Session at ICCH9 (Torino, 28 Jun-2 Jul 27)

Politecnico di Torino, May 27–Jun 28, 2026
Deadline: Jun 28, 2026
www.constructionhistorygroup.polito.it/icch

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The 9th International Congress on Construction History (ICCH9) will be held June 28 – July 2, 2027, at Politecnico di Torino, Italy. The ICCH9 will bring together researchers from different disciplines and continents to exchange recent advances, results, and insights in the vast and expanding field of Construction History. Special topics will be discussed in dedicated Thematic Sessions, while the scope and diversity of Construction History will be reflected in the Open Sessions. Researchers from all fields connected to Construction History are invited to submit abstracts of contributions for ICCH9.

Session TS4. The Early Modern Machine Model Book in Its Entirety

The study of early modern machine model books (c. 1300-1700) spans fields of contemporary academic specialization. As highly visual, graphic compendia of machine design, the books would seem to belong to the ambit of the art historian. But in terms of their subject matter—namely, applied mechanics—the books fall under the purview of architectural historian, or better, the historian of construction and technology. As bound compendia—volumes that were deliberately assembled and often conserved for posterity in important library collections—the model books merit codicology study. Finally, an understanding of textual component of the books, which take the form of recipes, postils or marginal annotations, often recorded by multiple hands over an extended period, benefits from the insights of someone with expertise in paleography.

The proposed session invites contributions that confront early modern machine model books as complete objects. Participants are invited to present on objects composed in the period between 1300 and 1700, from any geographic or cultural context. The overriding principle is methodological: the machine book is considered in its entirety, bringing to bear the totality of its material, visual, and textual evidence. Although academic training and expertise present legitimate limitations—the background and interests of the architectural historian are fundamentally different from those of a codicologist, for example—the session challenges participants to acknowledge the multiple dimensions of bound compilations of machine drawings. Put differently, the contributors are asked to consider the extended life of the machine model book, and how each of its components contributes important information about its origins, its makers, and its function as a transmitter of human experience and knowledge.

In the last thirty years, the history of early modern machine drawing has received critical contributions by historians of science and technology. Paolo Galluzzi's Prima di Leonardo (1991) remains

a canonical source for scholars interested in the Italian machine drawing prior to the sixteenth century, with pointed (albeit brief) summaries on numerous manuscripts and single sheet drawings. The studies of Marcus Popplow and Wolfgang Lefèvre (2003, 2006) offer a greater contextual framework for understanding the development of machine drawing in a broader European context, with a specific focus on the epistemic function of graphic models. While these publications, and others, have been instrumental for advancing our understanding of early modern machine drawings, the graphic conventions they employed, and their ubiquity in diverse contexts, they frequently isolate the drawings from the material supports that allowed for their circulation. The way model books were produced and by whom remains little studied. Similarly, there are substantial lacunae in our knowledge of who owned and collected the drawings, and the functions they filled for different audiences. A driving assumption has been that the majority of model books produced prior to the sixteenth century were presentational manuscripts, directed to patrons and held in elite libraries. But the materiality and visual use of the many early manuscripts suggest otherwise. What does this tell us about the education and background of the building designer in this period?

Important Information:
- Abstracts must be submitted in English and must not exceed 400 words
- Abstracts must be submitted exclusively via the Congress website: https://easychair.org/conferen ces/?conf=icch9
- All abstracts will be reviewed and selected for presentation by at least two members of the ICCH9 Scientific Committee
- All papers that have undergone scientific peer-review will be published in an edited open-access proceedings volume and will be available, in digital form, at the congress

Important Dates:
- Abstracts are due by 28 June 2026 (midnight CET).
- The decision of the scientific committee will be announced by 20 August 2026
- Full papers are due by 30 October 2026

Reference:

CFP: Session at ICCH9 (Torino, 28 Jun-2 Jul 27). In: ArtHist.net, Jun 1, 2026 (accessed Nov 25, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/52574>.