

Rita Ciminnisi (Heidelberg)

Alumni Activity in Germany and the United States

Heidelberg University as a Case Study



Editors:

Frank Austermühl

Viktorija Bilić

Anja Holderbaum

Anne Kimmes

Joachim Kornelius

John Stewart

Christoph Stoll

Publisher:

Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier

Rita Ciminnisi (Heidelberg)

Alumni Activity in Germany and the United States

Heidelberg University as a Case Study

Abstract

Alumni activity has become an integral part of the American university system. The majority of higher education institutions, both private and public, have alumni associations or an alumni program of some sort. In stark contrast to this, alumni involvement in Germany is not deeply rooted in higher education. This article explores the beginnings of alumni involvement in the United States, and also seeks answers to why this facet of higher education is still in its infancy in Germany.

By taking Heidelberg University as an example, an analysis demonstrates how alumni activity is developing in Germany in comparison with the United States, and outlines the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

Keywords

alumni associations; Heidelberg University; Heidelberg Alumni International; non-profit; higher education; university management

Alumni-Vereinigungen; Universität Heidelberg; Heidelberg Alumni International; Non-profit; Hochschulmanagement

Table of Content

1	Introduction.....	2
2	What is Alumni Activity?	2
3	History and Structure of American Alumni Associations	4
4	Explaining the Success of U.S. Alumni Associations.....	5
5	Alumni Activity in Germany.....	7
6	Fundraising and Alumni Activity.....	10
7	Alumni Services	11
8	Alumni Activity at Heidelberg University	12
8.1	Heidelberg University Association – The New York Liaison Office	14
8.2	Services for HAI Members.....	15
9	Heidelberg Alumni Demographics	18

10	Summary and Outlook	24
11	Bibliography	25
12	Table of Figures	28

1 Introduction

2011 marked a momentous year in the history of Heidelberg University. Celebrating the institution's 625th anniversary paved the way for a number of events that year, including the inauguration of renovated lecture halls in the *Neue Universität* building, publication of the *Wissenschaftsatlas* ("Science Atlas"), and an exhibition showcasing the history of Heidelberg University.

As one of the most renowned and prestigious institutions of higher education in Germany, Heidelberg University is the alma mater of numerous individuals who later went on to play pivotal roles in science, philosophy and politics. Hannah Arendt, Robert Bunsen and Helmut Kohl are only a few examples of well-known names that appear in the list of Heidelberg University graduates.

In the United States, alumni associations have a longstanding tradition at both colleges and universities, as well as at most institutions of higher education. Germany, however, presents us with a completely different picture.

2 What is Alumni Activity?

Universities or colleges are usually defined as a "complex public organization unit, which operates [...] in responsibility towards society, the government, investors, employees and other interest groups" (Zech 2002: 15)¹. They combine research and teaching, representing the entire spectrum of academic disciplines (Trogele 1995). In the German context, the role

¹ Original German source: "[...] komplexe öffentliche Organisationseinheiten, die [...] in der Verantwortung gegenüber Gesellschaft, Staat, Geldgebern, Mitarbeitern sowie weiteren Interessengruppen arbeiten."

of private universities is limited, as they do not hold the same level of importance and prestige as private colleges do in the U.S.

The term “alumni” comes from the Latin word “alumnus”, meaning “foster child” or “nursling” (w1). In medieval times, church education facilities called “alumnats” would not only provide their pupils with schooling, but also offered board and lodging (ibid).

Today, “alumni” is mainly used to refer to former students or graduates of a higher education institution. The term was first used with this meaning in the U.S. towards the end of the eighteenth century (Zech 2002: 18). “Alumni” also includes former exchange students, professors, lecturers and even students who have attended but not concluded their degrees.

When it comes to alumni activity, there is no standardized terminology. Especially in Germany, but also in the U.S., some colleges and universities refer to their associations as “initiatives”, “programs”, “networks”, “projects” or “clubs” (Zech 2002: 20). In Germany, this may be due to the fact that the public is not particularly familiar with the idea of alumni activity. A survey that was conducted in 2001 at the Ruhr Universität Bochum found that only 19 per cent of those questioned had ever come across the term “alumni activity” (Zech 2002: 19). According to a survey by the *Hochschul-Informationssystem GmbH* (HIS) from that same year, however, about 50 per cent of those questioned stated that in the future they would like to keep in touch with professors, lecturers, research groups and fellow students of the university (Vintz 2003: 90 f.).

Alumni networks can generally be defined as

[...] a communicative association, which is established and organized by the university, encouraging membership in order to directly and regularly support and initiate contact between the organization’s members (Trogele 1997: 84).²

² Original German source: “[...] eine kommunikative, von der Hochschule initiierte und organisierte Vereinigung von Menschen, denen die Mitgliedschaft angetragen wird mit dem allgemeinen Ziel der regelmäßigen, direkten Kontaktierung und der Aktivierung derselben.”

All alumni organizations see their main tasks as fostering the ties between their former students and the college or university, and in promoting networking among the alumni themselves (Jacquemot 2004: 29).

3 History and Structure of American Alumni Associations

Alumni associations have been part of American college life for centuries. The first alumni club was established in 1792 at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, when a group of former students decided to found an organization that would send out newsletters to its members (Zech 2002: 20). In the decades after that, a number of similar organizations were instituted at other universities. Of course, these associations were only loosely structured, and presented hardly any elements of the organized initiatives and programs that are active today. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, alumni associations began to organize their work in a more structured way. In 1927 the *American Alumni Council* was founded (Vintz 2003: 18) and continues its work today. The *Council for Advancement and Support of Education* (CASE) now focuses on the coordination of alumni activities in schools, colleges and universities all over the U.S. (w2).

Nevertheless, it is essential to bear in mind that alumni associations are in no way to be equated with other powerful campus institutions, fraternities and sororities, whose members primarily consist of enrolled students, who may be engaged in youthful procedures such as pranks, bets and dares, and thus have nothing in common with alumni associations.

In the U.S., alumni associations are usually integrated in the institutional-development department of a college or university that is responsible for the strategic alignment of its activities (Zech 2002: 152). In addition to permanent staff members, the department is often supported by a number of student and alumni volunteers (Jacquemot 2004: 30). Alumni clubs in the U.S. have continuously had more financial means at their disposal than their

German counterparts.³ In general, alumni clubs in the U.S. employ about 10 per cent of their revenue from donations for raising new money (Trogele 1995: 162).

There are three common forms of alumni associations: independent, dependent and interdependent (Vintz 2003: 59). An independent alumni association is comprised of a board, with an executive director and a budget that arises from donations and membership fees. Dependent alumni clubs are integrated into the administrative department of the university or college, and are therefore accountable to the respective presidents and boards of the university. The most frequent form is the interdependent alumni association, which receives the major share of its funds from the university, and contemporarily has a stronger say in the decision-making process and the strategic orientation of its activities.

