Track: Management and Business History

Track Chairs: James Fowler, University of Essex James.Fowler@essex.ac.uk
Roy Edwards, University of Southampton r.a.edwards@soton.ac.uk

Track description: This track encourages the growing number of management and business historians who work in business schools and social science departments to engage in constructive debate with a wide range of management scholars. The 2020 conference theme, ‘Innovating for a Sustainable Future’, is a superb opportunity to explore the value of historical study for current management. In this track we specialize in chronologically or longitudinally motivated research. Histories of organizations, industries and institutions give us the opportunity to understand how managers have innovated in the past. Longitudinal studies reveal how sustainable, or not, those innovations were and detailed archival records cast light on why that was.

We welcome papers, symposia or workshop proposals either using new and innovative methodologies or applying archival methodology to a new disciplinary context. We are also interested in context specific papers using more traditional historical methodology but which take innovative approaches to relate their findings to wider social science concerns. In addition, we appreciate papers dealing with the legacy of uncertainty in the past in business and management more generally, and how it has influenced the diversity of experience in present day businesses, regions and communities. This year, while the main conference theme ought to feature prominently in all submissions, we encourage cross-disciplinary papers and workshop submissions that link different Tracks.

As a group we are inherently multi-disciplinary and believe in the application of theory to historical analysis, and there is no single epistemology for approaching this. We aim to encourage theoretically orientated social science history with a clear relationship to present day debates in the management discipline. Contributions might focus on but are not limited to: the economic or social history of business, historical case studies for theory building, theoretical contributions on the relevance of history to management studies, the uses of history, history as a method for management studies Please note that while we are open-minded work not featuring a historical dimension, broadly defined, will not be accepted.

This editorial is a useful point of reference:


These articles offer commentary on the ‘dual integrity’ of business history methods as a combination of social science and historical craft:


Some theoretical and empirical examples of the genre of work that we seek to welcome include:


