inquire about the details of the donation. The gentleman, who would later have a meteoric career with several engagements that mostly ended prematurely, then explained to me in very concrete terms what we could expect. He listed several IBM products that they wanted to give Dagstuhl. Unfortunately, the purely museum-like qualities of this equipment were already all too clear at the time. When I timidly objected that our guests were not familiar with this type of computer and operating system, I received the answer, "Then just give two hours of introduction every Monday morning!", a suggestion that was horrifying. A meeting was arranged at which, with the help of employees from IBM's university-relations department, an attractive configuration of IBM's then-new Unix workstations was agreed upon as a donation. But, as it turned out, the sting of my rejection of the originally intended donation ran deep. When I returned from vacation, I found two almost identical letters from IBM and Siemens, in which they informed me that "in view of the changed concept of Schloss Dagstuhl and the challenges in the new accession states," where each of their computers is received personally with a handshake by the responsible ministers, so to speak, they were unable to donate anything to the center. I was summoned to the State Secretary in the Saarland Ministry of Science, to whom I was asked to explain where we were now going to get the lost 2 million DM from. The State Secretary, Rüdiger Pernice, quickly understood the situation and was open to a proper and cost-effective solution to the computer equipment problem. Rüdiger Pernice was always a great help in difficult situations. This also applied to my colleague and friend Kurt Mehlhorn. Whenever I feared that I had got myself stuck in a conflict, I asked him for advice. He confirmed that my approach was the right one and predicted that the other side would soon see it too. I also always quickly found consensus with Wolfgang Lorenz, who came from a different sphere as a business economist.

Figure 5 The entire complex, including the new building and guest house.

Architectural competition for a new building

It was clear from the start that the late baroque castle and the extension that the sisters of Waldbreitbach had added to make room for a retirement home would not offer enough space. Therefore, the National Science Council's recommendation already included the requirement that a new building should be added. A competition for a new building was announced. After my rather depressing experience on the jury of the art-in-architecture competition, working on this jury was a real joy and interesting experience. This was also helped by the fact that Oskar Lafontaine's personal chef cooked for us while we worked. I was surprised that at the end of the process the jury unanimously selected the winning design from 33 submissions. This was a monastic architecture that Dagstuhl saw as a scientific monastery in which guests could spend a week in seclusion. This concept demonstrated the architects' empathy for our work.

3 The third trip, when the operation is well established

By and large, I thought I had found the optimal route. However, I still turned left when approaching Lebach, and this time I missed the turn to Büschfeld at Schattertriesch. Passing through Nunkirchen, I could not beat the magic mark. Small deficiencies needed to be eliminated.

Similarly, at Dagstuhl. On the one hand, it quickly became clear that the Dagstuhl concept, as we had adopted it from Oberwolfach, would be a success. Intensive communication is behind many successes in science, especially in the natural sciences and engineering. When the first calls for proposals for Dagstuhl seminars were issued, the success was convincing, if not overwhelming. On the other hand, we noticed an unbalanced program and an inheritance from birth defects of our discipline. It turned out, not entirely surprisingly, that the communities that had already been guests in Oberwolfach were the quickest to respond and submit applications for Dagstuhl seminars. For example, all sub-areas of complexity theory, algorithms, and data structures were so strongly represented that we had to assign priorities and quotas. Slowly the message spread that in Dagstuhl you could conduct research very effectively together, in other areas of computer science. The thematic range of the Dagstuhl seminars has become wider and wider. I am always surprised that new topics are suggested in each application round.

After a while we were able to identify certain peculiarities. Computer science suffers from a birth defect. It is a latecomer among the sciences. Out of a certain impetuosity, people wanted to get their results onto the market, i.e., into the scientific public, as quickly as possible. Since the publishing system was not yet well established and scientific journals had long review periods and therefore long lead times, publications at conferences were an alternative. There was a natural time pressure for program committees and reviewers, which shortened the lead time. Therefore, conference publications were given greater importance than in other sciences. The publishing system in computer science never recovered from this start. The predominance of conference publications resulted in an unhealthy development: the landscape, or perhaps better said, the zoo of conferences, became increasingly diverse. As soon as a group within

a sub-area of computer science felt that it was not being adequately recognized in the existing conferences of the area, i.e., that it could not accommodate its excellent results in the conferences, it quickly founded a new conference or workshop series. Thus, the zoo became increasingly diverse, with the consequence that researchers who urgently needed to talk to each other no longer met at joint conferences because their groups only went to their own conferences. This is where Dagstuhl comes into play. Since – thank God – there are still colleagues who keep track of what is being worked on in the various divisions, subdivisions, and sub-subdivisions of research communities, they submit applications for Dagstuhl seminars that bring researchers from the various groups together again. This is a characteristic of many Dagstuhl seminars, often very successful seminars. I have therefore often referred to Dagstuhl as a repair shop for the broken conference culture of computer science.

