

other kinds of labs.” Prospective scientists must convince the lab they have an idea in the relevant fields “that has a 20% chance of success,” Rubin said. “If you’ve got a 90% chance of success, then we’ll tell you to go back and think of something more adventuresome.”

The idea for the lab started almost as a cliché, drawn on the back of a napkin in a Boulder, Colorado, restaurant by David Clayton, HHMI’s chief scientific officer. Clayton, Rubin, and Nobel laureate Thomas Cech, HHMI’s president, spent a couple of years developing the idea of the freewheeling lab based on the Bell Labs model. HHMI already funds about 350 university-based scientists, and creating the lab was an alternative to simply funding more university researchers. To determine the focus of the lab’s work, Rubin said, they set out to find a “biomed problem” that was interdisciplinary, couldn’t be done easily at university labs, and would “make a difference in the world.”

The facility, designed by architect Rafael Viñoly, will include the lab, a hotel, and a housing complex for visiting researchers. Rubin is already thinking about the lab’s legacy. “Twenty years from now, I want discoveries that, if we hadn’t built Janelia

Farm, wouldn’t have happened. I want to be able to say we did good stuff. That’s why we want to do something different.”

Jim Dawson

Publishers Sue US Treasury

In a bid to lift restrictions on publishing works by authors in embargoed countries such as Cuba, Iran, and Sudan, a group of US publishers and authors’ associations is suing the Treasury Department’s Office of Foreign Assets Control. The suit, filed on 27 September, says OFAC’s regulations violate the Trading with the Enemy Act, the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, and the First Amendment.

The suit was filed by the Association of American Publishers professional and scholarly publishing division (AAP/PSP), the Association of American University Presses, PEN American Center, and Arcade Publishing. It follows OFAC’s ruling from earlier this year, in which the peer-review practices of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers were deemed legal (see *PHYSICS TODAY*, May 2004, page 28).

Despite that ruling, other publishers are wary that the door remains open to heavy fines and prison sentences. In particular, they object to the notion of applying for a license to publish. They tried to get OFAC to reverse its regulations without going to court. But, says Marc Brodsky, chairman of the AAP/PSP and executive director of the American Institute of Physics (which publishes *PHYSICS TODAY*), “we got frustrated. They were anxious to help, but they want to solve problems with specific cases. But the issue is, Why should we have to ask for permission for each case when the regulations are unconstitutional?”

As they stand, Brodsky says, the regulations have “a terrible chilling effect and create an aura of self-censorship.” As an example, he points to the journal *Mathematical Geology*, which last spring canceled publication of a paper by Iranian geologists on earthquake prediction. Adds Brodsky, “How can the United States uphold our position as a beacon for the free exchange of ideas and science if we ourselves censor authors because of where they live?”

The government has agreed to expedite the suit. A hearing is expected to be held this month.

Toni Feder

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