**Call for Papers ECREA Communication History Workshop**

**Communication Networks Before and After the Web:**
**Historical and Long-term Perspectives**

**CERN, Switzerland, 5-7 February 2025**

The 2025 ECREA Communication History Workshop will be hosted by CERN (Conseil Européen pour la Recherche Nucléaire / European Council for Nuclear Research), where the World Wide Web took its first steps between the end of the 1980s and the early 1990s.

This special location inspired us to choose the theme of communication networks from long-term and historical perspectives as the key topic of the workshop. “Network” is one of digital literacy’s most symbolic and obsessively repeated keywords and metaphors. However, communication networks are not exclusively digital. From telegraphy to telephony and wireless communication in the 19th century, from radio and TV networks in the 20th, the concept of network has been used even before the Internet and, specifically, the Web. Communication networks seem to transform the sense of speed, space, and place, creating new connections and erasing others. Networks enable the exchange of communication or limit it, new networks are launched and old ones are abandoned or have to be maintained.

Interrogating communication and networks from a diachronic perspective can be approached from numerous angles: networked communication and its infrastructures, communication through networks, and within networks, networks of communication, and communication on networks, to name but a few. This inquiry should encompass discourses, imaginaries, modalities, infrastructures, governance, and many other dimensions. Three main historical perspectives on communication networks are suggested:

1. **Communication and networks before the digital age**

Potential topics for exploration include, but are not limited to letters, press, telegraph and telephone networks, radio, and TV networks, but also other forms of communication networks, through for example learned societies or rumor. The legacy of these models, their physical or symbolic persistence, their stakeholders, and their structure are topics of interest as well as issues of regulation and governance.

2. **Imaginaries, representations, and narratives related to networks**

This may include cultural imaginaries and narratives surrounding networks in a long-term perspective, their representations in media, the controversies that may have arisen through time, utopia, and mythologies related to networks and networked societies. A reflection on the word per se, its emergence and eventual disappearance, and its metaphorical history is also welcomed.

3. **Digital communication networks: from socio-technical origins to platformization**

Genesis and evolution of digital networks, communication dynamics and changes through digital networks, online communities and their modalities of communication, and past discourses and approaches surrounding the development of networked communication are only a few topics that may be diachronically addressed. The history of social network sites, even the disappeared ones or the failed European attempt to create alternatives to US platforms, can be considered. The digital dimension of networks should be always considered from a historical perspective, in line with the focus of the section.

Other transversal topics such as the role of networks in shaping communication and community, their impact on societies, or network analysis for studying the history of communication may be proposed. The study of networks in communication and media studies is also welcome: media studies, for example, have often advanced theories about small or large networks, their social role, the power of media in creating or breaking social networks, the strong or weak ties created by networks, etc.

We invite scholars from various disciplines to submit abstracts for papers addressing these themes. Submissions should be in English and have a clear historical approach.

**Abstracts of 300 words** should be submitted no later than **31 July 2024**. Proposals for full panels (comprising 3 or 4 papers) are also welcome: these should include a 300-word abstract for each individual presentation and a 150-word rationale for the panel. Send abstracts to: **comnet@usi.ch.** Authors will be informed regarding acceptance/rejection for the conference no later than **13 September 2024**. Early career scholars and graduate students are highly encouraged to submit their work (please indicate if the research submitted is part of your thesis or dissertation project).

**Fees and accommodation**. The conference registration fee is 150 Swiss francs/about 150 euros (100 Swiss francs /about 100 euros for Ph.D. and M.A. students), and participants are asked to cover their travel expenses. This fee includes apero at the get-together, coffee breaks, and two lunches. A special rate has been arranged for lodging near CERN: a single room with a private bathroom for 58.00 Swiss francs. Further information will be sent to all the accepted presenters.

**Local organizers**: James Gillies and Jens Vigen (CERN, Geneva), Deborah Barcella, Martin Fomasi and Gabriele Balbi (USI Università della Svizzera italiana, Lugano)

**For the section management team**: Christian Schwarzenegger (University of Bremen), Valérie Schafer (C$^2$DH, University of Luxembourg), Marie Cronqvist (Linköping University)

For more information, visit our website, ECREA Communication History, and follow us on Facebook ECREA – Communication History.