

Envirotech Newsletter

Volume 4 number 2

October 2004

New Envirotech Co-Chair

By Jim Williams

Last year we had a very close election for co-chair to replace Sara Pritchard. As you know, Betsy Mendelsohn was elected and has been serving as co-chair this year. Like Sara, I did not plan on continuing as co-chair for more than a couple of years, and this year I am stepping down. After a bit of discussion, Betsy and I decided, in light of the closeness of last year's election, that it would be more than reasonable to ask Joy Parr, the runner-up in last year's election, if she would be interested becoming co-chair. We did this at the beginning of August, and Joy is happy to succeed me as co-chair. Betsy and I hope that this will meet with your approval, and I hope that you will welcome Joy into this new task as much as I do.

May I also say how very honored I am to have been a part of the founding of Envirotech. I look forward to many years of friendship with all of you.

By Joy Parr

I'm happy to follow Jim Williams as an Envirotech co-chair and to be working with Betsy. I run an interdisciplinary research program called 'Technology, Culture and Risk' at the University of Western Ontario in London, Ontario, a group which currently draws on the sociability and scholarship of environmental historians, health geographers, sociologists of science and an errant forester.

My own work is on large engineering works and the effects of radical landscape change on the sensing historically specific body. An example, coming soon, is 'Local Water Diversely Known' in **Environment and Planning:D**, Dec 2004. My email is jparr@uwo.ca and I welcome suggestions for Envirotech projects and news for the Envirotech listserv.

Envirotech Articles from 2001-2003

By Hugh Gorman

At the 2004 American Society for Environmental History conference in Victoria, Canada, Envirotech awarded its prize for the published article that best examines the historical interplay of technology and the environment to Jessica B. Teisch for her essay "Great Western Power, 'White Coal,' and Industrial Capitalism in the West," *Pacific Historical Review* 70 (May 2001): 221-253. Envirotech members also nominated several other articles that deserve to receive wider attention. With permission from the authors, they are summarized here.

Clapperton Mavhunga, "Firearms Diffusion, Exotic and Indigenous Knowledge Systems in the Lowveld Frontier, South Eastern, Zimbabwe, 1870-1920," *Comparative Technology Transfer and Society* 1 (August 2003): 201-232. In this study of technological transfer, Mavhunga examines the diffusion of firearm technology in the region that is now home to the Great Limpopo National Park. He shows how it gave rise to a "gun society" in which local socio-economic patterns and the local environment both shaped and were shaped by the introduction of firearms. Specifically, Mavhunga reconstructs the process of diffusion that brought guns to the region during the period of European Colonial Expansion, focusing on how local factors influenced the transfer of this technology and how that technol-

ogy changed as it diffused. This particular article is a byproduct of broader research on pre-colonial Indigenous Knowledge Systems.

Timo Myllyntaus, "Technology and the Environment: Searching for their Nexus in History," *Finnish Quarterly for the History of Technology* (2003): 5-15. In his article, Myllyntaus directly addresses the overlapping interests of environmental historians and historians of technology. In particular, he notes that "technology constitutes the predominant contacting surface between humanity and the environment" and outlines several ways in which that "contact" occurs. Thoughtfully examining this contact from both sides is clearly important, and Myllyntaus suggests ways that historians of technology can fruitfully incorporate environmental dimensions into their studies and how environmental historians can expand their understanding of the interplay between various human-induced factors and the environment.

Michael J. Yochim, "Snow Machines in the Gardens," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 53 (Autumn 2003): 2-15. Here, Yochim compares the regulation of snowmobiles in two national parks: Yellowstone, which accommodates them, and Glacier, which bans them. He

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Envirotech Articles from 2001-2003

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examines the different outcomes by tracing the evolution of the two policies in the face of changing technology, values, and decision-making processes. In both cases, officials with the National Park Service had to balance issues related to public access with other aspects of their mission. However, early decisions by Yellowstone officials to allow motorized winter tourism led to the development of an economy centered around snowmobiles, making changes in policy difficult.

David E. Nye, "Technology, Nature, and American Origin Stories," *Environmental History* 8 (2003): 8-24. As many cultural theorists have noted, societies tend to have master narratives that influence the way in which people think. Nye, building on this idea, examines the implications of the dominant American narratives (and counter-narratives) on the interactions of Americans with nature. As an example, indigenous people, given their long association with the land they occupy, tend to have a master narrative that is intimately linked to the land. Settlers, on the other hand, tend to have master narratives that have to do with conquering the land. He argues that the dominant American narrative is of the "settler" variety and has given rise to an assemblage of three narratives ("second creation," conservation," and "wilderness") that have come to

be woven into American policy debates.

