Call for Papers

Summer School

Oral History and Technological Memory: Challenges in Studying European Pasts

10–15 August 2009, University of Turku, Finland

Conveners: Prof. Hannu Salmi, University of Turku; Dr. Petri Paju, University of Turku; Dr. Gerard Alberts, University of Amsterdam

The European Science Foundation EUROCORES program "Inventing Europe: Technology and the Making of Europe, 1850 to the Present" (www.esf.org/inventingeurope), in collaboration with the international research network "Tensions of Europe" (www.histech.nl/tensions) and the research project "Software for Europe" (SOFT-EU), is organising a summer school on oral history and technological memory, with a special emphasis on the methodology of oral history within the framework of the history of technology. The Summer School is open to doctoral students and junior scholars from the projects Inventing Europe and from Tensions of Europe. Other doctoral students and junior scholars who are interested in the topic, are invited to attend as well. The Summer School will be hosted by the Department of Cultural History, University of Turku, Finland. It will take place at the University of Turku between Monday 10 August and Saturday 15 August 2009.

Course Content

The Summer School has two main objectives. Firstly, it aims at providing PhD students and post-docs with up-to-date knowledge on oral history methods especially in the domain of the history of technology, and in particular with regard to how these questions and methods can help us better understand the European pasts studied in the EUROCORES Programme "Inventing Europe" (and the network "Tensions of Europe"). Secondly, the Summer School offers the participants an opportunity to present their own work and to discuss it with senior historians of technology and international experts in the fields of oral history and cultural history.

The Summer School has its background in the changes in our notion of history. Traditionally historical research has seen the past as a closed system, focussing on processes that have already

been ended. Oral history, however, starts from the idea that the past exists in the present day and that the boundary between past and present is by no means clear-cut. The historian has an active role in creating historical knowledge.

When it emerged as an innovation in historical research in the 1970s, oral history was first presented as an emancipatory approach, enabling voices to be heard which would otherwise remain ignored. Today, however, in the historiography of technological culture, we go out and interview technicians, scholars and politicians in the attempt to gain access to layers of history which are not often disclosed: the tacit knowledge, the implicit practices, the cultural webs of constructions and appropriations. Moreover, oral history enables us to approach the history of technology as "intangible heritage", embracing conceptions, experiences, traumas, and emotions that are unlikely to be accessible to an artefact-centred approach to the history of technology.

In several fields of the history of technology oral history methods are well advanced. It is time to share such practices and rethink their theoretical background. In the history of computing, the Charles Babbage Institute (Minneapolis) and the IEEE History Center (New York), have led the way in systematizing and standardizing oral history as a contribution to scholarly endeavour. The history of technology group at the Royal Technological Institute (Stockholm) has recently undertaken large scale oral history projects, and 'witness' seminars. The Summer School brings together these experiences and offers the junior scholars of Inventing Europe/Tensions of Europe an opportunity to consider new methodologies.

With these inputs the Summer School will offer a brief introduction to the historical development and the hermeneutics of oral history, followed by a laboratory style exercise in good practices of oral history in the history of technology. Participants are asked to bring their own examples of, or groundwork for, recent interviewing (more detailed instructions will be sent to all participants in advance). In small group intensive seminars tutors will guide students through a review of their approach.

The Summer School takes up the challenges and opportunities that oral history sources present for the study of technological memory in European contexts. What roles can oral history play in examining the European history of technology? When should one use oral history and when not? Which questions may be usefully asked and which not? We also offer the participants an opportunity to present other methodological questions they have encountered in their research for the Inventing Europe program. The Summer School will also touch the larger issue of new methods of assembling sources, such as Internet based questionnaires, witness seminars, and how these new methods may change oral history work. We will survey ways of collecting the oral histories of ordinary people, including autobiographies. Finally we will discuss the issues and practicalities of sharing sources such as oral history materials in Europe through internet-based platforms.

Structure

All participants are expected to attend throughout the duration of the whole Summer School. The programme consists of lectures, workshops, round table discussions, student project

presentations, laboratories in using oral source material, and slots for open discussions between teachers and students.

Teachers
- Dr. Isabelle Dussauge (Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm)
- Dr. Anna Green (University of Exeter)
- Dr. Thomas Haigh (University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee)
- Dr. Per Lundin (Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm)
- Dr. Thomas Misa (Charles Babbage Institute, University of Minnesota)
- Prof. Hannu Salmi (University of Turku)

Application/Participation
Applicants are to send a cover letter, a CV and a motivation letter, addressing the applicant's interest in the issues related to the topic of the Summer School by **May, 8, 2009** to Prof. Hannu Salmi, email: hansalmi@utu.fi. They will be informed about acceptance no later than May 20, 2009. Admission will be based on thematic fit and overall quality of the application. Residential costs will be covered for all participants. A limited budget is available for a contribution to travel costs. The application must include a request for such assistance, including the amount.

Upon admission all students and post-docs are expected to write a paper of about 4.000 words on their research topic, particularly in relation to oral history issues. The deadline for submission will be June 20, 2009. The participants are also expected to study the papers of all other participants, which will be pre-circulated, and the compulsory reader (about 100 pages), which will be based on publications selected by the teachers. In addition the students will participate in an oral history experiment which will be conducted during the Summer School. Further instruction will be sent to the participants in due course.

Contact
For further information, contact Dr. Petri Paju, Dept. of Cultural History, University of Turku, FI-20014 Turku, Finland, email: petpaju@utu.fi.

Sponsors
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Department of Cultural History, University of Turku, Finland

Further information
http://www.hum.utu.fi/kulttuurihistoria/memory.html