

PREFACE

The following essays were presented at a symposium convened at MIT on June 7 and 8, 2024. Over fifty scholars from around the U.S. attended the meeting and seventeen of them made presentations. My intent in calling the meeting was to take stock of the history of technology as a field of scholarly inquiry and to assess current needs and opportunities for further development. As best I can recall, nothing of that nature has been done since the 1980s when an NSF funded/supported meeting of SHOT members took place in Roanoke, Virginia.

When Melvin Kranzberg founded The Society for the History of Technology (SHOT) and published the first issue of *TECHNOLOGY AND CULTURE* in 1959, he sought to establish an international journal with an international focus. Over the years, meeting those goals came slowly. When I entered graduate school in 1963, SHOT's annual meetings were very small affairs that were almost always held in the United States. Often supported by the Smithsonian's National Museum of History and Technology, research in the new field also centered primarily on American topics with virtually no attention to countries beyond Europe. Change came slowly, but by the late 1970s Kranzberg's interest in internationalism began to reveal results. By the time Mel passed in 1995, SHOT had embraced contextual history and social constructivist thinking had taken a strong hold among a broad circle of scholars, many of whom came from Great Britain, Sweden, and the Netherlands.

In organizing the MIT symposium, I asked the presenters to speak about the history of technology and where they would like to see it go in the future. Specifically, I asked them to think about new interpretative approaches to the field and neglected topics in need of attention. The resulting presentations exceeded my fondest expectations. All the papers printed below are very revealing and focus mainly on new topics in need of further development. All told, the symposium was a huge success.

My warmest thanks to everyone who participated in the symposium. I also want to thank Deborah Fitzgerald for her kind words of introduction and for humorously dubbing the event "RoeFest." Finally, my sincere thanks to Judy Spitzer who spent many hours assisting me in organizing the event. It represents a fitting tribute to my 54-year career at Ohio State University, the University of Pennsylvania, and, above all, MIT.

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