FAREWELL,
HORST WERNER MÜLLER

Matthias Beuers

TALL, CURIOUS, BROAD SHOULDIERED ...
AND 28 YEARS AT THE GEI
If we were given the above riddle and asked to identify the relevant colleague, most of us would be in little doubt. That is Horst Werner Müller, both at work and at home.

He is tall – and this refers not only to his considerable height, but also to his ability to keep looking upwards, or to “think outside the box”. He has constantly sought to build up networks, to form strategic partnerships, to exchange information to compare and contrast and to avoid “stewing in his own juice”, thus developing ideas and visions for long-term perspectives, strategies and missions. While such qualities may be demanded of modern administrative staff, they are nevertheless increasingly hard to find. In Horst Werner Müller, however, they have been instrumental in countless situations, not least when working towards membership of the Leibniz Association. And yet where would we be without a Head of Administration with both an eagle-eye for detail and simultaneously both feet firmly on the ground?

He is curious – and this quality has given him the driving force necessary to face new challenges such as gaining membership of the Leibniz Association or the rapid growth of our institute. While “resetting all thinking to zero” and developing “new approaches and mindsets” might be both unconventional and divisive for a Head of Administration, it is the daily bread of an institute specialising in research infrastructure. Horst Werner Müller is well-known for his open-mindedness in the committees in which he has played in instrumental role. His motto: come off the beaten track and keep your eyes on the horizon, ever seeking new experiences.

He has broad shoulders. Between the poles of academic freedom and administrative regulation, his staff – and not least Horst Werner Müller himself – have needed broad shoulders on which to carry complex proceedings safely through all winds and weathers. To constantly tackle new challenges – sometimes spontaneously, yet not rashly, and sometimes even to decide against doing something – all of this has demanded broad shoulders. Should colleagues ever find themselves in personal difficulties, Horst Werner Müller always has a sympathetic ear and has often found ways and means to provide support and ease the burden.

For some 28 years, Horst Werner Müller has co-steered the destiny of the GEI in his role as Head of Administration. Indeed, when he first took up his post on 1 February 1987, the institute was still regulated by the Lower Saxony Ministry of Science and Art, while the institute itself already bore the name Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research. Today, the ministry may have lost its “art”, yet gained “culture”; while the GEI has achieved its membership of “Leibniz”. The dynamics of this development are best expressed in numbers. The first budget under the administration of Horst Werner Müller in 1987 comprised in Deutschmarks the equivalent of 1.264 million euros, with a staff of 27. In 2015, this number had exploded to some 6.8 million euros and over 140 employees. The list of directors that have passed through the office door of Horst Werner Müller is equally impressive: Prof. Ernst Hinrichs, Prof. Ursula Becher, Prof. Wolfgang Höpken, Dr Falk Pingel (acting director) and Prof. Simone Lässig. The current director, Prof. Eckhardt Fuchs, will be the one to see Horst Werner Müller off as he embarks upon his retirement. Indeed, Herr Müller has promised to continue living by his motto even as he enjoys this next chapter of life: “Always keep your visions one step ahead of reality”. For this and other new challenges we wish him good health, vitality and all the very best!