The following graph illustrates one example of an alumni association's organizational structure:

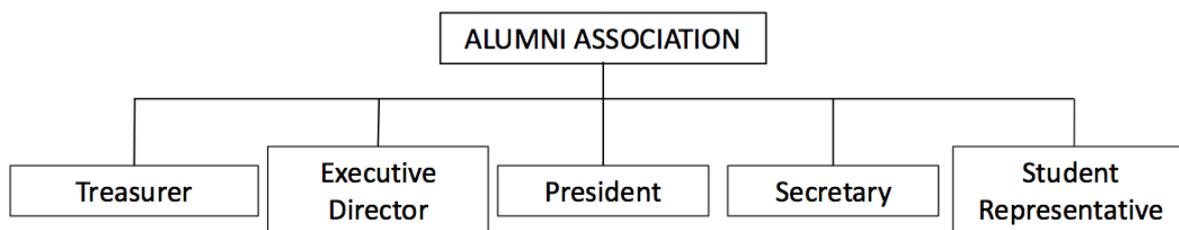


Fig. 1: Exemplary organization chart of an alumni association⁴

4 Explaining the Success of U.S. Alumni Associations

The major reason that alumni associations are more successful in the U.S. than anywhere else in the world is the longstanding tradition of donations and foundations in America. Compared to Europe, American citizens are more likely to donate, not only to charitable organizations that provide for the poor and needy, but they also support organizations from other areas of life, such as politics or education (Zech 2002: 150). Philanthropy in America

³ The budget of Princeton University for the year 2001 was 45 million USD, for instance, with 600 employees in charge of 69,000 alumni (Zech 2002: 148).

⁴ Based on the *Indiana University Alumni Association*.

started long before it did in Germany or any other European country. A social and financial commitment towards society has become an essential part of American life (Vintz 2003: 84). *Giving something back* and *making a difference* are ideas that are now deeply rooted in American mentality. Moreover, philanthropic commitment is not limited to the rich and famous, such as John D. Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie or Bill Gates, all of whom have donated part of their private assets for charitable purposes. Benjamin Franklin was one of the first individuals to donate to educational institutions. In the eighteenth century, he founded America's first library, and he went on to establish the University of Pennsylvania (w3). In the following century, around 500 additional colleges were founded, thanks to philanthropists (Vintz 2003: 86). It is estimated that, on average, Americans donate about one per cent of their incomes to charities and non-profits, which is ten times more than individuals in Germany (w4). The willingness of former students to donate part of their private capital to their university or college can be interpreted as a sign of gratitude and recognition. By making a financial contribution, they hope to pave the way for the successful academic careers of a new generation of students.

The structural aspects of American college life are an additional explanation for the success of U.S. alumni associations. American universities are often geographically isolated. The university campuses consist of much more than university buildings, and also include dorms, sports facilities, restaurants, shops and hospitals. Colleges and universities offer a wide palette of cultural and social activities, transforming the university campus into a "home away from home" (Habersack 2003: 91). Altogether, this creates a deep and strong bond between the colleges and their students that is meant to last for the rest of their lives. "Sign up for life" is a slogan that is often used in this context (w5).

The American higher education system is primarily funded by tuition fees. These, along with substantial donations, allow prestigious universities to accumulate multi-million-dollar

budgets.⁵ Additionally, a strong sense of competitiveness in American society also trickles down to the education sector (Trogele 1995: 148). Universities and colleges are constantly competing against each other in terms of reputation, scientific activities, funding and athletics, and are thus continuously striving for better quality standards in teaching and research. As a consequence of this, their level of overall educational satisfaction has a direct impact on the willingness of alumni to donate money to their former college or university (Trogele 1995: 151). Detailed college rankings, published on a regular basis by widely read publications like *U.S. News and World Report*, greatly influence both the images and public perceptions of US colleges. University alumni, their career paths and success stories can be regarded as other determining factors in shaping the image of a college or university.

5 Alumni Activity in Germany

Compared to the United States, alumni activity in Germany is still in its infancy. It was only towards the late 1980s that German universities started to establish alumni networks (Vintz 2003: 88). More than a decade later, in 1997 the non-profit umbrella association *alumni-clubs.net e.V.* was founded (w7). It serves not only in the interest of universities in Germany, but also those in Austria, Switzerland, Lichtenstein, Hungary and Italy (w8).

Alumni bonding refers to the process of establishing a life-long relationship between a college or university and its alumni (Kimmel 2003: 24). The procedures involved in alumni-bonding are related to marketing strategies, similar to relationship and dialogue marketing found in the business world. These strategies describe a “process of establishing relationships and ties to clients and other partners of a company though continuous dialogue” (Zech 2002: 84). In an academic context, alumni-bonding management attempts

⁵ A study conducted by the *National Association of College and University Business Officers* (Nacubo) in 2013 found that Harvard University has a budget of 32.2 billion USD, making it the richest university in the country, followed by Yale University with 20.8 billion USD, the University of Texas System with 20.4 billion USD, Stanford University with 18.7 billion USD and Princeton University with 18.2 billion USD (w6).

to analyze all aspects of the college student experience in order to elaborate methods and strategies to deepen the relationship between the university and its partners (Zech 2002: 85).

Before contemplating ways to raise money for an alumni club, the focus must be on “friendraising before fundraising”, as stated by Albrecht Bayer from the International Relations Office at Heidelberg University (Zech 2002: 94). For a successful alumni initiative, it is crucial to first prioritize the establishment of a strong bond between the alumni and their university.

Once the process of alumni bonding is initiated, it becomes an ongoing endeavor that can be outlined in three stages: the preliminary phase, the study phase and the alumni phase (Zech 2002: 86). The preliminary phase is the stage alumni networks have the least influence on, since they rarely have a say in deciding who is admitted to the university (Zech 2002: 88). In the study phase, alumni associations can direct their efforts towards positively influencing students’ academic paths right from the start. In order to establish an initial bonding, traditional instruments like student events and extracurricular activities can be implemented. Positive interactions among students, lecturers, professors and university staff can also contribute to raising the level of satisfaction among students, thereby laying the groundwork for a lifelong relationship. This phase requires a close cooperation between alumni associations and their university administrations. The alumni phase is the only stage that is entirely managed by the alumni association. Since the target group is not as homogenous as it was when the alumni were enrolled students, this can be a challenging task. Due to their different geographic locations and the variety of life-stages among alumni, events and initiatives of alumni associations have to be adapted and tailored to the heterogeneous character of their alumni group.

Generally, there are four key factors that determine a successful alumni association: identification, satisfaction, benefit and communication (Holtschmidt, Priller 2003: 67). Identification involves creating a sense of exclusivity. Introducing admission restrictions and adjusting the admission requirements are ways of making sure that once students have been admitted, they feel a stronger sense of belonging to the university. This is more than creating a relationship between an institution and its students; it is about creating a

corporate spirit among students (Holtschmidt, Priller 2003: 70). The level of satisfaction achieved during students' journeys along their academic paths can be determined by the university in various ways, including enhancing the quality of research and teaching, and integrating students in research projects (Kimmel 2003: 29). Students must sense that their efforts, both in terms of time and money, stand in relation to the study programs and extracurricular activities offered (Holtschmidt, Priller 2003: 69). Despite the often cited principle of "discretionary collaborative behavior" by Heckman and Guskey (1998) which describes the willingness of "customers to contribute to an effective functioning of the relationship" (Holtschmidt, Priller 2003: 9) with vendors or companies, especially in Germany, the alumni have a strong demand for personal benefit (Kimmel 2003: 24). Consequently, in order to operate effectively, alumni associations need to offer services and activities that alumni can draw an individual benefit from, either directly or indirectly. The last critical variable for a successful alumni association is a continuous form of interaction. Most alumni gravitate to a combination of mass and personal communication (Jacquemot 2004: 65). The Internet provides a major forum for mass communication, distributing news of events and recent developments at the university. Personal letters and phone calls are an effective vehicle for soliciting contributions, and provide the alumnus with the feeling of a continuing personal attachment to their alma mater.

