

Call for Papers

Conference: *Technological Hopes, Hypes, and Disappointments*

Technological developments and change have always been associated with hopes and promises, not only for developers but also for designers, marketers, and users. Expectations that emerge with the development and introduction of new technologies are deeply connected to their potential social, cultural, and political roles. Enthusiasm and technological hypes are a reoccurring historical phenomenon, one that has a multifaceted and non-obvious relation to success, failures, and disappointments. While the current fascination with AI has been understood as a prominent technological hype, such trends and processes have been integral to a variety of kind of technologies of the 19th-21st century.

To mark its 100th anniversary, the Georg Agricola Society for the History of Technology and Industrial Culture (e.V.) intends to explore the topic of the history of technological hopes, hypes, and disappointments. The identically named conference, which is organized in collaboration with the Technical University of Munich and the Deutsches Museum, will take place on November 16, 2026, at the Auditorium of the Staatliches Museum Ägyptischer Kunst in Munich. The conference aims to shed light on the historical and contemporary cultural mechanisms underlying the phenomenon of technological hypes and trends, but also to celebrate the centennial of the scientific society named after its eponym, Georg Agricola (1494-1555).

We invite interested parties to submit papers for the conference. These papers should examine the nature of technological promises and disappointments. We particularly welcome proposals that address the following questions:

- What are technological hypes, and how have technologies been constructed, understood, and marketed to serve political, economic, and social goals—but also, to sell?
- What were the pitfalls, disappointments, and failures?
- How has the realization of technology deviate from expectations, and what were the consequences of that difference?
- What role do hype, hopes and setbacks play in the preservation of industrial heritage? How and why do they influence perceptions of and the value attributed to this heritage?

The conference will feature presentations of both works in the history of technology focusing on specific hypes and works that examine the topic hopes and hypes as a whole. Presentations on how such hopes, hypes, or disinterest, as well as the relation to their ultimate success or failure, have been institutionalized or have since acquired significance in industrial heritage are also welcome topics for contributions.

We invite proposals for presentations that address the main themes from various disciplinary perspectives (e.g., history, cultural studies, sociology, etc.). We are also happy to consider contributions from students in the early stages of their academic careers. Proposals must include a short abstract (max. 250 words) and a brief academic CV.

The conference language is German, but English presentations are also welcome.

Proposals should be submitted by July 24, 2026, to the office of the Georg Agricola Society; contact person: Norbert Gilson (info@georg-agricola-gesellschaft.de).

After a committee has reviewed the presentation proposals and selected the topics, the speakers will be notified by the office. Speakers are exempt from the conference registration fee. For questions or further information, please contact the office (www.georg-agricola-gesellschaft.de).