

Uncovering Material Knowledge

30-31 August 2019, Queen's University, Belfast

Call for Papers



This conference is generously supported by Queen's University Belfast, [Past & Present](#) and the [Society for the History of Alchemy and Chemistry](#).

Uncovering Material Knowledge invites scholars from the arts, humanities and social sciences to participate in a discussion about the development, experience and construction of material knowledge in the past. Contributions are welcomed from a wide range of historical eras, from the ancient through to the modern. This conference seeks to break with the age-old separation of hand and mind and uncover examples of material and embodied knowledge across a broad range of periods, geographical locations, spaces and places.

Developments in histories of science, medicine and technology have fundamentally re-oriented our understanding of knowledge production. Recent scholarship has made a break with narratives that privilege a few 'great men' and engaged with a more diverse range of actors (e.g. women, indigenous peoples, tradesmen, technicians) and prioritised an approach that uncovers complex interactions between humans, their environments and the material things they have at their disposal.

However, 'knowledge' or intellectual work took many different forms and scholars from fields such as food history, gender history, literary studies, historical geography and art history have increasingly viewed activities that were traditionally dismissed as unexceptional (such as cooking or craft) as playing a critical role in knowledge production.

Some kinds of knowledge are harder to access in the historical record than others and require different sources and approaches to bring their meaning and significance to light. The surge in interest, across a range of disciplines, in the study of material culture has served to unlock one such source and has offered new opportunities for understanding different forms of knowing – the material, the embodied and the non-verbal.

Proposals might engage with the following questions:

- What connections can be drawn between histories of material culture and histories of intellectual activity?
- How is artisanal, tactile or tacit knowledge communicated in different periods and places and how can we access these forms of knowledge?
- What role does space and place play in our understanding of (material) knowledge?
- How is intellectual authority constructed through material practices and who possesses such authority?
- How can we better understand technique (in theory and practice) and embodied knowledge in different periods of history?
- What role do material literacies (or the absence of them) play in historians' understanding of knowledge production in the past?

The delegate fee is £50 for the two-day conference, which includes lunch, refreshments and the reception. Delegate fee waivers are available to postgraduate students and unwaged early career researchers (please apply to Leonie Hannan). For further information and registration see: <https://www.qub.ac.uk/schools/happ/News-and-Events/UncoveringMaterialKnowledge.html>

Please send proposals for papers and panels (maximum 250 words per paper) to Leonie Hannan, at l.hannan@qub.ac.uk by **Friday 28 June 2019**. Individual papers should be no more than 20 minutes in length, panels should ordinarily be comprised of three contributors but proposals for other formats, such as round tables, group presentations or workshops, are encouraged.

