

## Chapter 5

# Heidelberg Makerspace

### **ABSTRACT**

*The Heidelberg Makerspace is a community-based makerspace located in Heidelberg, Germany, a town with many colleges and a population of about 150,000 souls. The space is located in the basement of the Heidelberg Cultural Center, which is part library, part school, and a place for cultural events for the town. Heidelberg Makerspace was founded in 2014 and has a little over 40 paying members that utilize the equipment on a regular basis. Every Wednesday night the makerspace is open to the public and will provide tours and tutorials on equipment. Members of the Heidelberg Makerspace are expected to contribute to the community by documenting their work through project logs. In addition, members are expected to help with the running of the space by attending to issues left by other members. This chapter explores the Heidelberg Makerspace.*

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*That is similar here, if something fails someone sees and tells you what the cause is and maybe you talk to people, and if it fails, you can discuss it together. It's just this atmosphere that you have people around you. So, it's the community that lifts them up. —Lukas Frese*

## ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

Located in the basement of the Deutsch-Amerikanisches Institut (DAI), part of the Heidelberg Cultural Center, the Heidelberg Makerspace is a small community-based space run by a team of enthusiasts led by Lukas Frese. Frese, a biologist by trade and the lead organizer for the Heidelberg Makerspace, provided time during an open night in February 2017 to discuss the space. Heidelberg, a city of about 150,000 residences, sits on the banks of the river Neckar and is notable for Heidelberg University, which was established in 1386 and is the oldest in Germany (University of Heidelberg, n.d.).

The town of Heidelberg itself sits below the ruins of the Heidelberg Palace, atop the cliffs overlooking the Neckar Valley. Largely unscathed from the second world war, the city retains much of its historical architecture. Many of the residences of the city are involved in the sciences, with a student population of roughly 38,000; in addition, academic staff in the city have won 56 Nobel Prizes.

The Heidelberg Makerspace has its origins in the Deutsch-Amerikanisches Institut (DAI) Heidelberg Cultural center located in the city center. DAI is located in a repurposed residential structure with three stories plus a basement. The mission of DAI is to “Promote exchange and encounters with people and institutions from America and to promote scientific debate with the United States” (DAI, n.d.).

Founded in 1946 as a library, the site now provides intellectual exchanges through lectures and other events. The space contains a library with a collection of books and other media in the English language. The US State Department also provides an advising center to help potential scholars plan their visits to the US. The Heidelberg Makerspace started with just one 3D printer in the DAI Library purchased through funds from the US Embassy. The space moved from the main Library to the basement of the building in 2015.

Entering from the main doors of the DAI and down a short flight of stairs, the space is defined by large, glass, arched windows and a glass door. Moving into the space it's clearly a basement, with few windows to the outside and, in some places, unfinished rock walls.

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