The 2004 Prize Committee consisted of Sylvia Washington (chair), Frank Uekoetter, and Hugh Gorman. For 2005, Uekoetter will serve as chair and Gorman will rotate off. For the 2005 award we encourage you to nominate any article that you feel deserves to be recognized for thoughtfully examining the changing interaction of society, technology, and the environment. Details will be forthcoming.

Envirotech Breakfast at SHOT!

We hope that those of you able to attend the SHOT conference in Amsterdam will join us for breakfast on Saturday 9 October, an event for which Frank Uekoetter has served as able organiser. He will be our chair for breakfast that day.

Joy will introduce herself as co-chair. Betsy will talk about our arrangement with ASEH to coordinate conference panels and about plans for an Envirotech essay book. Your co-chairs promise not to be long-winded. Please bring news of current research and activities to share.

Envirotech 2003-2004 Activity Report & Request For Matching Funds

By Jim Williams

[Editor's note: Envirotech is required to submit an annual report to the SHOT Treasurer on our activities, and in the interest of transparency and of retaining our "corporate memory," the co-chairs and I believe it should be reproduced here.]

September 1, 2004

Richard Hirsh, Treasurer
Society for the History of Technology
3009 Stradford Lane
Blacksburg VA 24060

Dear Richard:

I am herein supplying an annual report of Envirotech's activities during the period 2003-2004, along with our request for matching funds and one single request for reimbursement for printing copies of our newsletter.

2003-2004 REPORT

In October 2003, Envirotech held one of its two semiannual meetings in conjunction with the SHOT conference. At that meeting, we announced the results of our election for a co-chair. Betsy Mendelsohn was elected to replace Sara Pritchard. Thirty-six members attended the gathering, where announcements were made and ideas floated for continued work in the intersection of technology and the environment. It was announced that Matthew

Booker, a PhD student at Stanford, would be running the Envirotech listserv, which has approximately 300 subscribers.

Shortly after the conference, Erik Conway, our online newsletter editor, released the vol. 3, no. 2 issue, which can be seen on the Envirotech website managed by Gabriella Petrick at the University of Delaware:

<http://www.udel.edu/History/gpetrick/envirotech/index.html>.

The Envirotech Prize Committee (Frank Uekoetter, Hugh Gorman, and Sylvia Washington) for the best article focusing on work at the intersection of technology and the environment was hard at work through the fall and winter, and they were prepared to announce the first prize in the amount of \$300 at our second semiannual meeting held in conjunction with the ASEH conference on April 1, 2004 in Victoria, B.C. The winner of the prize, Jessica Teisch was unable to attend, but she sent her deepest thanks and gratitude to Envirotech for its recognition of her work. Also at this meeting, Betsy Mendelsohn offered several ideas for further work by Envirotech, and Marty Reuss suggested that perhaps we could sponsor a book in which a collection of essays could focus on critical issues in the intersection of technology and the environment.

Since the spring meeting, co-chairs Betsy Mendel-

Envirotech Activity Report Continued

sohn and Jim Williams have continued to discuss these ideas, and a draft proposal for a book of collected essays is being circulated among the groups leadership. Jim Williams also announced his intention to step down as co-chair, and Betsy and Jim agreed that, because the 2003 election was so close between Betsy and Joy Parr, that we should offer the position to Joy. We are happy to report that Joy Parr accepted and already is working with Betsy and Jim in preparation for our semiannual meeting in October 2004 with SHOT in Amsterdam.

Finally, I must mention the important role of our treasurer, Ann Greene, who has faithfully collected dues and made sure they are properly deposited in our SIG account with SHOT.

REQUEST FOR REIMBURSEMENT and MATCHING FUNDS

1. During 2003-2004, Envirotech expended the following funds:

By Jim Williams to print newsletter hardcopies for distribution at ASEH in April (receipt attached)
\$ 74.04

By SHOT Treasurer from SIG account for Envirotech prize award
\$300.00

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TOTAL: \$374.04

2. **Reimbursement request.** Request that the SHOT Treasurer issue a check from the Envirotech SIG account to Jim Williams in the amount of \$74.04 as reimbursement for expenditures list above.

