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## “Feminist Technologies: Theory and Practice”

Society for the History of Technology Conference, October 24–27, 2019

### Traditional session proposal

Determining the socio-cultural values that shape and are shaped by technologies is an ongoing historiographical process. So too is identifying the ways that specific technologies serve feminist purposes, how feminisms shape technologies, and which definitions of feminism best illuminate themes in the wider history of technology. The intention of this panel is to broaden and deepen theories and practices of feminist technology. It aims to develop working definitions of feminist technology that historians can use as they investigate the wide range of entities that improved gendered and sexual relations in the past and could continue to do so in the present and future.

While scholars have explored the question of how technology and feminism intersect in texts such as *Feminism Confronts Technology* (Polity, 1991), *Gender and Technology, a Reader* (Johns Hopkins, 2003), *Technofeminism* (Polity, 2004), the challenge of agreement on specific definitions of feminist technology remains. Some questions that the whole panel could address include: Is a feminist technology one that improves person-to-person gendered and sexual relations, one that improves them on a macro scale, or both? How do race, class, sexual identity, age, and (dis)ability factor into conceptions and expressions of feminist technology? As the last major text on the subject was published nearly a decade ago (*Feminist Technology* [Illinois, 2010]), and since social media and Internet technology generally have had a marked impact on academic research practice and idea exchange, the time is ripe for a renewed consideration of the intersection of feminist theory and the history of technology.

The organizer’s paper addresses the technological, industrial, and socio-cultural development of barrier methods of contraception for women in the U.S. and western Europe (particularly Germany, England, and Austria) from the 1900s through the 1930s. It considers the degree to which technologies can improve gender relations—and meet historical or contemporary definitions of feminist technology—even when the actors involved had other motivations. The paper also considers the levels of risk or harm involved in determining the feminist nature of contraceptive technologies.

The organizer welcomes papers addressing gender, sexuality, and/or feminist issues in the history of technology across time, culture, and geography. Submissions will be acknowledged as soon as possible.

Please send a proposal of up to 500 words and a one-page CV in Word format to the above e-mail address by **Monday, March 25, at 5pm GMT**. If you are interested in serving as chair or commentator, please also send a one-page CV and a short background statement by the **25<sup>th</sup>**.