I would like to share the following anecdote from my personal environment to illustrate the intensity of communication in Dagstuhl. When one of our daughters went to a conference for the first time, in computer science of course, she sent me an email, "Dad, this is totally disappointing! People don't listen to the speakers at all." I replied, "I'm sitting in a Dagstuhl seminar right now. A young postdoc is presenting the results of his dissertation. He was given half an hour. Now he's been presenting for two hours, and there's no end in sight because he gets a question after every second sentence on average."

Actual demand

Since a few other things were happening in the world at the same time as the founding of Dagstuhl in 1990, we were faced with a special task, namely, to get the East-West communication, which had been blocked for decades, going. Parts of the Eastern Bloc at the time were cut off from the rest of the world and were not allowed to travel to international conferences or to research stays in the West. Western journals were not available, and people were not even allowed to publish in them. This problem was not just a Russian one; it began at the inner-German border. We made it our task to support young, promising researchers from the former GDR. To this end, applicants for Dagstuhl seminars were required

to search for interesting young people there and put them on the suggested participant lists. For Russian scientists, travel costs were a problem. We found out that the Russian military trains were still running free of charge from Russia to East Berlin and drew attention to this.

I remember a Dagstuhl seminar on automata theory particularly well. The western colleagues suspected that relevant results had been achieved in the Eastern bloc that were still unknown in the West. When we arrived in Dagstuhl, there were heart-rending reunion scenes. The Eastern and the Western scientists had not seen each other for many years. The most impressive participant from Russia, a Russian bear type in blue mechanic's overalls, came accompanied by a colleague. The bear gave his lecture in Russian – he supposedly did not speak English – and his companion translated. When the discussion – translation back and forth – took too long, the bear simply pushed his companion aside and joined in the discussion in English. In fact, he had new results in his luggage.

4 The fourth trip, which exploits all deceleration possibilities

This time I was not alone. My colleagues and friends Mooly Sagiv and Tom Reps accompanied me. We were expected as participants in a Dagstuhl seminar on the static analysis of programs. We started on Sunday morning and planned to have lunch on the way. So, this trip could not have reached the two-hour mark from the start. Unfortunately, Sunday was Low Sunday, the day of first communion for catholic children, and anyone who has ever wanted to go out for a spontaneous meal in Saarland on Low Sunday knows that it is not easy. We finally found a restaurant in an industrial area on the outskirts of Lebach that took us in. But there were also first-communion families sitting there. We spent more than two hours waiting and eating. When we finally set off again, it was well after 2 p.m. We drove towards Primsweiler and thought it would be a good idea to drive through the forest. We crossed this forest in all directions, finally emerging from it at about 6 p.m. and arriving at Dagstuhl Castle a short time later, tongues hanging out. It took us seven hours in total!

In Dagstuhl, too, we sometimes had to take costly detours from our actual work. However, the effort paid off in the long term.

The evaluation by the National Science Council

Up to now, the Informatics center's subsidy requirements had been financed by Saarland and Rhineland-Palatinate. Naturally, the states were interested in other forms of funding. The option was to be included in the Blue List of institutes funded by the federal and all state governments. The institutes listed on the Blue List formed the Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Association in 1995, later simply the Leibniz Association. They are included in the list upon application by the previous sponsors and after a successful evaluation. Our two sponsoring states therefore applied for inclusion in the Blue List and the Leibniz Association in the same year that the state of Baden-Württemberg applied for the Oberwolfach Mathematical Research Institute to be included.