3. **Matching funds request.** Request that the SHOT Treasurer transfer \$187.02 from SHOT funds into the Envirotech SIG account as a 50% match of eligible funds expended by Envirotech.

Respectfully submitted,
James C. Williams
Co-Chair, Envirotech

News and Notes

Joyce Bedi and **Arthur Moloella** of the Smithsonian's Lemelson Center for the Study of Invention and Innovation participated in "Between Conservation and Innovation: Achieving Sustainability in an Urban Environment," a conference held in London on 16-17 June and co-sponsored by the Center and the University of Westminster's Centre for the Study of Democracy. The international audience considered recent strategies for sustainable urban planning and redevelopment, while a special forum on local and global imperatives highlighted issues raised in "Inventing for the Environment," edited by Moloella and Bedi (MIT Press, 2003).

Erik Conway has shifted his flag from the NASA Langley Research Center in Virginia to the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, operated by California Institute of Technology, in Pasadena, California. As the first historian JPL has had since 1975, his task will be to build a history program. JPL's primary function is robotic planetary exploration, and secondarily, to develop remote sensing instrumentation to support Earth and planetary science. His history of supersonic transportation will be published by Johns Hopkins University Press in spring, 2005.

Sara B. Pritchard has published a new article, "Reconstructing the Rhône: The Cultural Politics of Nature and Nation in Contemporary France, 1945-1997," *French Historical Studies* 27:4 (2004).

Sylvia Washington's first monograph, "Packing Them In: An Archaeology of Environmental Racism in Chicago, 1865-1954," will be released in paperback in December 2004 and softcover, January 2005.

The monograph elucidates the relationship between engineering (sanitary), the built environment and race/ethnicity in producing geographical spaces of environmental inequity for marginalized communities in Chicago (the Back of the Yards and Bronzeville).

New Member Introduction

Sandy Norman writes:

I am an Associate Professor of History at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, Florida. I teach both Environmental History and History of Technology. Because of where I live, most of my hand-on field work deals with south Florida, the Everglades and the Overseas Railroad to Key West.

I can be reached at Norman@fau.edu or 561-297-2621

The monograph also describes the public or environmental health impacts which are a direct consequence of engineering and urban planning decisions in the pre-Civil Rights era.

Chris Weller has finished his dissertation in August at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. It's titled "Car Country: Automobiles, Roads, and the Shaping of the Modern American Landscape, 1890-1929," and was written under the co-direction of Paul Boyer and William Cronon. He also just started a position as a Visiting Assistant Professor in environmental history at Davidson College.

Finally, a new volume of *Osiris* contains much of interest to members of this group: "Landscapes of Exposure: Knowledge and Illness in Modern Environments," *Osiris*, 2nd series, vol. 19, 2004. A table of contents is available at:

www.hssonline.org/teach_res/publications/mf_publications.html

Conference Announcement

Thinking through the Environment

A joint meeting of the 8th Turku Methodological Conference
and the 6th Nordic Environmental History Conference

15-17 September 2005.

We are pleased to invite proposals for papers, sessions and posters on the methodology of environmental history. We welcome proposals that examine the application of methods and theoretical frameworks to the historical research of the environment. We aim to bring both established and younger scholars together to share their ongoing research as well as broader perspectives on themes and opportunities in environmental history.

The deadline for paper and session proposals is February 15, 2005. Proposals ought to be 200-300 words accompanied by a short curriculum vitae.

The webpages of the Conference are available at the following site: <http://www.tte2005.utu.fi>

These pages include further information and an electronic form, by which you may submit your proposals for individual papers, sessions of 3 - 5 contributions, or posters.

The conference will be held in Turku/Åbo, Finland. It will be hosted by the University of Turku and the Åbo Akademi University. Inspired by the medieval setting, the time span examined in the meeting stretches from the late Middle Ages to the present.

We look forward to receiving your submissions.

On behalf of the organizing committee,

Timo Myllyntaus
Professor
School of History
20014 University of Turku, Finland
Tel. 02-333 5222
GSM 0400-798 409
Email: timmyl@utu.fi

Conference Announcement

The 22nd International Congress of History of Science

Timo Myllyntaus, Anthony Stranges, and I are organizing a symposium on “Technological Landscapes and Environmental Pollution” for the 2005 International Congress of History of Science in Beijing, China. Our symposium is being organized under the auspices of ICOHTEC, which will have three or four symposia at the Congress. Each symposium can include a maximum of three sessions, each with four papers. Papers will be 30 minutes in length (approximately 12 manuscript pages), which leaves about approximately 10 minutes for discussion of each paper and a bit of time for introductions.

