

43rd History of Technology Conference

Good, Durable, Safe. Quality and Safety Requirements of Technology in History

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Date 17–18 November 2023
Venue Klostergut Paradies, Schlatt, Switzerland
Organizer Iron Library, Foundation of Georg Fischer Ltd
Deadline 28 February 2023

Call for Papers

On November 17 and 18, 2023, the 43rd History of Technology Conference of the Iron Library (TGT) will take place at the Klostergut Paradies in Schlatt near Schaffhausen (Switzerland). Since 1978, it has provided an outstanding platform for exchange between research, teaching, and industry. 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. Information on previous conferences can be found at: www.eisenbibliothek.ch.

The 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 the scientific advisory board, whose members include Prof. Dr. Gisela Hürlimann (TU Dresden), Prof. Dr. Friedrich Steinle (TU Berlin) and Prof. Dr. Marcus Popplow (KIT).

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

Conference topic in 2023: Good, Durable, Safe. Quality and Safety Requirements of Technology in History

In addition to functionality and aesthetics, quality and safety are central goals of technological development and production. Quality and safety are just as relevant for the manufacturing process of technical equipment and products as for their use. This applies to the materials used and the manufacturing processes as well as to the end products: from buildings to vehicles, machine elements or computer chips to foodstuffs or active pharmaceutical ingredients.

Even in pre-industrial trade, guilds sought to comprehensively ensure the quality standards of products. In the course of the Modern Period, it was not only manufacturers and companies who were concerned with questions of quality and safety; rather, these were increasingly negotiated by society. Governmental and state actors assumed control and regulatory functions that were institutionalized, standardized and legally fixed. In this way, they also responded to the complaints and claims of users and consumers. Scientific actors produced damage assessments as well as test procedures for individual technologies. The scope of such measures has expanded in the historical process: While the initial focus was on accident prevention, ensuring efficient production processes and customer satisfaction, in the second half of the 20th century the demands expanded to include environmentally relevant aspects. Discussions about environmental legislation, the safety of nuclear technology or autonomous driving also dealt with questions of product liability and its limits. In all of this, massive disparities are apparent in different types of operations and industries, but especially in a global comparison. The current question is to what extent established standards for the operation and use of technology need to be renegotiated in view of the climate crisis.

The history of technology has continually paid attention to the historical development of quality control, materials and material testing and the establishment of corresponding control procedures. Emphasis has been placed on industrial production, occupational health and safety, and civil engineering. With a view to long-term utilization processes, the reaction to accidents and technological catastrophes is investigated in a society-wide perspective, when standards for quality and safety have proven to be insufficient. Currently, research on reuse and reparability is also raising questions about the quality and safety of technology. Such topics are addressed in a broad and interdisciplinary field of research that includes the history of science as well as the history of construction technology or historical risk research.

The 2023 TGT focuses on the genesis and implementation of quality and safety requirements at the interface of technical production and use and invites discussion of the following questions: How did control and testing procedures develop in the historical *longue durée* and from which groups of actors did impulses for corresponding measures come? What role did developments play in technical practice from shipbuilding to daring architectural projects and transport infrastructure on the one hand, and in sciences such as chemistry, strength of materials and materials science on the other? How did companies act in the area of conflict between quality assurance measures and economic objectives? What role did quality and safety play in corporate culture and marketing? How did corresponding demands affect the design of work processes or the search for new raw materials and materials? How did informal technical standards become established in craft enterprises or in the absence of official control? What interactions become visible at the intersection of companies, politics, and the public? And what role did quality and safety standards play in the globalization of production processes? Case studies from all historical epochs and world regions are welcome, as are overarching theses and discussions of methodological issues. Contributions from different disciplines of the historical sciences and from the museum sector are equally welcome.

Format

The presentation time is 20 minutes. Presentation languages are English or German (with English slides). Conference proceedings with English abstracts of all papers will be prepared by the organizers. Conference papers will be published in the journal *Ferrum*, a journal published by the Iron Library.

Synopsis and timelines

Applicants are invited to send their exposé of max. 3'000 characters (or 400 words) in English or German with a current CV to Franziska Eggimann (franziska.eggimann@georgfischer.com), Head of the Iron Library, by February 28, 2023. Speakers will be selected by the end of April 2023.

Organizational matters

The Iron Library will cover the travel expenses of the speakers as well as the costs for accommodation and meals during the conference. We expect speakers to attend the entire conference.

Contact person

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