

Conference Report ABH-GUG conference on May 27-28 2016, Berlin

Session H4 on Creativity in Industries featured three fascinating papers:

David J. Smith (Nottingham Business School at Trent University, UK) and Richard K. Blundel (Open University Business School, UK) on "Disruptive Innovation in the Creative Industries"; Catherine Harbor (Royal Holloway, University of London) on "The Birth of the Music Business? Public Commercial Concerts in London, 1660-1750"; and Joseph Lane (London School of Economics) on "Secrets for Sale? Evidence of Innovation and the Nature of Knowledge in an Early Industrial District: The North Staffordshire Potteries. 1750-1851." Though all UK focused the papers, combined, ranged from the mid seventeenth-century to the late twentieth and covered diverse topics, from concert promotion, through musical instrument making, to the manufacture of ceramics. Nonetheless the session had a great cohesion as we explored together where creativity springs from and what it brings to an industry. The session was well attended and the audience made their own contribution with a dynamic, well-informed dialogue.

Andrew Popp (University of Liverpool)

Chair: Session H4

Hartmut Berghoff

Session D 2 on "Methodology and Entrepreneurship" looked at entrepreneurship from a theoretical and an historiographical angle. Amatori Franco (Bocconi University, Italy) opened the session by a general overview of theories of entrepreneurship. Charles Harvey sketched the connection between Organizational Theory and historical research on entrepreneurship and business history. Matthias Kipping (Schulich School of Business, Canada), Takafumi Kurosawa (Kyoto University, Japan), and Dan Wadhvani (University of the Pacific, USA) gave a survey of the role of entrepreneurs in different historiographical traditions and schools of economic research since the 19th century.

Report on Session E1

A lively, well-attended session was opened by Helen Müller, of Bertelsmann AG, whose paper with Pierluigi Ledda, of the Archivio Storico Ricordi set out the particular challenges posed by maintaining the Ricardi Collection, a 200-year music archive which passed into Bertelsmann ownership. This was followed by Anders Houltz (Centre for Business History in Stockholm), who spoke about a new Swedish project to collect the archives of Swedish entrepreneurial firms engaged in the global computer gaming industry. The session concluded with a paper from Judy Faraday, of the John Lewis Partnership Archive, who, by explaining how the archive was used to promote new products during the 150th Anniversary of John Lewis, emphasised the need for business archivists to exploit their collections in order to add value for their businesses. She also challenged business historians to be more responsive to contemporary business requirements.

Terry Gourvish, Visiting Professor, Economic History Department, London School of Economics

Mike Anson, ABH Archives Officer, who helped organise this session, adds that it was encouraging to see an interaction between business archivists and business historians and this will be repeated at next year's ABH conference in Glasgow.

F5: Space, Armaments and Technological Entrepreneurship

This well attended session featured three papers covering key issues in entrepreneurship and innovation. Two of the three - one on Dutch entrepreneur Daniël Wulf and one on Werner von Siemens - featured family business prominently, although the approaches were quite different in each case. On the other hand, two of the three - one on the evolution of the space industry from 1957-2011 and the one on Siemens - were explicitly embedded in theory, although again approached very differently. There were a number of common themes developed in all three papers, however, including the role of the government (and especially the military) as a key customer and its impact on business; the interaction between customers and entrepreneurs in business evolution and technological development; the importance of salesmanship; and the importance of long-term perspectives on the evolution of business and technology.

Raymond Stokes, University of Glasgow