



Transnational Pathways to the Digital Age. Computers and Societies in North-South Perspective, 1950s–2000s

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Veranstalter	Leibniz-Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung (ZZF) Potsdam
Veranstaltungsort	Am Neuen Markt 1
PLZ	14467
Ort	Potsdam
Land	Deutschland
Vom - Bis	01.08.2024 - 02.08.2024
Deadline	31.10.2023

Von

Michael Homberg, Leibniz-Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung Potsdam

Call for Papers: International Conference: Potsdam, Germany, August 1–2, 2024.

Organization: Prof. Dr. Debora Gerstenberger (University of Cologne), PD Dr. Michael Homberg (Leibniz-Centre for Contemporary History Potsdam)

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Digital technologies and online social networks profoundly shape our 21st-century world. However, it's crucial to recognize that digital technologies have a considerable history already. From its inception in the 1950s, the digital computer has become a global phenomenon with far-reaching social, cultural, economic, ecological, and political implications. Despite its extensive influence, the societal changes brought about by early digital technologies have received limited scrutiny. Existing studies have primarily focused on developments in industrialized centers, leaving the changes in the Global South and their transnational connections underexplored. Thus, there is a pressing need to shift the conventional computer history narratives and adopt a new North-South perspective. In particular, we lack comprehensive studies that investigate how various national and regional paths into the digital age were globally interconnected.

This conference, therefore, embarks on a mission to establish a fresh historiographical perspective, delving into the transformative influence of computers and digital data processing on the living conditions and work environments of both the Global North and the Global South from 1950 to 2000. Our foremost objective is to illuminate the intricate interplay between digital advancements and societal transformations, while also nurturing comparative and interconnected perspectives.

Numerous works on the history of computing have been crafted under the assumption that the development of computer technology in other regions would closely resemble that of the United States. However, over the past two decades, scholars have enriched this field by exploring computing histories worldwide, focusing on Asia and Latin America, but also extending to Africa. These studies provide deeper insights into global trends and how they were shaped on a local level. Localized histories of global computing enable us to critically reevaluate contemporary assertions of globalization brought about by digital technologies, including the accelerated global circulation of capital, goods, information, and people.

Redaktion

Veröffentlicht am

07.09.2023

Autor(en)

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Beiträger

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Zitation ↓

Our conference blends well-established methodologies from political, cultural, and social history with insights from the new history of technology, Science and Technology Studies (STS), and Postcolonial Studies. We encourage and facilitate interdisciplinary exchanges to advance our understanding of the historiography of digital technologies and digital media. As such, this conference seeks to unite researchers from all historical disciplines while remaining inclusive of contributions from anthropology, computer science, cultural studies and media studies. Contributions are particularly welcomed when they elaborate on the pioneering digital metamorphoses that unfolded in Asia, Latin America, and Africa, along with the connections these regions forged with North America, the Soviet Union, and Europe.

The conference will delve into five key areas of focus:

1. (Geo-)Political Settings:

This section will explore the connections between developmental discourses and programs, human rights debates, and decolonization struggles within the context of Cold War politics. It will examine the political controversies surrounding digital (inter-)dependencies.

2. Global Digital Infrastructures:

This segment places special emphasis on virtual networks and the tangible geography of digital data traffic. It will also delve into issues related to digital access and divides, considering their social, ecological, and cultural ramifications.

3. Economic Entanglements:

Here, we will examine global computer networks and trade regimes and their ecological consequences. We'll also explore shifts in globalized working environments, particularly with regard to their social implications and the emergence of new digital inequalities based on factors such as race, class, and gender.

4. Emerging Computer Cultures:

This area will focus on (trans-)national academic communities and entrepreneurial networks, along with the evolving work and migration patterns associated with them.

5. The Digital Age and Media Representations:

This section will investigate changing representations of the digital age in popular media. It will pay special attention to computer myths and explore utopian/dystopian depictions in various forms, including comics, radio reports, TV series, and motion pictures.

By analyzing the groundbreaking digital transformations since the 1950s, this conference aims to enrich broader discussions in contemporary history. It seeks to reflect the interconnected societal changes in both the Global North and the Global South, offering new perspectives on the global circulation of digital computer hardware, expertise, and knowledge. Additionally, it aims to explore their impacts on postcolonial nation-building and international policy in the 20th and early 21st centuries.

The conference sessions are scheduled to take place on August 1–2, 2024, at the Leibniz-Centre for Contemporary History (ZZF) in Potsdam, Germany. The primary language for the conference is English. For those interested in attending, travel and accommodation costs may be covered upon application. Presentations should adhere to a maximum speaking time of 20 minutes and should be based on previously circulated papers. We invite proposals for papers, with a maximum length of 300 words, from individuals representing all disciplines. Additionally, please provide a brief bio-bibliographical note. The submission deadline for paper proposals is 31 October, 2023. Kindly direct your proposals and any inquiries to Debora Gerstenberger (debora.gerstenberger@uni-koeln.de) and Michael Homberg (homberg@zzf-potsdam.de). We look forward to your valuable contributions to this conference.

Kontakt

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Zitation

Transnational Pathways to the Digital Age. Computers and Societies in North-South Perspective, 1950s–2000s. In: H-Soz-Kult, 07.09.2023, <www.hsozkult.de/event/id/event-138512>.

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Nach oben ↑

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