CENTENNIAL CONFERENCE OF THE COMITE INTERNATIONAL DES SCIENCES HISTORIQUES

Technology and the Making of History

Programme Event

International Committee of Historical Sciences | 26–30 August 2026 | Leipzig, Germany

DATE	LOCATION
28 Aug 2026, 08:30 - 10:30	House 5 SR134
THEME	CONFERENCE
G - Future Trends, Challenges, and Opportunities in the Historical Sciences	International Committee of Historical Sciences

Overview

This panel seeks to integrate two scholarly debates pertaining to the history of historiography that seem to have developed in parallel. One concerns a focus on the making of historical knowledge which follows the praxeological turn in the history of the humanities over the past decade. The other revolves around recent work on the history of digital history and, more broadly, the role of technology in the making of history. Even if the latter logically builds on the former, the question of how new technologies have shaped historical research practices and knowledge production since at least the late nineteenth century, has only recently begun to be explored.

Our panel focuses on a key aspect in the making of history: the circulation and diffusion of technological knowledge and expertise among transnational networks of computing historians in the post-WWII period against the backdrop of the Cold War. The uptake of analog and later digital computing in the United States, Western Europe and the communist bloc in the 1960s and 1970s went hand in hand with the creation of informal and formal networks and collaborations that contributed to the emergence of historical computing.

The 13th CISH congress in Moscow in 1970 was a pivotal moment in this process. Its methodological strand foregrounded the potential of computing for historical research and brought together computing historians across ‘East’, ‘West’ and non-aligned nations. It directly led to the 1973 History and the Computer conference in Uppsala, the ?rst international event of its kind. The momentum generated by these events would eventually find formal expression in a new CISH committee in 1980, the International Commission for the Application of Quantitative Methods to History (ICAQMH) which was initiated by a working group that convened during the 1980 CISH Conference in Bucarest.

The papers in this panel will explore various aspects of the technology-inflected making of history and probe the ways in which the local and the transnational intersected in the reshaping of historical research practices.

Participants

Convenor

- Gerben Zaagsma (Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History (C²DH))

Panelists

- Gerben Zaagsma (Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History (C²DH))
- Marek Tamm (Tallinn University)
- Sofia Papastamkou (Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History)
- Sune Bechmann Pedersen (Stockholm University)

Papers

Technology and the Transnational Making of History in the Longue Durée: An Introduction

Gerben Zaagsma (Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History (C²DH))

Wired Histories: Technology and Transnational Scholarly Networks in the Cold War Era

Marek Tamm (Tallinn University)

Teaching Computers to Historians and Humanists, 1960s–1980s

Sofia Papastamkou (Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History)

Historical Inquiry from Mainframes to Microcomputers: Oral Histories of Reshaped Research Practices

Sune Bechmann Pedersen (Stockholm University)

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