

International Communities of Invention and Innovation

IFIP WORKING GROUP 9.7 CONFERENCE

NYU Polytechnic School of Engineering, 25–29 May 2016

Analog and digital computers were developed by individuals aware of an international scientific community. Likewise, although sometimes thought of as solely national projects, the first computer networks were built in an age of growing interconnectivity among nations. This meeting of IFIP Working Group 9.7 in New York City gathers historians and other professionals to reflect on histories that foreground the international community. Participants with an interest in this historical context for computers and computer networks may present academic papers or join in roundtable discussions.

In accordance with this theme, we hope to blur the dichotomy between core and periphery and complicate simplistic notions of linear technological progress. Far from a deterministic view that computers and computer networks were developed in isolation and according to their own technical imperatives, we will show the history of pre-existing relationships and communities that led to the triumphs (and dead ends) in the history of computing. This broad perspective will help us to tell a more accurate story of important developments like the Internet, to be sure, but also it will provide us with a better understanding of how to sponsor future invention and innovation.

At the conference, we seek to foster a conversation about internationalism in the history of computers and computer networks along four broad themes:

1. Invention

- communities where analog computers were developed
- communication about and competition for early devices
- innovations brought in from the supposed periphery
- failed, forgotten, or thwarted efforts to develop networks or industries

2. Policy

- trade and treaties supporting computers and networks
- organizations like IFIP with a mission to promote collaboration
- long trajectories of digital divides
- case studies revealing ethical considerations
- cross-national comparisons of gender or ethnic diversity in industry and education

3. Infrastructure

- communication and data networks before the Internet
- development and diffusion of TCP/IP

- connectivity efforts before NSFNET, NSFNET, and beyond
- resistance to and success of the WorldWideWeb

4. Social History

- differences and similarities in international impacts on general society
- antecedents (Wells's World Brain) and visions (Human-Nets's WorldNet)
- individuals who championed connections between nations
- historiography of internationalism in computing
- representations of international computing communities in film or literature

It is hoped that the conference will be of interest to a broad range of people who study computing and computer networks, including academic scholars and graduate students, but also those who have a professional or technical interest in computing. Accordingly, there are two ways to participate:

1. Academic Papers

For consideration, please submit your draft paper before January 8 via the conference website (http://wp.nyu.edu/ifip_wg97/). Enquires are welcome in advance of your submission (wg9.7conference@nyu.edu). Draft papers will be circulated before the conference in order to encourage a meaningful discussion. At the conference, each selected participant will be allotted time to present an overview of his or her paper. It is our intention to publish selected conference papers in an anthology by Springer, and hopefully the conference feedback will be useful as presenters complete their final drafts.

2. Roundtable Discussions

In order to welcome technical professionals and others who may not desire to prepare a full paper, the conference will also feature roundtables of 10–15 minute, relatively informal presentations related to the conference theme. These presentations could focus on key figures, historical anecdotes, or observations on particular projects. We hope that these roundtables will spark lively conversation and, perhaps, generate research partnerships between historians and technical professionals. For consideration, send a 250-word summary of the topic and your interest in it before January 8 via the conference website (http://wp.nyu.edu/ifip_wg97/). Enquires are welcome in advance of your submission (wg9.7conference@nyu.edu).

The conference will be held at New York University's Polytechnic School of Engineering in MetroTech Center, Brooklyn, New York 11201. About 20 minutes away by subway from NYU's Greenwich Village location, MetroTech Center is located in the heart of Downtown Brooklyn and within walking distance of the Brooklyn Bridge as well as the iconic neighbourhoods of DUMBO, Fort Greene, and Brooklyn Heights. In order to help make the conference more affordable, we will offer accommodations in the school's dormitory, adjacent to the conference venue, at a competitive price for those who do not wish to stay in a nearby hotel.

Further details will be made available at http://wp.nyu.edu/ifip_wg97/

About IFIP WG 9.7: IFIP, the International Federation for Information Processing, was founded in 1960. It is a nongovernmental organization dedicated to information and communication technologies and sciences. It sponsors fourteen committees primarily of a technical nature. Technical Committee 9, however, is dedicated to ICT and Society. The organizer of this conference is TC9's Working Group 7, which focuses on the history of computing.

Important Dates

- **Deadline for consideration: January 8, 2016**
- Acceptances announced: February 5
- Early deadline for payment of registration fee: March 1
- Revised papers and abstracts due: April 1
- Last day to reserve a room in the dormitory: April 10
- Papers and abstracts made available to participants: May 1
- Revised papers due for consideration in proceedings: July 1