We were then faced with the task of preparing the evaluation. We were given a questionnaire the size of a book. Unfortunately, this questionnaire had been designed for research institutions with their own research staff. The vast majority of the questions did not apply to us. Because our guests were doing the research, not our own staff. We were at a loss as to how to deal with this situation. It was only in later evaluations that we found the right strategy to solve this impossible task. I would describe this as a deliberate misunderstanding of the questions to be answered. When we were asked about the research performance and publication figures of our research staff, we answered with information that we had requested from our guests. That made enough of an impression. The first time, however, we answered the inappropriate questions truthfully, but strategically clumsily with "not applicable". This led to disaster. The National Science Council's evaluation group met in Dagstuhl to assess the project. Half of it was made up of computer scientists and the other half of researchers from other disciplines, managers from industry and senior officials from research-funding agencies. The computer scientists were convinced that Dagstuhl was doing wonderful work and were shocked that the other group members thought we were a bunch of losers based on the questionnaire we filled out. I was grilled for several hours, during which the poor assessment of the non-computer scientists slowly but surely improved. In particular, I noticed that the members of the evaluation

group reacted with real enthusiasm to my statement that at most Dagstuhl seminars the state of science in the area of the seminar was represented for a week in Dagstuhl. The consequence was later found in the decision protocol: the establishment and support of a scientific staff was called for, which would have the task, among other things, of communicating findings from Dagstuhl seminars to research funders. We tried to do this in various ways, e.g., by organizing Perspective Seminars, the aim of which was to analyze the state and perspectives of the area and to make funding recommendations. These funding recommendations were therefore regularly sent to German and European research funders, and on a few occasions even presented in person. I found that our recommendations were not always well received. After all, the people in the ministry knew much better than we did what should be promoted. For example, when we wanted to present recommendations in the area of cryptographic security, an official attacked us in a sharp tone with the question, "What is the contribution of German academic research to cryptography?" When I mentioned Claus-Peter Schnorr's digital signature as an example, it turned out that he did not know it nor Claus-Peter Schnorr. From then on, he kept quiet, and we were allowed to present our recommendations.

But back to the day of the on-site evaluation. After a botched start, the breakthrough came at dinner. We had distributed the members of the evaluation group at the tables with the guests so that they could get an objective picture of what Dagstuhl meant to the researchers present without being influenced. The impression was so positive that after dinner the survey, which had actually been completed, was reopened and I was grilled for another hour. After that, the evaluation group decided to give us detention at the headquarters of the Science Council in Bonn. I had been told that the evaluation of Oberwolfach had gone considerably better. However, I had the impression that the evaluation group there had crawled up the hill on which the institute is located on their knees out of sheer awe. So, I prepared a slide on which the difference between an engineering science such as computer science and mathematics was illustrated using examples. Computer science was represented by a Seminar topic, the construction of a particular piece of software, where the principles of its automatic generation had largely been developed at Dagstuhl, which

reduced the development time of a product to 2 person-months compared to 2 person-years with human implementation. As an example of a problem from mathematics in the solution of which Oberwolfach had played a role, I chose Fermat's Last Theorem. I characterized it as follows:

1. Very concise wording
2. Very long open problem
3. Romantic circumstances
4. Completely irrelevant for practical application.

The resolution protocol on the admission of Dagstuhl into the Leibniz Association stated that there were differences between mathematics and engineering, and that computer science was an engineering science. In addition to an embarrassing hymn of praise for the Scientific Director, it also recommended that his term of office be extended from three to five years. It also stated, "re-election is possible," after the resolution proposal had stated "one-time re-election is possible."

Admission to the Leibniz Association took place on January 1, 2005. Since then, there has been new funding based on the Koenigstein key; 50% of the subsidy is paid by the federal government, 50% by the federal states, with an increased share for the Saarland and Rhineland-Palatinate. Since admission to the Leibniz Association, the institutes of the Leibniz Association have been evaluated by its Senate Committee for Evaluation in accordance with the rules of the Science Council. So far, Dagstuhl has passed all evaluations, which ultimately determine continued funding, with flying colors. I was touched by a statement by the head of the responsible department that "they turn over every stone of an institute in the evaluations and always find something hidden under some stone. Only in Dagstuhl, despite my best efforts, I couldn't find anything."

I mistakenly believed that our good work had earned us admission to the Leibniz Association. But some time later, other actors took credit for this. First, the then Minister of Science invited himself to Dagstuhl to present his own achievements to the participants of a Dagstuhl seminar. After all, the Saarland had applied for admission to the Leibniz Association under the aegis of his ministry. As he did not have a sufficient command of English, I had to interpret. I discovered that my talent as

an interpreter had its limits. Because instead of simply translating the minister's sentences into English, I distanced myself with "The minister says ..." implicitly from the increasingly worsening statements. When the minister finally went straight into his election campaign speech, which he had just given many times, I blurted out, "The minister gets into election-campaign mode." This ended the minister's speech in one fell swoop. A further explanation was provided to us by the Federal Ministry. Its representative on the committee that had to give the approval had been determined to refuse it. But then, because of the long meeting and the drinks he had consumed, he had felt such strong pressure on his bladder that he had to go to the toilet just before the vote. So, it was not our good work, but the bladder of an employee of the Federal Ministry that promoted Dagstuhl to the Leibniz Association. One explanation is as wonderful and convincing as the other!

