41st History of Technology Conference

Technology's workforce. Inventing, operating and learning technology throughout history

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Date	16–17 November 2018
Venue	Klostergut Paradies, Schlatt, Switzerland
Organizer	Iron Library, Foundation of Georg Fischer Ltd
Deadline	30 April 2018

Call for Papers

The 41st History of Technology Conference will be held at the Klostergut Paradies in Schlatt near Schaffhausen, Switzerland on 16 and 17 November 2018. The Conference has served as an outstanding platform for the exchange of ideas between research, teaching and industry since 1978. The speakers and the invited guests come from universities, libraries, collections and museums or contribute their business and industrial experience. The conferences are renowned for the breadth and topicality of the papers presented. You can find information on previous conferences at: www.eisenbibliothek.ch.

This international and interdisciplinary event is organized by the Iron Library (Eisenbibliothek), Foundation of Georg Fischer Ltd. Responsibility for the content of the conference is in the hands of a scientific advisory board consisting of Dr. Gisela Hürlimann (ETH Zurich), Prof. Reinhold Reith (University of Salzburg) and Prof. Friedrich Steinle (TU Berlin).

We kindly invite interested persons involved in research, teaching and practice to apply to present a paper.

Conference topic in 2018: Technology's workforce. Inventing, operating and learning technology throughout history

The interaction between humans and technical artifacts is a constitutive element of technology history, but this interplay seems to take on a new quality in the 21st century. On the basis of current developments and forecasts, we can assume that the work and technical operations done by human hands will increasingly be taken over, wholly or in part, by machines that are equipped with artificial intelligence. That is an exciting starting point for reassessing both the role of humans as technological actors and technology as a field of human endeavor.

The Conference will examine the historical change in technical activities and in those individuals or groups of individuals who learn and practice these technologies and who develop and maintain technological processes and equipment. The focal point of the Conference are humans as technology's 'actors' and 'workforce' – also in their role as men or women, as 'natives' or 'foreigners' or as members of different social, ethnic or religious groups. We invite papers that inquire in particular into the following areas:

Learning and teaching

From learning by doing to master craftsman and technical college? This concise formulation outlines a path that has developed – and continues to co-exist with more formal approaches – in technical training. Speakers may wish to address the less formalized practices of technical training and routinized procedures alongside formal educational establishments and teaching methods as well as the institutions behind them.

Development

The image of the innovative engineer encompasses the narrative of technical progress as the epitome of modernism. The Conference aims to broaden this perspective on the process of technological discovery and development and inquire into the conditions for invention. In which social contexts and professional networks does the knowledge of technical development emerge? What is the role played by knowledge and practice transfer, and where do imitation and adaptation come in? Papers will focus on engineers but also on tinkerers, experienced practitioners, nerds and superusers who bring about the modifications that are so crucial for sustainable innovation.

Implementing and maintenance

The biggest contribution to technology as routine practice is made – today as in the past – by the "workforce": the men and women who implement technical procedures, who operate apparatus and machines – from weaving looms to CNC machines – and thereby ensure that technology actually works. This also involves the important tasks of maintenance and repair, which are – even today – virtually inseparable from technological development and continue to offer a wide field of activity.

Proposals for papers on these and other related subjects are welcome.

Format

The papers may be read in English or in German. Conference documents including English abstracts of all papers will be prepared by the organizer. The papers should not exceed 20 minutes in length. Following the conference, papers will be published in the specialized journal *Ferrum*, which is published annually by the Iron Library.

Synopsis

Applicants are kindly invited to submit a synopsis of their paper – no longer than two A4 pages (4'000 characters) – in English or German, along with an up-to-date resume, by 30 April 2018 to the Head of the Iron Library, lic. phil. Franziska Eggimann (franziska.eggimann@georgfischer.com).

Organizational matters

The Iron Library, Foundation of Georg Fischer Ltd, will assume speakers' travel expenses and the cost of room and board during the Conference. We expect that speakers will attend the entire Conference.

Timelines

We request you to submit your synopsis by 30 April 2018.

The selection of the speakers will be completed by the end of May 2018.

Contact person

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