Recently, universities and colleges have often been compared to companies in the business world (Kimmel 2003: 28). Both need to look for potential partners and bind them to the company or university. A leadership strategy that is oriented towards the marketing strategies of a free economy is called "strategic marketing" (Trogele 1995: 8). This general approach can be adapted to the academic context and is then called "strategic university management", i.e. when universities "develop a marketing concept to enhance their competitiveness by tailoring their services to their selected target market and target group" (Zech 2002: 70).

6 Fundraising and Alumni Activity

Fundraising represents a major purpose of alumni associations. Funds generated are needed to finance both the network activities and university projects. Fundraising involves all forms of donations, endowments, bequests, payments from sponsors and income from the marketing of products and services of a university or college (Jacquemot 2004: 58).

Donations from alumni represent an expression of gratitude and attachment to the university. Alumni decide to make financial contributions, because of their personal interest and social expectations, or else they donate in order to benefit from a tax deduction.

Keeping the donation process as simple and easy as possible by providing such amenities as online payment options, is crucial and avoids creating additional administrative hurdles.

Informing alumni about the tax advantages of their donations serves as an additional incentive. Publishing a participation rate that illustrates the share of donors in relation to the total number of an institution's alumni is another way of boosting donations (Holtschmidt, Priller 2003: 55).

Membership fees are a second source of income for alumni associations. Especially in the early stages of a new association, imposing membership fees can represent a profit-yielding strategy. At the same time, this is often likely to deter potential members from joining the association, as they cannot gauge whether the potential personal benefits are worth paying the fees. Instead of membership fees, alumni associations can instead raise additional funds by introducing participation fees for selected events like seminars, conferences or further training opportunities. By using the university's infrastructure and staff, alumni associations can contemporarily save money and avoid the need for external equipment.

Sponsoring is the third source of financial income for alumni associations. Unlike donations, a sponsoring agreement always implies a balanced ratio of performance and consideration. In return for providing money for an event, sponsors are allowed to place advertisements on an association's website, or on promotional literature. Sponsoring constitutes the most controversial funding option of the three, since critics fear that academic sponsorship may jeopardize free and independent research and teaching at universities (Jacquemot 2004: 61).

The university itself can also represent a source of financial support. Yet due to increasing university budget-cutting, the university should not be considered a reliable funding option for the long term.

7 Alumni Services

Alumni associations have a range of options when it comes to the services that they provide for their members. It is important that in addition to merely supporting their alma mater, alumni always expect to derive a personal benefit from their membership. The services that are offered should thus be geared towards two purposes: interacting with new alumni and strengthening the bond between the university and its alumni in the long run.

The alumni database lies at the heart of all alumni activity. In addition to fulfilling the administrative purpose, with its lists of names and addresses, the database also can represent an independent service offered to the alumni. By integrating this data into an online platform, alumni can independently contact their former university colleagues.

Alumni profiles in a database include the following information (Jacquemot 2004: 49):

- first name, surname, maiden name,
- contact details,
- date of registration with the alumni association,
- year of graduation,
- career profile,
- personal interests and hobbies.

Career services can also be included among the range of alumni services. An alumni association career service is especially attractive to recent graduates who are just entering the job market. This provides an attractive stimulus for joining an alumni association. Alumni of all ages can benefit from a well-designed platform listing job vacancies and internship opportunities, seminars on tips for job interviews, continuing education opportunities, and computer and Internet classes. Web seminars represent a more recent trend that is

particularly suitable for alumni associations, allowing alumni from all over the world to conveniently participate without limitations of time or space.

Members are attracted to an alumni association that allows them to keep in contact with former classmates, as well as offering opportunities to meet new people and enrich their social lives (Jacquemot 2004: 55). Consequently, it is crucial to offer events that also have entertainment value. Organizing national, regional and local reunions with interesting fringe events, such as city tours, cocktail gatherings and dinners, can accomplish this. Trips and excursions provide other opportunities to promote relationships with alumni, both at home and abroad.

Alumni magazines are another significant part of alumni organizations. Despite the power of the Internet, colorful print-form publications are designed to appeal to alumni tastes. Although alumni may opt for a digital version, there is no substitute for the attractive alumni magazine printed on heavy, slick paper-stock. Sometimes, individual university departments issue their own alumni magazines to keep alumni updated on the latest developments⁶. The mission of alumni magazines is to provide university news and events, as well as features on current students, successful alumni or expanded coverage of sporting events. These periodicals further update alumni information, including individual career advancements, marriages, births and deaths of both alumni and faculty members. Alumni magazines are usually financed by the alumni association's website and are available free of cost to members of the organizations. Magazine staff members are usually alumni themselves.

8 Alumni Activity at Heidelberg University

Heidelberg Alumni International (HAI), the alumni network of Heidelberg University, was launched in 1996 as one of Germany's first ever alumni associations (w9). The initial goal was to begin an initiative that would allow Heidelberg alumni to keep in touch with each other

⁶ *Hermes*, for instance, the alumni magazine for Columbia Business School.

and to strengthen their personal ties to the University. Some initial sporadic contacts with former students had already been established in the 1980s. In 1995, after a survey conducted in cooperation with the *German Academic Exchange Office* (DAAD) revealed that former students had a vivid interest in an alumni association, Heidelberg University decided to offer an address database and to begin hosting regional and national reunions ([w10](#)).

The association *Verein der Freunde der Universität Heidelberg e.V.* (Friends of Heidelberg University Club) provided initial administrative and financial support. Today, this society operates under the name *Gesellschaft der Freunde Universität Heidelberg e.V.* (GdF) (Society of Heidelberg University Friends) and represents an association that is fully independent of the alumni association, despite their shared efforts and overlapping goals ([Rodenberg 2014](#)). In 2006, ten years after its launch, the alumni database comprised 5,000 national and international members; currently, this figure has doubled. In 2011, on the occasion of the 625th anniversary of Heidelberg University, alumni from around the globe gathered in Heidelberg to celebrate the fifteenth anniversary of HAI ([w11](#)). The year 2011 also represented an opportunity to examine the association's achievements and redefine its goals and ambitions for the future.

With ties to more than 176 countries, the Heidelberg alumni association is now organized in various ways: International clubs, such as Heidelberg Alumni Canada and Heidelberg Alumni Luxemburg; regional chapters, including the New York and Boston chapters in the U.S. and the Munich and Berlin chapters in Germany, as well as professional groups, such as medicine, natural sciences or law. These individual groups host regular reunions, meetings and events that continuously keep members actively connected with their alma mater. Notably, the University's *Institute for Translation and Interpreting* (IUED) constitutes the largest professional group in the network. When the comprehensive alumni database was compiled, the Institute was also one of the main contributors of addresses.

Heidelberg Alumni Association has its own office in Heidelberg with a number of full- and part-time employees and student assistants ([Rodenberg 2014](#)).

8.1 Heidelberg University Association – The New York Liaison Office

Heidelberg University Association, Heidelberg University's liaison office in New York operates as an alumni office that serves to strengthen and expand academic cooperation with American universities and colleges, while also representing the non-profit society, *Friends of Heidelberg University* ([w12](#)). Since 1996, Heidelberg University has continuously focused its alumni activity on the United States, since it represented a huge potential for the University's international relations. This relationship with the U.S. presented enormous challenges as well, due to its impressive geography and its established alumni association traditions. Limited staffing at the International Relations Office of Heidelberg University further complicated the matter, so that at first it seemed to be an insurmountable task. Eight years later, in 2004, the *German Academic Exchange Office* (DAAD) called upon German universities to open a liaison office in the U.S., Heidelberg University responded, and set up its New York presence in 2008 ([w13](#)). In conjunction with the inauguration of Heidelberg University Association, the American alumni club Heidelberg Alumni U.S. (HAUS) was founded ([Rodenberg 2014](#)). The mission of the New York office is to promote exchange between Heidelberg University and the United States. Since Heidelberg University's vice-rector for international affairs is always one of the three members of the association's managing board, this allows for continuous and direct communication between the two sides of the Atlantic.

