

# TEN THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT HEIDELBERG AS A CITY OF LITERATURE

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## The Myth

Heidelberg's literary history reaches right from the Middle Ages to the present. The city was always two things at once: a motif in poetry and a place where writers lived. In one particularly historical moment the literary zeitgeist crystallised out here: German Romanticism had its heyday in the early nineteenth in this, the "fairest" of all cities. The myth continues to this day. Anyone who walks round Heidelberg is taking a stroll through living literary history.

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## Places for Literature

Literature needs places – both niches and large arenas – where it is taken seriously. Heidelberg can boast many such locations – from the German-American Institute to the Heidelberger Literaturtage festival or the Public Library. All of these institutions have international horizons. And numerous cultural centres, university institutes, bookshops, private and public book clubs are likewise keen literature mediators.

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## The Living Spirit

Ruperto Carola is the oldest university in Germany and a place where renowned academics and researchers have taught and teach. All of the faculties entertain cooperative relationships with research facilities home and abroad. And literature also features strongly in this. The Germans have not only instituted a poetics lectureship, but together with the city they award the Brentano Prize once a year. Along with Ruperto Carola, several other universities help make up the diversity that distinguishes the research in the city.

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## Writing, Translating, Networking

Heidelberg is a city of "magical thinking". Which is why perhaps so many writers and translators still lose their hearts to it. The fact that Heidelberg has a renowned institute for translation also helps, of course. And Heidelberg is a city of many voices. With the help of literature, bridges are built to authors and readers, publishing companies and institutions in other countries.

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## Libraries and Collections

When Jorge Luis Borges spoke of paradise as a kind of library, he could have been thinking of Heidelberg, of the Public Library or the University Library which is so rich in traditions, but that has nevertheless performed the leap into the twenty-first century: the electronic library is steadily growing, and a modern digitisation centre has been established. Residing in the library's vaults are works of historic import – not least the Manesse Codex. A special treasure trove is the Prinzhorn Collection with its artworks by psychiatric patients.

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## City of Readers

Reading is child's play – when reading is the order of the day. The educational establishments set a good example here. Reading incentive programmes are top of the curriculum in primary and secondary schools, and creative writing courses or theatre groups are part of everyday school life. Just as literature seems to be an everyday matter in the city: many a Heidelberger gets together at literature clubs and reading circles.

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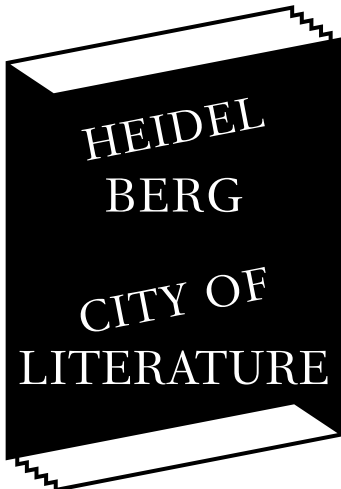
## 7 City of Books and Book Dealers

A special feature of Heidelberg is its large number of bookstores and antiquarian booksellers. Printing presses the world over bear the city's name. And the publishing companies are also of vital importance to literary life. Around 50 companies exist today in Heidelberg, many of them distinguished by their broad commitment to translation.

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## 9 Numbers at a Glance

Heidelberg received its first mention in the annals in 1196 and today has around 150,000 inhabitants. For every 10,000 citizens there are 1.3 publishing houses and 1.5 bookshops. The Municipal Library has some 220,000 titles, which in 2010 notched up over 1.16 million loans. With almost 2 million loans per annum, the University Library of Heidelberg is one of the best visited libraries in Germany. The overall portfolio of the Heidelberg Electronic Library received 6 million visits worldwide. In Heidelberg 677 companies in the creative sector have showed a turnover of 590 million euros (5.2% of the total turnover). With 30 %, the book market in Heidelberg makes the largest contribution to the creative economy.



## 8 Creativity and Commerce

The part that the cultural and creative sector plays in the overall economic performance is far higher in Heidelberg than anywhere else in the country. Over a third of it is yielded by the literature business and book market. Of all the freelancers in Heidelberg, every eighth is a creative. In 2013 a centre for the creative economy was set up to help above all start-up businesses in the literary field.

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## 10 The Vision

The literary city of Heidelberg is set on increasing its network on the local, national and above all international levels. By distinguishing itself as a city of literature and applying for membership of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, a number of very different projects have been inaugurated, such as the founding of a literature bureau. The latter is aimed at coordinating activities in and around the literary city of Heidelberg, supporting initiatives, and promoting collaborations in the international network.

The sheer amount that Heidelberg has to offer literature fans is immense. Current debates will show whether Heidelberg's developments as a place of literature will result in residencies for literati, a house of literature, or even a literature museum. In addition, Heidelberg is preparing to join the international cities of refuge network, ICORN, for writers in exile. The local book trade has also been earmarked for special support as an economic factor and cultural asset. In the longer term an "International Co-Innovation Centre for Literature and Publishing Technologies" could come about, which as both a think tank and centre for business and technology would weigh up the issues surrounding the book and publishing culture of the future. The digital turn should be seen here as a chance to be seized.

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[www.cityofliterature.de](http://www.cityofliterature.de)