5 The fifth trip, which reveals new parts of the Saarland

On this trip I tried out my e-bike and trusted its satnav, which had already helped me on many previous trips to surprising, not necessarily obvious and not necessarily prettier or shorter routes. I took my usual initial route to the motorway underpass before Riegelsberg and then switched to this little helper in the forest, where you could actually benefit from a satnav. It diverted me from the usual route. But you can always try something different, I thought. The forest path got worse and worse until I began to have doubts. Thank God, along with the doubts came two ladies with a dog. When I asked whether I could reach Wadern in the long term and Heusweiler and Lebach in the short term on this route, both were answered in the negative with a shake of the head. At least I was shown a path out of the forest that led to previously unknown, charming landscapes near Holz. Somehow you never really get lost in Saarland. At some point I actually arrived in Lebach and later in Wadern.

New fields of activity

Our work in Dagstuhl also opened up surprising new fields. Michael Ley had set up the bibliographic database dblp for publications in computer science at the University of Trier in an impressive one-man effort. As the name suggests, he had started in his research areas, databases and logic programming, and had subsequently expanded dblp to other areas of computer science. Since he foresaw his professor's retirement in the foreseeable future and knew how volatile university funding was, he came to me and asked whether I thought it would be a good idea for Dagstuhl to cooperate with the University of Trier on dblp and take over dblp in the long term. I actually thought that was a very good idea and that it was very well covered by the bylaws of our company under the heading of promoting computer science research. What did not occur to me were the complications arising from the fact that two different German states were involved. Fortunately, this had to solved by my successor, Raimund Seidel.

At that time, the Leibniz Association had just set up an intra-community competition procedure with funds from the Federal Ministry of Research. We wrote a project proposal to promote cooperation with the University of Trier with the aim of expanding the coverage of research areas by dblp. As fate would have it, the deadline for submitting applications was the evening of the day on which our industrial board of trustees met. I presented the project proposal and Andreas Reuter, who was on this board among others due to his function in the Klaus Tschira Foundation, said, "We're in!" Two hours later, we had a letter signed by Klaus Tschira, one of the founders of SAP, in our hands in which he promised long-term support in the event of successful cooperation. This letter was submitted and proved to be extremely helpful because it gave our application a lasting impact.

Soon another field of activity arose. Investors had discovered that academic publishing was very profitable. After all, in what other areas could profits of over 20% be made? Investors therefore pounced on some important publishing houses, took them over, forced part of the purchase price on them as debt, with the requirement that they pay off this debt

with profits. This was reflected in ever-increasing costs for publishing and thus in library budgets. The idea was therefore born of using the great trust that Dagstuhl enjoyed among computer-science researchers to start up as an online publisher. At the same time, the open-access movement was accepted as the best support for science. Dagstuhl therefore initiated an open-access series of conference proceedings. In computer science, unlike in almost all other scientific fields, conference publications counted and count at least as much as journal publications. Due to the requirements of our financial supervision, we were not allowed to offer this service free of charge, but had to charge prices that covered costs. After a careful but naturally difficult calculation, these were about a tenth of the costs of commercial publishers. There were heated, sometimes aggressive discussions among colleagues about the competition with the commercial publishers that we wanted to build up. Above all, colleagues who were linked to the commercial publishers through editorial positions identified with their commercial interests and lost sight of the financial consequences for the expenses of the scientific enterprise.

The aim was now to find high-quality conference series – of course, that was the only thing we wanted – for the transition from the commercial to the non-commercial, open-access world. This transition was not without risk, because it often meant losing the classifications in rankings, which were also carried out by commercial institutions. Factual arguments presented to these ranking institutions for maintaining the ranking – the quality did not change as a result of the transition – did not count. Nevertheless, more and more conference series gradually switched to LIPIcs, the Leibniz International Proceedings in Informatics. I will just mention a few names of renowned series here, STACS, FSTTCS, RTA, TYPES, CSL, SAT, CONCUR, SOcG, ECOOP, ECRTS, and ICALP.