The University primarily provides the funds for both the alumni office in Heidelberg and its New York presence. One of the University's major concerns is to make sure that operating expenses are entirely covered by their budget. For events, projects, initiatives and additional services for the alumni, HAI uses funds arising from fundraising campaigns or member donations. Additional funds are project-bound and come from external organizations, such as the DAAD. Unlike third-party funds that must be used for specified projects only, donated money can be distributed more freely. In Heidelberg, for instance, a fundraising campaign by HAUS raised a significant amount of money to renovate one of the lecture halls of the Neue Universität ([w14](#)). In contrast to many other German alumni associations, HAI deliberately decided not to introduce membership fees, because it was felt that potential members

would be deterred. According to Silke Rodenberg, the director of HAI, a basic range of free services is required to bind considerable number of people to the University ([Rodenberg 2014](#)). Initially, HAI also placed advertisements in its newspaper, but this was later abandoned in favor of university-related advertising in its newspaper and on its website.

8.2 Services for HAI Members

The only requirements for joining *Heidelberg Alumni International* are academic or professional ties to Heidelberg University. Registration can be done online at the HAI website and the *HAI*net portal (see [Fig. 2](#)) or by completing one of the forms found in flyers or leaflets that are available at events and reunions. Following verification, HAI provides the new members with online access information, a HAI membership card and, if desired, an alumni-email address.

HEIDELBERG ALUMNI INTERNATIONAL
HAInet

Home > New Registration

New Registration

Personal information:

Title: Mr. [v] [i]

Academic title: [v] [i]

First name*: [v] [i]

Last name*: [v] [i]

Maiden name*: [v] [i]

Date of birth*: [v] [v] [v] [i]

Nationality*: [v] [i]

Address:

Address line 1: [v] [i]

Address line 2: [v] [i]

Address line 3: [v] [i]

Street, Number*: [v] [i]

Zip/Postal Code*: [v] [i]

City and Province/State*: [v] [i]

Country*: [v] [i]

Telephone: [v] [i]

E-mail*: [v] [i]

Status:

Graduate or former student

Student

Current or former Professor or University employee

Visiting scientist / scholar

Fig. 2: Online registration for HAI membership ([w15](#))

To assure a lively connection between the university and its alumni, as well as among its alumni, HAI offers a wide range of services. National and regional meetings have become a

major constituent of the spectrum of alumni initiatives. Academic projects like the *International Alumni Meetings* and international workshops like the *Summer School* and *Spring Schools* provide opportunities for participants to discuss and exchange experiences on a wide variety of topics ([w16](#)).

Meetings and reunions sponsored by HAI allow personal interaction with its members, while its web-based services allow alumni worldwide instant access to forums, magazines and job markets (see [Fig. 3](#)). The *HAI*net portal also features an internal search engine for members, events and forums, enabling registered members to interact independently of the alumni administration.

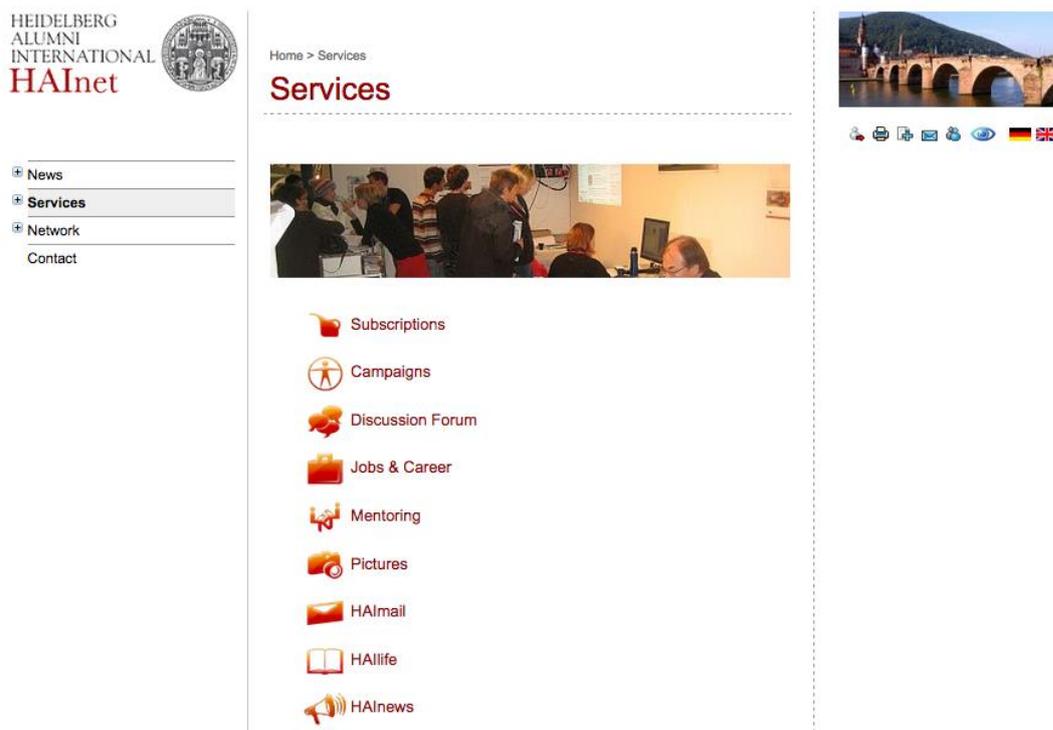


Fig. 3: Web-presentation of HAI services ([w17](#))

The HAI website presents stories about current, past and future events (see [Fig. 4](#)). Unlike the *HAI*net portal, this website is accessible to non-members such as potential students or cooperation partners. With its overview of association structure and activities, it serves as a major instrument of both communication and marketing.

The screenshot shows the HAI website layout. At the top, the University of Heidelberg logo and 'ZUKUNFT SEIT 1386' are visible. The main navigation includes 'HEIDELBERG ALUMNI INTERNATIONAL' and a list of services like 'Services & Aktivitäten', 'Netzwerk', and 'Mitmachen'. A central banner reads 'Herzlich Willkommen!' with a photo of Heidelberg. Below this, there's a section for 'HALU - Generalversammlung' on May 7, 2014. To the right, a 'Services' section lists newsletters and email addresses. Further right, 'AUSSERDEM INTERESSANT...' lists articles like 'Berufsperspektive Quereinstieg' and 'Mentoring'. At the bottom right, 'RESEARCH ALUMNI' is also visible.

Fig. 4: The HAI website ([w18](#))

Published annually, *HAlife*, the print-version alumni newspaper, presents news about the Heidelberg alumni network. While members automatically receive *HAlife* in their email boxes, it is available for download on their website. Subscribers receive a quarterly newsletter published online. According to HAI, members increasingly prefer online editions of all publications ([Rodenberg 2014](#)).

Like most alumni associations, HAI also offers a free life-long alumni email address, allowing alumni to express their personal and emotional ties to the university. The alumni-email address follows the format *firstname.surname@alumni.uni-heidelberg.de*.

Access to university library services is a popular bonus for alumni association members. Publishing house licensing restrictions prohibit access to scientific e-journals, but registered HAI members can access the library's online catalogue *HEIDI* ([Rodenberg 2014](#)).

