

Workshop:  
**Paths to “Informatik”: Values, Machines, Sciences**

23–25 October 2025

Deutsches Museum, Munich  
The Research Institute for the History of Science and Technology  
Seminar room “Forschung 1”

Application deadline (title and abstract): 30 June 2025

URL: <http://www.deutsches-museum.de/forschung/aktuelles/tagungen/2025/wege-in-die-informatik>

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**Call for Papers:**

The 1950s and 1960s saw the birth of the new discipline “Informatik” in the German-speaking scientific landscape. It emerged as a direct challenge to and in contrast to “Computer Science”, which was evolving simultaneously in the American scientific system.

The historical roots of this new scientific discipline can be found in electrical engineering, mathematics and logic, and to a lesser extent also in other disciplines such as philosophy, brain research and psychology. As is often the case in the early stages of a new discipline, there was a clash of values, which resulted in disputes between representatives of different scientific milieus. These controversies have since been largely forgotten in the sciences as well as in the collective memory of our society due to the great success that “Informatik” (and computer science) enjoyed as a new “leading science” in the 20th century.

The main objective of the conference is to facilitate critical reflection on these pasts in all their complexity and to investigate whether disciplinary value competitions and newly emerging value formation processes had an influence on the genesis of “Informatik” in the 1950s and 1960s. Furthermore, the conference aims to ascertain

the extent to which these developments were specific to the German-speaking world in comparison to other European countries.

By analysing these transformation processes of value systems in the emerging field of “Informatik” as well as their feedback effects on classical scientific disciplines, in particular mathematics, physics and electrical engineering, we hope to contribute to the questioning and shedding of new light on the scientific self-image and value system of “Informatik” in the 21st century. The conference will trace the different paths that either led to the development of “Informatik” in the 1950s and 1960s or remained in their original disciplines. Methodologically, these approaches can be examined in a biographical context, in terms of institutional history, the history of ideas or analytically, to name just a few examples.

The underlying assumption of the conference discussion is that the advent of the “computer” as a new artefact has precipitated profound shifts in the prevailing value systems within the scientific disciplines that have given rise to “Informatik”, namely mathematics, physics, electrical engineering and logic. Concurrently, it has also engendered the establishment of a novel disciplinary canon of values within the very subject of “Informatik” itself in the German scientific system, which is largely shaped by mathematics. Furthermore, the extent to which this development was specific to the German-speaking world and how this was the case in other European countries will be discussed.

Finally, the workshop will cover the question of how some of the “Informatiker/Informatikerinnen” (computer scientists) who were active in the 1960s developed historical narratives and interpretations for their own discipline’s history, and also used narratives of digital objects and implemented some of these in museum exhibitions. One theory is that historical artefacts served to define a scientific discipline of “Informatik” that is increasingly operating in a media-digital environment.

The main language of the workshop will be German, but contributions in English are also welcome. Discussions, in particular, can be held in either language.

A subsidy towards travel and accommodation costs can be granted on application.

Please send presentation proposals to:

[wege-in-die-informatik@deutsches-museum.de](mailto:wege-in-die-informatik@deutsches-museum.de)