6 The sixth ride, tandem with Margret

That was a completely new attempt, cycling to Dagstuhl with my wife Margret and the tandem! Unfortunately, there were a few problems. I'll try to use a gender-neutral formulation for the first problem. The distribution of physical strength between us was very unbalanced. This

meant that when we were riding tandem, one of us had to do more, and in the evenings after strenuous tours I was exhausted from the extra work I had done. On that day, the heat was unbearable. It had a very destructive effect on our stamina. As soon as we started climbing to the Neuhaus forest lodge, our will to actually do the tour to Dagstuhl waned. We turned around and went to a café hut by the Netzbachtal pond.

Hard Times

At the time, the federal government representative sent by the responsible federal ministry to the supervisory board (Aufsichtsrat, AR) of the Leibniz Center for Informatics in Dagstuhl Castle had a similarly destructive effect. His behavior suggested that he saw his task as paralyzing the center. The dynamic nature of the activities probably frightened him. No one knew what the people at the center would take up as the next useful task after taking over dblp and publishing conference proceedings. He could not bear his responsibility as a supervisory board member under these circumstances. After all, whoever decides something can also make the wrong decision and thus take responsibility for mistakes. That would immediately lead to recourse! His debut on the AR was glorious! Three days before the first meeting he was supposed to attend, he wrote to us saying that he did not feel we had prepared him sufficiently and that he would not attend the meeting, but that he was vetoing all resolutions in which he was entitled to vote. Three days after the meeting, he wrote to us saying that he had just discovered that he had not been correctly appointed as a member of the AR and had therefore never been a member of the AR. He therefore asked us to delete his name from all documents, invitations, minutes, etc.

There was a memorable meeting with him at which we were told that all activities other than the core business of organizing scientific conferences were not covered by the articles of association. However, he had not read the articles of association, in which one of the tasks was listed as supporting computer scientists doing research. At the urgent request of the representative of Saarland and the chairman of the supervisory board, I did not say anything at this meeting. To be honest, I felt as if I had a

Figure 6 Roof damage. © Reinhard Wilhelm

gag in my mouth and my feet tied under the chair and my arms on the armrests. After the meeting, our eager supervisor explained to me that I had to accept that I was not a good fit for collaboration. Should I have said something, perhaps something constructive?

During this time, I enjoyed a lot of committed support; a colleague from the university who was asked for legal advice demonstrated succinctly and pro bono that a dangerously disturbing ministerial interpretation of a clause in the partnership agreement was sheer nonsense and a lawyer and auditor also established pro bono that our criticized financial behavior was in order. Finally, the behavior of the ministerial officials was met with a lot of head-shaking on the supervisory board.

Also nature seemed to turn against us. I met a heavy thunderstorm when I drove home from of my weekly visit to a Seminar on Kolmogoroff Complexity. Just arrived at home I received a phone call from Ms. Ney, head of kitchen and house service, "Mr. Wilhelm, the roof of the new building has taken off and has flown away." A local whirlwind had sucked up one side of the roof and deposited it on top of the lecture-hall building. This side of the new building was, thus, unprotected from weather and unusable. Ms. Ney had managed to relocate the occupants into unoccupied rooms or double rooms. She profited from the fact that one of the topics of the Seminar was Optimal Compression.

Fortunately, the time of conspiracy theories had not arrived yet. There were only isolated voices saying, "We knew that Wilhelm had a leaning towards the arts. However, this is exaggerated."

7 The seventh trip on which the magic mark is cracked

This time everything was just right; the best route was definitely on. The weather was sunny but cool, I was in shape, and my racing bike was already scraping the ground with its tightly inflated tires. Off I went to through Rußhütte, the Fischbachtal at a reasonable speed up the slope to Riegelsberg, before the motorway I turned right in the direction of Holz, then took the first underpass under the motorway. Nothing could stop me from attempting this record. On a few makeshift tarred forest paths I went into into Riegelsberg, then on the B268 in the direction of Lebach. This time before Lebach I turned right onto the B269, which I left again after a short time to skirt Gresaubach. I knew that I shouldn't now fall into the illusion that I had overcome all the difficult parts. No, after a long bend to the right through a very scenic valley, I went uphill one last time. Having done that, it went steeply downhill through Limbach, then through Büschfeld to Bardenbach and from there along the Prims to Lockweiler and Dagstuhl. Timed: 1h 57m, in words, one hour and fifty-seven minutes! The mark was beaten!

