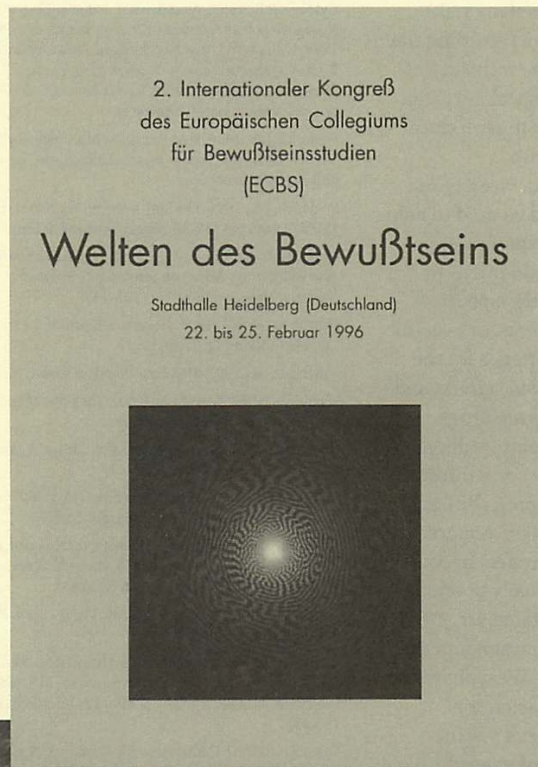


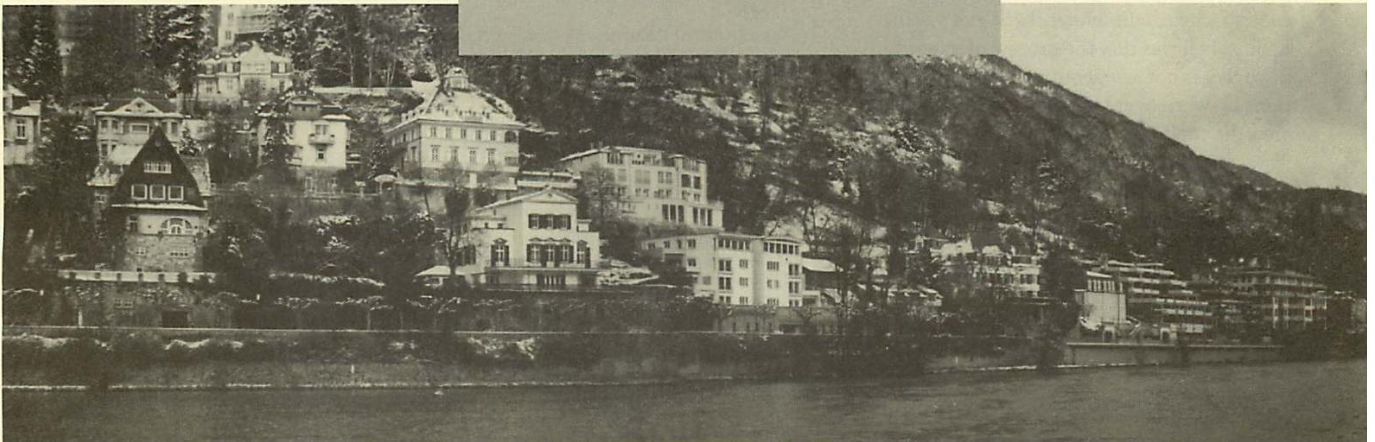
THE EUROPEAN COLLEGE FOR THE STUDY OF CONSCIOUSNESS (ECSC) held its second international conference in Heidelberg, Germany, February 22-25, 1996. The conference, entitled "Worlds of Consciousness," attracted about 40 participants from the United States and about 800 from Europe. Psychedelic and consciousness researchers from around the world converged for a few days to meet and share scientific findings in the shadow of the magnificent ruined Heidelberg castle that dominates the hillside above the city.

worlds of consciousness conference

Rick **Doblin**



*Panoramic view
of Heidelberg*



THE CONFERENCE was opened by the Mayor of Heidelberg. Symposia took place in the city's main conference center and were covered by the local media and the BBC. The first evening's event, featuring Betty Eisner, Roland Fischer, Felicitas Goodman, Albert Hofmann, Hanscarl Leuner, Ralph Metzner and Sasha Shulgin, was open to the public and attracted about 1,200 people. Though the majority of the speakers and participants were primarily interested in psychedelics, there were presentations on a variety of other topics and techniques. In addition to the seminars and lectures, there were musical presentations, an art exhibit, book vendors and a stunning slide show with musical accompaniment that left many in the audience awed.

The conference offered a precious opportunity to evaluate the status of psychedelic research around the world. As always, I was on the lookout for new information so that I could more strategically evaluate how MAPS might direct its limited resources. My priority is to assist the field to move forward toward research into the therapeutic applications of psychedelics and, if good fortune permits, into the subsequent creation of legal contexts for the administration of psychedelics in a supportive environment.

New Opportunities for Research

The first opportunity I saw revolved around the research team led by Dr. Franz Vollenweider at the University of Zürich. Dr. Vollenweider pioneered the use of PET scans to study psychedelic states of mind and has attracted a dedicated and talented group of researchers as well as substantial funding. Dr. Vollenweider's vision for the development of his research is inspiring. In addition to the use of high-tech brain scans to conduct basic science, Dr. Vollenweider would like to branch out into studying the use of psychedelics as catalysts for creativity and into studying their clinical applications.

While Dr. Vollenweider is well-funded for his basic science projects, he has yet to raise any funds for clinical trials or for studies into the use of psychedelics to promote creativity. After some thoughtful discussion, MAPS pledged \$15,000 to support a study of MDMA in the

treatment of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The clinical research, to be directed by Truls Baer, M.D., will hopefully be ready to begin in early 1997.

The second opportunity involves the research being conducted by Dr. Leo Hermle in Germany. Dr. Hermle has previously conducted basic physiological research into the effects of mescaline and MDE. At the conference, he expressed an interest in initiating a clinical trial sometime around New Year 1997. In order to cover a few of the basic expenses of the experiment, MAPS pledged \$10,000 for Dr. Hermle's clinical trial. The choice of drug and patient population is still to be determined.

The third new opportunity involves the research of Karl Jansen, M.D. of London, England. Dr. Jansen would like to use functional MRI to compare the brains of infrequent MDMA users (1-5 times) with those of heavy users (more than 1,000 times), both before and during one MDMA administration. If this study does take place, it will be the first instance in England in which a researcher is given legal permission to administer MDMA to human subjects. Dr. Jansen has submitted a preliminary grant proposal to MAPS but is still developing his budget. I don't yet know how much it will cost or to what extent MAPS will be able to help but I do know that helping human studies with MDMA to begin in England is one of MAPS' top priorities. MAPS has sent \$1,960 to Dr. Jansen for his d-fenfluramine study of MDMA users. (p. 7)

The Heidelberg conference was a rousing success. A great deal of thanks is due to the three conference directors, Dr. Hanscarl Leuner, President of the ECSC, Dr. Adolf Dittrich, and Dr. Rolf Verres, the local Heidelberg host and coordinator, and to Dr. Michael Schlichting, the secretary of the ECSC who handled much of the communication between the conference organizers and the foreign guests.

You can get a taste of what the ECSC conference was like by reading Albert Hofmann's speech, translated from the original German by Jonathan Ott. A book of abstracts from the 1992 ECSC conference is now available for sale. A book of abstracts and papers from this recent conference will be available later in 1996. •