9 Heidelberg Alumni Demographics

The HAI database provides us with an overview of its alumni population in 2014 that describes them in terms of age, gender, academic discipline and country of residence. It is an attempt to determine whether certain alumni activities lead directly to new registrations, by noting a possible correlation between the frequency of certain HAI events and the time of new registrations. All the data that was employed for this study is dated May 2014, with a total of 10,000 datasets that were rendered anonymous.

Gender data from a total of 9,416 datasets indicated an almost equal distribution of male and female HAI members: 4,991 men (53%) and 4,425 women (47%) (see [Fig. 5](#)). According to the University's *Gender Action Plan 2009-2013*, in recent years, the female share of Heidelberg graduates has always been above 50 per cent ([w19](#)). It can therefore be assumed that in a few years' time, the share of female registered alumni will rise accordingly.

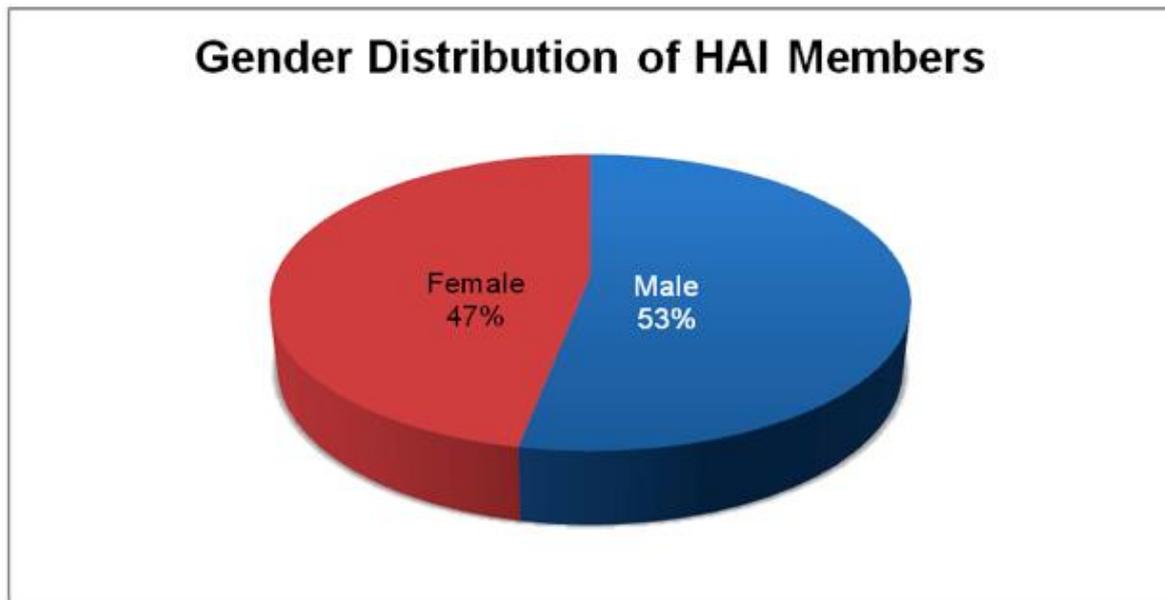


Fig. 5: Gender distribution of HAI members

There were 9,285 datasets with specification of age. The results in [Fig. 6](#) show that those aged between 30 and 39 constitute the largest group in Heidelberg University's alumni

population, followed by those between 40 and 49 years of age. Considering this, ideas for alumni activities should be largely tailored to meet the needs and interests of individuals in their 30s and 40s.

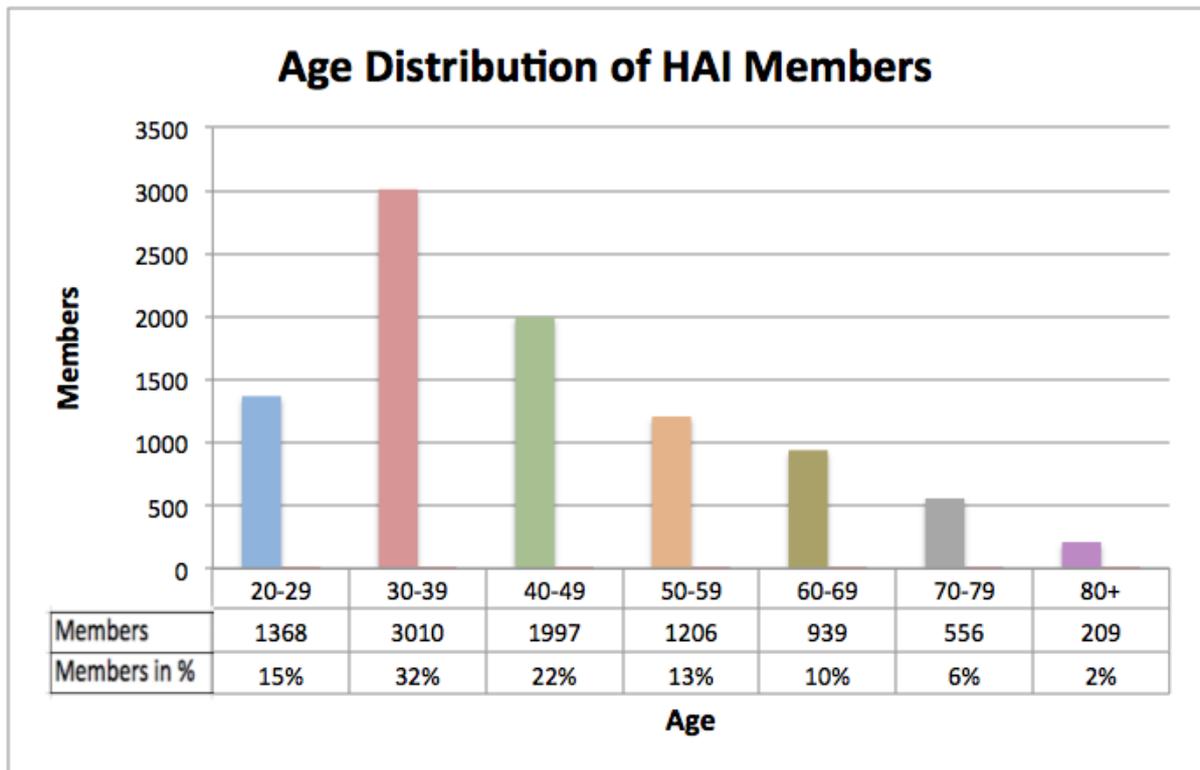


Fig. 6: Age distribution of HAI members

Our geographic-distribution analysis only considers country of residence, not actual citizenship. More than half of all HAI alumni (55%) live outside Germany. HAI’s decision in 2009 to focus on Germany led to a predictable increase in German-based alumni, who have now reached a share of 45 per cent.