To get ahead of the joke, when I proudly told Kurt that his mark had been beaten, he looked at me in incomprehension and said, "I never rode my bike to Dagstuhl in 2 hours."

Well-rehearsed operation

The operation in Dagstuhl also ran along optimized lines. There were still individual requirements, high points and problems. But we knew how operations should run in the various business areas.

8 The eighth trip, orderly farewell

The racing bike era was over, the non-existent mark had been broken, and age demanded support. On the eighth trip, this time with an e-bike, I took a leisurely train ride to Lebach-Jabach, then from there via Primsweiler to Büschfeld, Bardenbach and Dagstuhl. I arrived in a fairly fresh condition.

Figure 7 A relieved scientific director, a long-time head of the supervisory board, Heinz Schwärtzel, a thoughtful successor as scientific director, Raimund Seidel, and the actual head of the supervisory board, Stefan Jähnichen (from right to left). © Raphael Reischuck

Time to say goodbye

I had reached my blessed, maximum retirement age, which was already beyond the age limit for Leibniz directors. It was time to say goodbye. Looking back, I have to say that the long initial phase, which is described in this story, was remarkably unbureaucratic. A scientific director was needed, one was sought and found, he was given a more or less informal contract, which also included a reduction in teaching obligations, and off we went. It helped, of course, that the IBFI and the university both reported to the same ministry. Now, in Leibniz's time, several employers are affected and extensive regulations with secondments from one side and compensating measures from the other side are required. When we were accepted into the Leibniz Association, the Leibniz side did not interfere with my existing contractual relationship and allowed me to continue even after I had reached the usual age limit for Leibniz directors.

However, it was during this time that the support or lack thereof from one of our donors had its full effect. We discussed what kind of support we would actually prefer. Financial support was important for our existence,

emotional support would have been good for the atmosphere. But this was not available from this donor representative. That made it easier for me to say goodbye. In 2014, my successor Raimund Seidel was installed, and we celebrated a lovely party to hand over the management.

Acknowledgements

A whole series of people have helped to support the development of Dagstuhl. Heinz Schwärtzel was the head of the search committee that identified Dagstuhl Castle as a suitable location for an international meeting and research center for computer science, and was a committed chairman of the supervisory board for many years after its foundation. Stefan Jähnichen followed him in this role to this day. Roland Vollmar was a committed member of the supervisory board for 34 years and a generous supporter of our art collection. Kurt Mehlhorn and Raimund Seidel were always there to advise me in difficult situations and when new questions arose. Raimund, my successor, navigated Dagstuhl quite well through the difficult time of the pandemic with the excellent technical and administrative head of the center, Heike Meißner, at his side.

Angelika Müller-von Brochowski built up the logistics and the office with great skill and sensitivity. Wolfgang Lorenz was the technical and administrative manager for many years. We were on the same page on all important decisions.

At the political level, we are supported by the former finance minister Hans Kaspar; the foundation was a matter close to his heart. The then Prime Minister Oskar Lafontaine loved us so much that he repeatedly opened us up during several election campaigns and was not too worried about the press coverage. Science Minister Dieter Breitenbach was enthusiastic about and interested in our activities. His State Secretary Rüdiger Pernice was a very wise contact in the ministry. The town Wadern under several mayors has supported us whenever a need arose.

So many colleagues worked so hard on the Scientific Directorate that I cannot name them all. I would just like to name Susanne Albers, Bernd Becker, Bernhard Nebel, Nicole Schweickardt, Otto Spaniol, Wolfgang Thomas, Ingo Wegener, and Gerhard Weikum. Ingo was a great friend of Dagstuhl and also supported Dagstuhl in the National Science Council and at every opportunity that presented itself.

The scientific staff has contributed significantly to the success of Dagstuhl. I would just like to mention Andreas Dolzmann and Marc Herbstritt as representatives of the committed and competent work of the staff. As head of the kitchen and housekeeping, Annette Ney guaranteed a world-renowned standard of meals and housekeeping. Tanja Britz was an indispensable helper when it came to cooking. Thomas Schillo and his team organized an up-to-date, stable Informatics infrastructure. Peter Schneider was a caretaker who cared deeply about this institution.

Uwe Loebens and my sister Maria Krause advised me on the selection of artists for exhibitions in Dagstuhl.

Many thanks to all helpers named here and all unnamed.

I would like to thank Thomas W. Reps for his help with the English translation, Michael Wagner for the layout, Raimund Seidel for critical reading and Peter Schneider for historical data and photos.

Leibniz
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