

Call for Abstracts: Histories of Scholarly Evaluation in the Sciences and Humanities, 1700-2000

Deadline for abstracts (500 words): 31 January, 2026.

Organising Committee:

- Marie-Gabrielle Verbergt (Ghent University)
- Sjang ten Hagen (Utrecht University)
- Joris Vandendriessche (KU Leuven)
- Els Minne (KU Leuven)

This workshop is organised as part of the *Integrating the Histories of Science and the Humanities, 1500-1900* Scientific Research Network sponsored by the Research Foundation – Flanders (FWO). Bringing together nine international partners, the network explores what happens when we view the relation between the natural and the human sciences through the lens of their intertwined histories. For more information, see: <https://hshh.prđ.ugent.be/en>. The workshop is co-funded by the ERC-project *Global Academies* (KU Leuven). For more information, see: [Global Academies – Cultural History since 1750](#).

Evaluation, i.e. assessing how an entity attains a certain time of worth, and **valuation**, i.e. giving worth or value, permeate all domains of the social. As notoriously “complex, slippery, and often elusive sociological objects”, valuation and evaluative processes are also intrinsic parts of scholarly work (Lamont 2012, 203). Manuscript feedback, editorial reviewing, proposal ranking and departmental assessment—scholars today as in the past regularly judge the merit of their colleagues writing (Fyfe et al. 2020; 2022; Vanderstraeten 2021), ideas for new research (Serrano Velarde 2018; Gläser and Serrano-Velarde 2018; Verbergt 2024), work environments (Hamann 2016; 2018), careers, and, even, character (Tsay et al. 2003; Wils and Huistra 2020; Ten Hagen 2022). Scholarly evaluation thereby has a history; one that touches on both the social, intellectual, cultural and epistemological aspects of science.

With this call for abstracts, we want to invite historians and other interested scholars to **reflect collectively on the broad and multi-faceted history of scholarly evaluation**. Scholarly evaluation, we argue, is and has not solely revolved around quality control or gatekeeping. Instead, evaluative moments can also be approached as instances of knowledge production, circulation, transfer, or constitution. Historically, scholarly evaluation has also been related to education and teaching students how to do proper scholarship (Seifert forthcoming) or

guarding the autonomy of scientists over their work (Baldwin 2018). In line with the work of Laura Stark on 'declarative bodies', we moreover see (scholarly) evaluation as a performative act: evaluation processes can produce new ideas, structure our thinking about (valuable) scholarship, and (re)establish collectives (Stark 2012; 2019).

During a live workshop in Leuven (Sept 2026), we aim to use the varied perspective of evaluation to probe the – shared or distinct – histories of knowledge production and career development **across the sciences and the humanities**. Inspired by developments within the burgeoning field of history of knowledge, we think histories of evaluative cultures have the potential to enhance our understanding of questions related to access, legitimacy, and the development of scholarly reputations in a more holistic way. By this we mean that the evaluative practices, regimes and/or repertoires that have shaped scholarly careers were only partly determined by disciplinary boundaries. Rather, practices such as "peer review" were shared across fields, moved between them, and were adapted in the process to fit specific scholarly needs. Moreover, they were shaped and influenced by more widely shared socio-political and cultural contexts and values. It is these histories of similarities and contrasts, travels and adaptations, the workshop aims to uncover.

Possible themes and questions

Our approach to the theme of scholarly evaluation, as well as our periodization, is therefore consciously broad. We are interested in how evaluative infrastructures, methods, repertoires, and more, have shaped the long history of the sciences and the humanities since 1700 and up to today. To structure our discussions, we can delineate three larger sets of questions:

(1) Cultures, contexts and circulation of scholarly evaluation: In which contexts can we find scholarly evaluation, and how have specific national or disciplinary 'evaluative cultures' been established and/or reproduced?

- How have evaluative practices in the humanities historically differed from those in the natural and social sciences? And to what extent have "scientific" models of (peer) evaluation been appropriated and negotiated within the humanities, or perhaps vice versa?
- To what extent did evaluative practices travel between the sciences and humanities? Did ideals and practices of scholarly evaluation spread across geographical boundaries, for example between Euro-American contexts and non-Western contexts?
- Where did evaluation(s) take place? We invite contributions studying evaluative cultures in educational contexts, seminars, journals, conferences, scientific societies, universities, scholarships, etc.
- How can we write a history of evaluative cultures that brings to light similarities and relations between specific disciplines or across fields? Should such histories focus on shared (national, transnational) actors and/or institutions, ideals, or other shared contexts? Can historians trace similarities in reviewers' struggles with, or in the continued presence of, biases related to gender, politics, race and ethnicity?

(2) Practices and ideals of scholarly evaluation: Which evaluative practices, repertoires, and evaluative technologies were part of scholarship at a given time, and how did these change?

