

## 42<sup>nd</sup> History of Technology Conference

### Raw Materials. Natural Resources in History

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Date 13–14 November 2020  
Venue Klostergut Paradies, Schlatt, Switzerland  
Organizer Iron Library, Foundation of Georg Fischer Ltd  
Deadline 31 January 2020

### Call for Papers

The 42<sup>nd</sup> History of Technology Conference will be held at the Klostergut Paradies in Schlatt near Schaffhausen, Switzerland on 13 and 14 November 2020. The Conference has served as an outstanding platform for the exchange of ideas between research, teaching and industry since 1978. 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. You can find information on previous conferences at: [www.eisenbibliothek.ch](http://www.eisenbibliothek.ch).

This international and interdisciplinary 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 a scientific advisory board consisting of Dr. Gisela Hürlimann (ETH Zurich), Prof. Reinhold Reith (University of Salzburg) and Prof. Friedrich Steinle (TU Berlin).

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

### Conference topic in 2020: Raw Materials. Natural Resources in History

The extraction of materials from the natural environment is the first step in a wide range of technical and economic processes. From industrial corporations and construction companies, to financial services and medicine – virtually all aspects of economic and everyday life are involved in raw material cycles. Raw materials are dug out of the earth, blasted out of stone and pumped out of the seas; they are extracted from plants and culled from animals. These resources are then dissolved, prepared, chemically altered and recombined to be widely used and further transformed, or indeed wasted. Conflict over the use – and overuse – of natural resources has likely been entwined with human history since the earliest settlements. The 20th century has witnessed a dramatic rise in resource consumption, especially since the 1950s. The globalized economy's boundless hunger for natural resources and the recent debates on the "Anthropocene" have significantly increased scientific attention given to raw materials as the material basis of our society.

The conference aims to tie in with this agenda. It invites researchers to present papers on procedures of exploitation, refining and removal, on modes of prospecting and extraction, on trade, transport and processing, or also on the production of waste and emissions as well as on recycling of coal, gold, oil, copper, rare earths or other natural resources, in addition to plant- and animal-based starting materials. While approaching the subject from a history of technology angle, the conference also welcomes perspectives from corporate and global history, as well as archaeology, environmental and social history. Coal, for instance, was not simply a key resource for industrialization; its extraction altered landscapes, shaped soci-

eties and cultures, and has been in part responsible for increases in carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere. Palm oil, which has replaced other oils and fats in foods, soap or in energy and metal production, raises issues of colonial and agrarian entanglements, well beyond its role for a history of technology.

These examples illustrate the wide-ranging potential to historicize natural resources from antiquity to contemporary history. We also encourage contributions on non-European cases. The conference languages are both English and German.

### **Format**

The papers may be read in English or in German. Conference documents including English abstracts of all papers will be prepared by the organizer. The papers should not exceed 20 minutes in length. Following the conference, papers will be published in the specialized journal *Ferrum*.

### **Synopsis**

Applicants are kindly invited to submit a synopsis of their paper – no longer than 3'000 characters (400 words) – in English or German, along with an up-to-date resume, by 31 January 2020 to the Head of the Iron Library, lic. phil. Franziska Eggimann ([franziska.eggimann@georgfischer.com](mailto:franziska.eggimann@georgfischer.com)).

### **Organizational matters**

The Iron Library, Foundation of Georg Fischer Ltd, will assume speakers' travel expenses and the cost of room and board during the Conference. We expect that speakers will attend the entire Conference.

### **Timelines**

We request you to submit your synopsis by 31 January 2020.

The selection of the speakers will be completed by the end of March 2020.

### **Contact person**

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