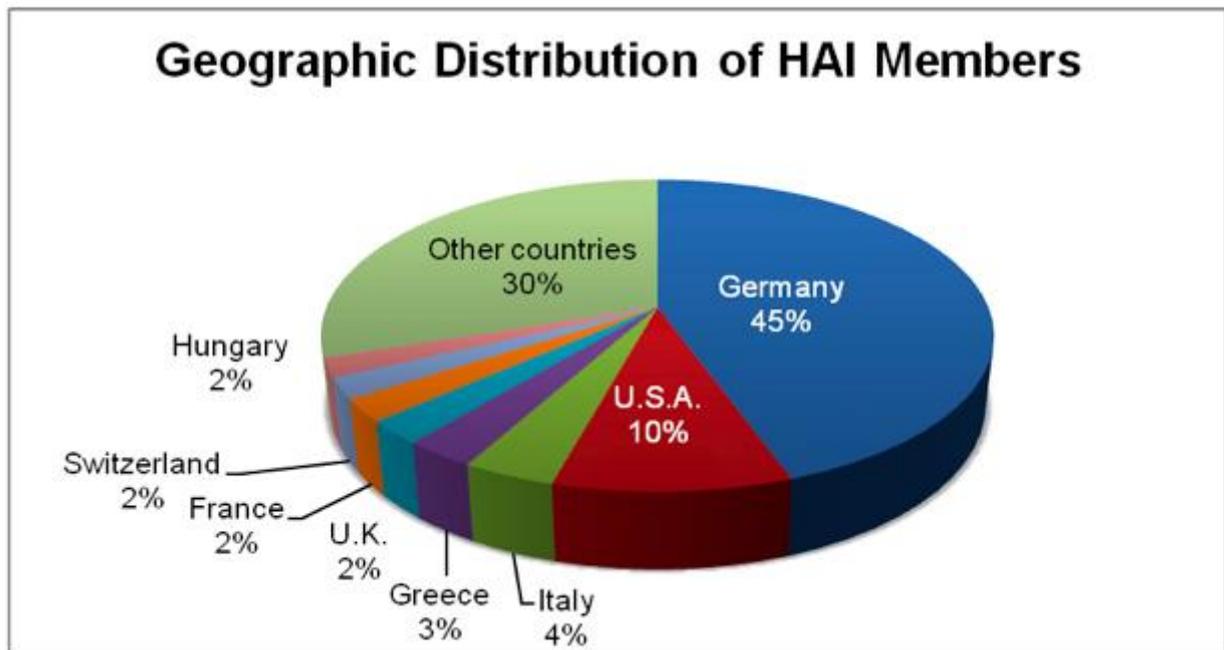


Fig. 7: Geographic distribution of HAI members

Most of the 5,209 alumni who live outside Germany reside in the U.S. (18%), which justifies HAI's emphasis since 2008 on alumni activity in America (Rodenberg 2014). Well-established alumni traditions in America combined with a desire while out of the country to link-up with fellow alumni, probably account for the increased likelihood of alumni joining while abroad. HAI's U.S. alumni are followed by those living in Italy (7%), Greece (5%), the United Kingdom (4%) and France (4%). Except for the UK, these countries already have their own national Heidelberg alumni clubs.

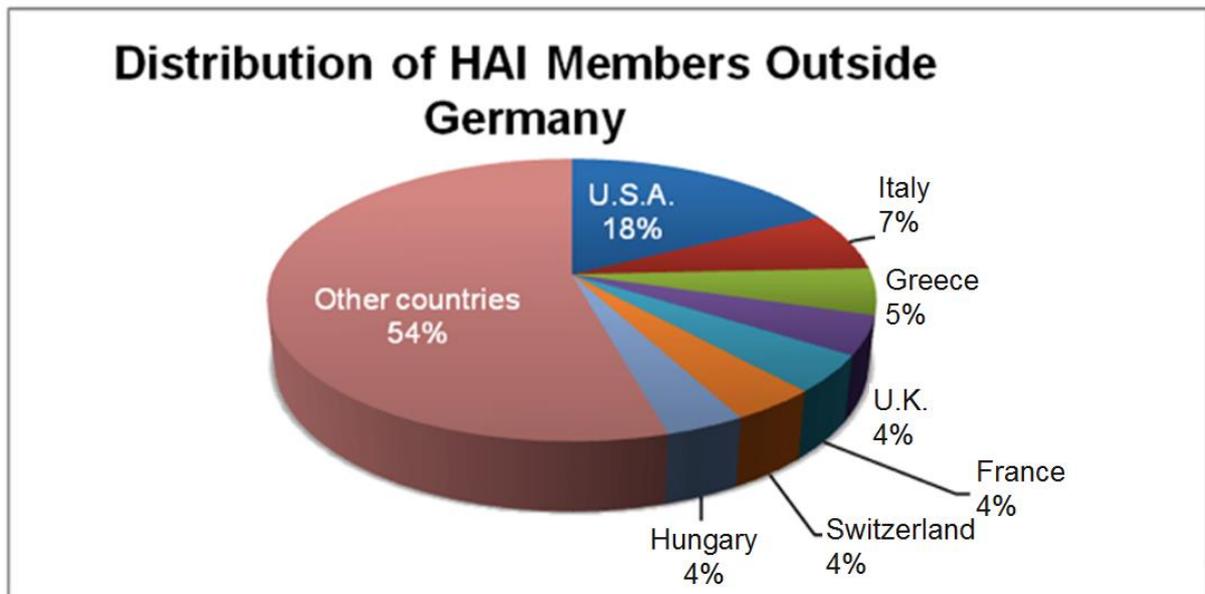


Fig. 8: Geographic distribution of HAI alumni living outside Germany

The alumni themselves instituted all the professional groups in the HAI network. Newly registered alumni now are able to contact fellow colleagues from the same institute or academic field. This data may indicate which academic disciplines are more likely to be dependent on postgraduate networking.

Fig. 9 displays what subjects the alumni studied during their time in Heidelberg. Significantly, the table in Fig. 10 shows that the distribution is not directly mirrored in the distribution of professional alumni groups. Translation and interpreting alumni, for instance, who only make up 6 per cent of all alumni in total, represent by far the largest professional alumni group (387 members). Of graduates from the medical and law schools, who respectively constitute 12 and 10 per cent of all Heidelberg alumni, only 50 medical and 4 law alumni joined the professional group in the HAI network. One observation is that apparently following graduation, translation and interpreting students are more interested in building networks with former fellow students than law or medical students. Since most translation and interpreting students study English, they may also be more familiar with the idea of alumni associations through academic and professional experience in English-speaking countries during the course of their studies.