Our symposium will pursue the on-going interest of past ICOHTEC symposia concerning the relationships of technology and the environment. We are looking for contributions that explore the impact of technology on the environment through the creation of distinctive technological landscapes and the consequences of resultant air, water, and toxic waste pollution. The overall theme of the Congress is Globalization and Diversity: Diffusion of Science and Technology throughout History, and we are sure our symposium will reflect this.

Also visit the Congress’s web site: <http://2005bj.ihns.ac.cn/index.frame.htm>

James C. Williams
Professor of History Emeritus - De Anza College
Vice President - International Committee for the History of Technology
Postal address:
790 Raymundo Avenue
Los Altos CA 94024-3138 USA
Phone: 650-960-8193
Cell: 650-575-9825
Email: <techjunc@pacbell.net>
Web Site: <<http://www.deanza.edu/faculty/williams>>

Conference Announcement

"The History of Solar Energy and ISES"

Special Session at ISES 2005

www.swc2005.org

Organizing Committee

Renate Boer, U.S.A., Solpaxr@aol.com - Cesare Silvi, Italy, csilvi@indra.com

Scientific-Technical Committees

International Scientific Committee

Chair James C. Williams, U.S.A., techjunc@pacbell.net

Gerhard Mener, Germany, Gerhard.Mener@swl.de

Bill Beckmann, U.S.A., Beckman@engr,wisc.edu

Dana Moran, U.S.A, danamoran@att.net

John Perlin, U.S.A, Solarperlin@aol.com

Anthony Stranges, U.S.A., a-stranges@tamu.edu

Calls for papers for the *Special Session at ISES 2005 on*

"The History of Solar Energy and ISES"

Foreword

The world history of energy use and technology is essentially the history of solar energy in all its renewable energy forms (for millennia, direct and diffuse solar radiation and its indirect forms of wind energy, hydro, photosynthesis) rather than the history of solar energy in its fossil or geologic forms (only for 200 years, coal, oil, gas) and of the other forms of energy (nuclear, geothermal, tides).

In 1955, AFASE, The Association for Applied Solar Energy, from which ISES had its origin, organized the first AFASE/ISES Symposium on Applied Solar Energy in Arizona. Since then, an international scientific network for solar energy existed.

After 50 years, ISES proposes the History Session on the occasion of its 50th Anniversary to review the use of solar energy in all its renewable forms (direct solar energy, biomass, wind and water power) in the past in order to understand its role for the future.

In the following we suggest topics for which we would welcome abstracts. In every section, papers on the material culture of solar energy (solar machines and the pioneers that are intertwined with them) or the events that constructed the fascination of solar energy are especially welcome, as well as papers by First Person Witnesses.

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Solar Energy Conference continued

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We also encourage submission of abstracts related to solar energy that are not spelled out in this call for papers. There are no restrictions in terms of academic disciplines. The decisive criterion is the likelihood that the papers can make a meaningful contribution to telling stories that have not been told or taking generally known stories and interpreting them in a new way.

Call for papers and abstract submission

Why a session on the history of solar energy

The history of solar energy and ISES is a special topic of the ISES 2005 Solar World Congress (Orlando, Florida, USA, August 8-12, 2005, www.swc2005.org), which has been included for the first time in an ISES solar world congress program on the occasion of the celebrations of the 50th Anniversary of ISES.

General Instructions

The abstract/paper must represent original work. Acceptance of papers for presentation will be based on extended abstracts. All full papers will be peer-reviewed.

Please submit title and abstracts of your presentation and clearly identify on the top of your paper and in the subject of your email:

"to be presented at the History Sessions – topic as identified in the instructions for authors"

Abstracts submission and selection

All submitted abstracts will be reviewed for an oral presentation at ISES 2005.

Abstracts should be submitted on-line at www.swc2005.org. Instructions for authors and on how to submit on-line will be posted September 1, 2004.

Important Dates

Deadline for submission of abstracts: November 15, 2004

Notification of acceptance: January 1, 2005

If you have any questions, suggestions for speakers, sessions or other activities at the 2005 Solar World Congress, please email to csilvi@indra.com or renateboer@aol.com. We welcome your suggestions on this international solar energy history event.