- Which practices and ideas of merit and value were driving scholarly evaluation in a specific discipline? To what extent did new evaluative practices shape genres of writing, methodological approaches, or ideas about 'good' scholars and scholarship (epistemic virtues, vices)?
- How have evaluative processes historically been organized (internal vs. external reviewing, informal vs. formal reviewing, varieties of technologies of evaluation)? Who were allowed to act as reviewers, and who were excluded from this role? To what extent were such inclusions and exclusions informed by historical conceptions surrounding gender, race, and ethnicity?

(3) Functions of scholarly evaluation: Why did scholars engage in evaluation, at a particular moment in time or during a specific period, and how did that differ per evaluative practice?

- What has been the relative function of various types of scholarly evaluation? How, for example, has the relation between pre-publication and post-publication peer review shifted historically?
- How have evaluative practices in educational settings (e.g. the nineteenth-century seminar, contemporary 'peer learning') historically related to evaluative practices in research settings? To what extent has 'peer review' been pioneered in educational contexts?
- How did the different functions of scholarly evaluation (learning, gatekeeping, selecting etc.) relate and/or collide with each other in different settings?

Interdisciplinary excursions to the sociology of (e)valuation, i.e. the sociological study of value and evaluating (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006; Lamont 2012), psychology of judgment, gender studies, and other fields are warmly encouraged, as are comparative and global approaches to the theme.

Timing

We propose the following timing that works towards an edited volume that we intend to submit to *Studies in the History of Knowledge* (formerly at Amsterdam University Press, now at Taylor & Francis):

- **31 January, 2026:** Deadline for abstracts (500 words). Please email abstracts to mariegabrielle.verbergt@ugent.be, s.l.tenhagen@uu.nl, joris.vandendriessche@kuleuven.be and els.minne@kuleuven.be.
- **28 February, 2026:** Selection and feedback on abstracts.
- **1 September, 2026:** Submission of drafts (approximately 4000-6000) words
- **27-29 September, 2026:** Network workshop in Leuven, Belgium; travel and hotel will be covered.
- **1 February, 2027:** Submission of final drafts (8000 words, references included) for publication at Amsterdam University Press.

Organisers

Marie-Gabrielle Verbergt is a historian and sociologist, working as a FWO postdoctoral researcher at Ghent University. She writes, speaks, and teaches about the history of science and the humanities, the history of academic historiography, and the role of the past in contemporary societies. At the most general level, her work focuses on the production and use of (historical) knowledge after 1945. Her doctoral thesis, *The Price of History* (2024), explored the history of European funding for historical research since 1970. She has previously published on the history of (European) research policy, the role of historians in policy, the use of computers in history, populists uses of the past, and the history of peer review, both in academic and public outlets.

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Sjang ten Hagen is a historian of the sciences and humanities who works as an Assistant Professor Liberal Arts and Sciences at Utrecht University. In his dissertation (2021, University of Amsterdam), he examined the relationship between the disciplines of history and physics in nineteenth-century Germany. He is currently involved in several other research projects that explore the dynamics within and connections between academic disciplines in the sciences and humanities. For example, he is the co-editor of a volume on the long-term history of scholarly vices (such as dogmatism, prejudice, dishonesty, etc.) with Herman Paul (Leiden University), published with Brill in 2025. Additionally, he recently started a new project on the dynamics of interdisciplinary collaboration in the field of climate history.

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Joris Vandendriessche is a tenure-track research professor at the Cultural History since 1750 Research Group of KU Leuven. He studied history at KU Leuven and the University of Minnesota (USA). His research engages with the history of science and medicine in the 19th and 20th centuries, and with health humanities. He focuses in particular on the history of scholarly societies, scientific publishing and the role of science in medical care. With Benoit Majerus, he co-edited the volume *Medical Histories of Belgium. New Narratives on Health, Care and Citizenship in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Manchester University Press, 2021). Within the Cultural History since 1750 Research Group, he co-supervises PhD research on the historical relation between medicine and religion within the projects IMPRESS and CAMEO, and with Kaat Wils and Tinne Claes, he directs the research network 'Medicine and Catholicism since the late 19th century'.

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Els Minne is a postdoctoral researcher at the Cultural History since 1750 research group of KU Leuven. She combines a teaching role on the history of historiography and on modern culture with research for the Global Academies ERC project, in which she explores how scholarly societies and academies influenced the careers and intellectual trajectories of historians in France and the United States between 1930 and 1990. In her PhD *Between Charity and Advocacy. Catholic strategies for poverty relief in Brussels (1950s-1980s)*, she explored the religious layers within Catholic poverty initiatives in Brussels, and the diverse strategies of those initiatives to carve out a role for themselves in the unfolding Belgian welfare mix.

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