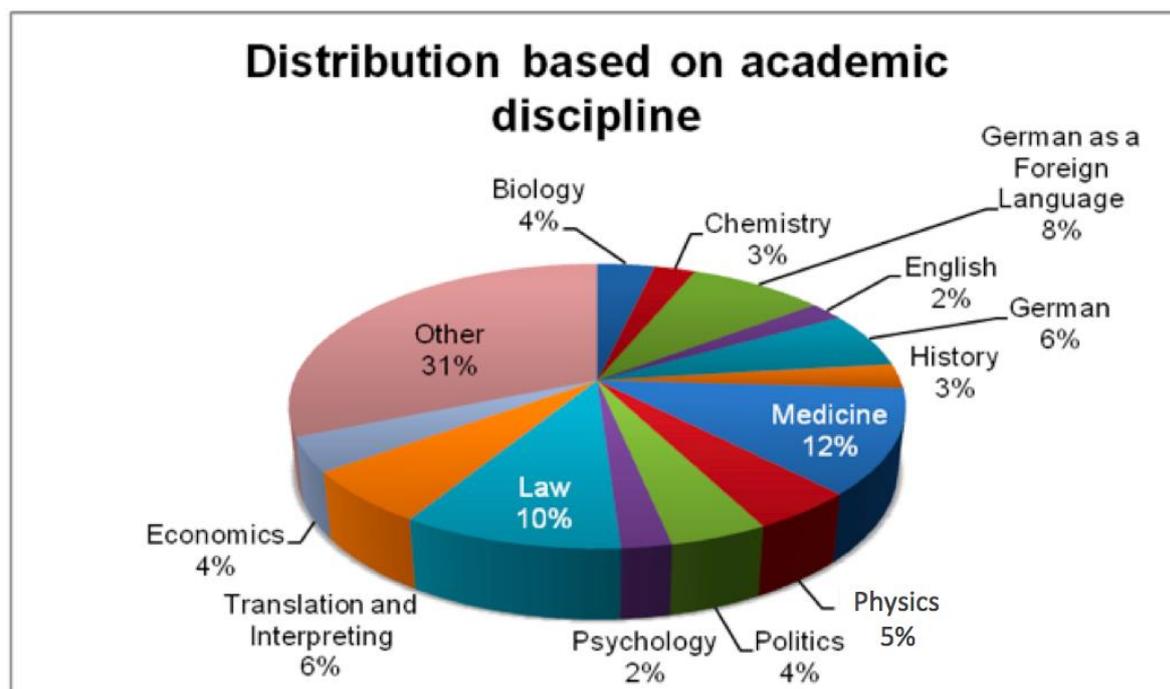


Fig. 9: Distribution of HAI members based on their academic discipline

Professional Alumni Groups	Registered HAI Members
Law	4
South Asian Institute (SAI)	8
Heidelberg Centre for American Studies (HCA)	9
Pharmacy	20
Medicine (Mannheim)	21
Medicine (Heidelberg)	28
Geography	30
Romance Languages	36
German as a Foreign Language	45
Classical Philology	48
Institute for Translation and Interpreting (IUED)	387

Fig. 10: Abridged list of professional groups in the HAI network ([w20](#))

Heidelberg Alumni International regularly hosts events and reunions that designed to help alumni keep in contact, while at the same time attracting new members. This is why it is worthwhile to closely study the relationship between past HAI initiatives and the number of new members joining the alumni association afterwards. The line in [Fig. 11](#) shows the number of new registrations per month since the establishment of HAI in 1996.

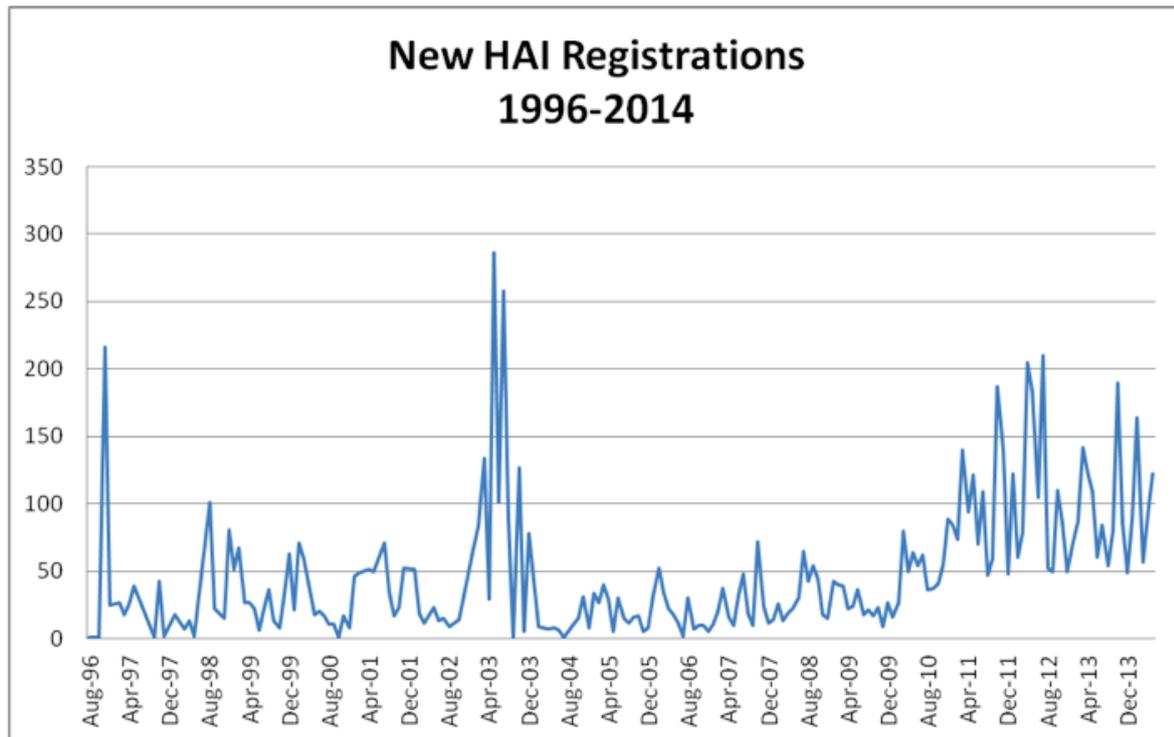


Fig. 11: Number of new HAI registrations from 1996 until the present

The initial peak in the number of new registrations in August 1996 clearly coincides with the official launch of *Heidelberg Alumni International*. There are two further high peaks in 2003, which may be linked to the year 2002, when *Heidelberg Alumni Greece* (HAGR) was founded and the first national reunion was held in Thessaloniki. During 2009 and 2010, there was a continuous increase in the number of new registrations. This may be explained by an increase on German alumni following the association's strategic shift toward the German market in 2008. In 2011, a combination of the HAI's fifteenth anniversary with the university's 625th anniversary spotlighted both the university and its alumni association, which both created a stronger public awareness of Heidelberg University and its alumni

association. Since then, the alumni organization has faded from public awareness, despite ongoing activities and the establishment of Heidelberg Alumni Italy (HAIT) in 2013. A sudden rise in new membership seems to be related to occasional large-scale alumni activities, yet there seem to be no clear indicators.

10 Summary and Outlook

Unlike in the U.S., alumni networks in Germany have not yet reached a comparable level of significance and influence on the German academic landscape. This is mainly due to how academic life functions in the U.S. and the different values in society, which make American alumni more likely than their German counterparts to join and financially support the alumni association of their college or university. In Germany, university graduates seem to primarily look for the personal benefits that a membership in an alumni association might produce. Due to the historical lack of fierce competition among German universities, benchmarks for research and teaching were not continuously adjusted as rapidly and ambitiously as in the U.S.

U.S. alumni associations serve to demonstrate what institutions of this kind can achieve and what potential they hold. Despite German-American cultural differences, Heidelberg University serves as a successful example of how alumni associations can operate in Germany.

In order to tap into the full potential of alumni associations in Germany, attempts to directly transfer American strategies to different cultural contexts must be strictly avoided. Instead, German alumni associations should view American alumni associations as a source of inspiration and attempt to adapt initiatives to the characteristics of their own native alumni population.

It is highly unlikely that alumni associations will reach the status of their American counterparts anytime soon. Yet today's need for networking and interaction between recent graduates combined with the university's need for alternate forms of funding indicate that alumni activity must be viewed as an attractive option.

11 Bibliography

Printed sources

Habersack, Ingrid (2003). *Hochschulbindung als Grundlage für eine erfolgreiche Alumni-Arbeit*. In: : Alumni-clubs.net e.V. (ed.). *Alumni-Arbeit im Aufbruch. 8. Konferenz der Alumni-Organisationen. Strategien erfolgreichen Alumni-Managements. 7. Konferenz der Alumni-Organisationen*. Alumni-clubs.net. Mannheim, Siegen

Heckman, Robert & Guskey, Andrew. (1998). *The relationship between alumni and university: Toward a theory of discretionary collaborative behavior*. In: Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice, Spring 1998, Issue 2

Holtschmidt, Philipp, & Priller, Sebastian (2003). *Alumni-Netzwerke. Nutzungspotenziale, Ausgestaltung und Erfolgsfaktoren*. Alumni-clubs.net. Mannheim, Siegen

Jacquemot, Stephan F. (2004). *Möglichkeiten des Hochschulmarketing*. Alumni-clubs.net. Mannheim, Siegen

Kimmel, Dominik (2003). *Alumniarbeit Quo Vadis?* In: Alumni-clubs.net e.V. (Hrsg.). *Alumni-Arbeit im Aufbruch. 8. Konferenz der Alumni-Organisationen. Strategien erfolgreichen Alumni-Managements. 7. Konferenz der Alumni-Organisationen*. Dokumentation. Alumni-clubs.net. Mannheim, Siegen

Rodenberg, Silke (2014). *Interview with Silke Rodenberg, director of Heidelberg Alumni International, conducted by Rita Ciminnisi*. 27 May 2014. Heidelberg.

Trogele, Ulrich (1995). *Strategisches Marketing für deutsche Universitäten: Die Anwendung von Marketing-Konzepten amerikanischer Hochschulen in deutschen Universitäten*. Peter Lang Europäischer Verlag der Wissenschaften. Frankfurt am Main

Trogele Ulrich (1997). *Zielgruppenbindung mittels Absolventenvereine*. In: Wissenschaftsmanagement: Zeitschrift für Innovation. Lemmens. Bonn.

Vintz, Anne-Kristin (2003). *Alumni-Arbeit in den USA*. Alumni-clubs.net. Mannheim, Siegen

Zech, Christina (2002). *Hochschulen und ihre Alumni*. Alumni-clubs.net. Mannheim, Siegen

Online sources

w1: Universität Hamburg (21 September 2000). *Netzwerk ohne Vereinsmeierei. Bericht über den Alumni-Verein Hamburger Soziologinnen und Soziologen e.V.*

http://www.uni-hamburg.de/PSV/PR/Presse/Unihh/3_00/alumni.html [17 Feb. 2014]

w2: Council for Advancement and Support of Education. *About CASE*.

http://www.case.org/About_CASE/CASE_History.html [10 Apr. 2014]

w3: University of Pennsylvania. *Our Founder*.

<http://www.upenn.edu/about/founder.php> [10 Apr. 2014]

w4: Zeit Online (12. Juli 2006). *Stiftungen. Philanthropische Republik Amerika*.

<http://www.zeit.de/2006/29/B-Stiftungen-USA> [4 Apr. 2014]

w5: Wirtschaftsblatt. Sylvia Wasshuber (19 February 2000). *Universitäten intensivieren Betreuung der Akademiker*.

<http://wirtschaftsblatt.at/archiv/karriere/911375> [4 Apr. 2014]

w6: Pensions & Investments. Christine Williamson (28 Jan. 2014). *NACUBO-Commonfund: Endowments grow 11.7% to \$448.6 billion*.

<http://www.pionline.com/article/20140128/ONLINE/140129876/nacubo-commonfund-endowments-grow-117-to-4486-billion> [4 Apr. 2014]

w7: Alumni-clubs.net. *Alumni News. Newsletter 4/2012*.

http://www.alumni-clubs.net/fileadmin/dokumente/newsletter/Alumni-News_4-12-web.pdf [20 Feb. 2014]

w8: Alumni-clubs.net. *Über uns*. <http://www.alumni-clubs.net/ueber-uns> [21 Feb. 2014]

w9: Ruprecht-Karls-Universität (23. Mai 2003) *Alumni Revue - Dezember 1996*.

http://www.alumni.uni-heidelberg.de/revue_titel_1_1996_2.html [18 Jan. 2014]

w10: Ruprecht-Karls-Universität (5. September 2006) *Alumni Revue - Sommer 2006*.
http://www.alumni.uni-heidelberg.de/revue_titel_1_2006_2.html [18 Jan. 2014]

w11: Universität Heidelberg (9. September 2011). *625 Jahre Ruperto Carola. 15 Jahre Heidelberg Alumni International. Alumni-Jubiläums-Tage 2011*.
<http://www.alumni.uni-heidelberg.de/jubilaem> [18 Jan. 2014]

w12: Heidelberg Alumni International (10. Juli 2008). *Unsere Frau in New York*.
http://www.alumni.uni-hd.de/revue_welt_1_2008_1.html [10 Jun. 2014]

w13: Hochschule Osnabrück (22 April 2005). *Feierliche Eröffnung des New Yorker Verbindungsbüros*
<http://www.hs-osnabrueck.de/722+M519f729dca2.html> [29 May 2014]

w14: Universität Heidelberg (Jun. 2011). *Festschrift zur Wiedereröffnung der Neuen Universität*. http://625.uni-heidelberg.de/md/kampagnen/625jahre/festschrift_neue_universitaet.pdf [29 May 2014]

w15: Heidelberg Alumni International. *New Registration*.
<https://alumniportal-heidelberg.de/public/newperson.aspx> [12 Sept. 2014]

w16: Universität Heidelberg. *Internationale Sommerschule des Alumni-Netzwerks „Bildung und Technologietransfer. Bildung und Beratung für problemorientierte Organisations- und Personalentwicklung*.
http://www.uni-heidelberg.de/md/zentral/alumni/flyer_sommerschule_2012.pdf [29 May 2014]

w17: Heidelberg Alumni International. Portal *HAInet. Services*.
<https://alumniportal-heidelberg.de/Default.aspx> [12 Sept. 2014, login required]

w18: Heidelberg Alumni International. *Welcome!*. <http://www.alumni.uni-heidelberg.de> [12 Sept. 2014]

w19: Universität Heidelberg. *Gleichstellungskonzept 2009-2013*. <http://www.uni-heidelberg.de/imperia/md/content/einrichtungen/frb/gskonzept2.pdf> [28 May 2014]

w20: Heidelberg Alumni International. *HAI*net. *Fachliche Alumni-Gruppen*.
<https://alumniportal-heidelberg.de/groups.aspx> [28 May 2014, login required]

12 Table of Figures

Fig. 1: Exemplary organization chart of an alumni association.....	5
Fig. 2: Online registration for HAI membership (<u>w15</u>).....	15
Fig. 3: Web-presentation of HAI services (<u>w17</u>).....	16
Fig. 4: The HAI website (<u>w18</u>).....	17
Fig. 5: Gender distribution of HAI members	18
Fig. 6: Age distribution of HAI members	19
Fig. 7: Geographic distribution of HAI members.....	20
Fig. 8: Geographic distribution of HAI alumni living outside Germany.....	21
Fig. 9: Distribution of HAI members based on their academic discipline	22
Fig. 10: Abridged list of professional groups in the HAI network (<u>w20</u>)	22
Fig. 11: Number of new HAI registrations from 1996 until the present	23

T21N - Translation in Transition

T21N offers a cutting-edge electronic publishing venue, created by experts for both young talent and established researchers from the worlds of translation and interpreting.

T21N provides a stage for emerging ideas and new academic talent to present their ideas in a digital reading site, where speed and ease meet enjoyment.

T21N is exclusively published online at <http://www.t21n.com>.

Articles in compliance with our style sheet may be submitted at any time and will be published at short notice.

T21N editors research and teach at the Institute of Translation and Interpreting at the University of Heidelberg in Germany.

Editors:

Prof. Dr. Frank Austermühl, Dr. Viktorija Bilić,
Dr. Anja Holderbaum, Dr. Anne Kimmes,
Prof. Dr. Joachim Kornelius, Dr. John Stewart,
Dr. Christoph Stoll