

EBHA 2023 Congress

Oslo, Norway, August 24-26, 2023

## “The Relevance of Business History”

Business history is a thriving field of research. As was noted already by Geoffrey Jones and Jonathan Zeitlin in their introduction to the Oxford Handbook of Business History, published back in 2007, the field of business history is “wide-ranging, dynamic and has generated compelling empirical data which sometimes confirms and sometime contests widely held views in management and the social sciences.” This is no less true today. Business historians hold important seats at prestigious universities and business school across the globe. Business history research is probably broader in scope than ever before and has also gained ground in the social sciences. Several large companies in many countries have found value and relevance in hiring professional business historians to write their history, trusting them both with a unique access to archives and the freedom to do independent research in line with basic principles for the writing of academic history.

The many strengths of business history as a field of research should no doubt be saluted. But there are also challenges looming in the near future. The organisers of the 2023 EBHA congress invites you to reflect on these challenges. It particularly invites critical reflection on business history’s relevance in relation to the broader field of history, to other academic disciplines, to business and society, and to students.

Business history seems to play a less important role in many history departments compared to most other subfields of history. One way to look at this challenge is to humbly ask other historians to better integrate business in the broader field of history. Another way is perhaps to integrate broader strains of history within business history, to assume a more ambitious role.

Business history has in recent years been increasingly more integrated into other academic disciplines, such as organisation and management studies, strategy, international business, and entrepreneurship studies. However, this integration has not been unproblematic. One question for further exploration is how these disciplines have understood and integrated methods and conceptual frameworks from business history. Another challenge is to make sure that business history not simply becomes a support discipline for various strands of the social sciences.

A third challenge relates to the fact that many business historians work in business schools and must teach traditional business school subjects such as management or strategy. How can

the value and usefulness of teaching proper business history to business school students, be more efficiently and successfully communicated?

Becoming accepted as a valuable academic discipline might come at the expense of another important challenge faced by business historians; namely the need to increase the relevance of the field in society. This raises the question: how do business historians frame and convey their findings to convince business practitioners and society at large about their practical relevance?

On this basis, the organizers of the European Business History Association's 2023 congress challenge you to reflect on how the future relevance of business history can and should be developed. We encourage papers, panels sessions and roundtable discussions dealing with the challenges facing the field of business history in terms of its academic, societal, and educational relevance.

Papers with other foci will of course be considered as well. Topics such as responsible business, sustainability, risk, innovation, entrepreneurship, economic growth, taxation, and similar ideas are more than welcome. In addition to proposals for individual papers, scholars can send full panel sessions, which will create more coherence within the conference program. For panels, we strongly recommend integrating a variety of comparative national, regional, or sectoral differences.

EBHA awards a prize for the best paper on European business history presented at its annual congress. The prize consists of a certificate and a cash prize of €250.00. The winner will be announced, and the prize presented at the congress dinner. More details will be specified at the congress website.

Online submission will open November 1, 2022, through March 1, 2023. Please see below the requirements for paper and panel proposals.

We also invite other formats such as workshops, debates, discussions, and poster presentations. Journals can also propose fast-track session. Please send your proposals directly to the organizers (ebha2023@bi.no.)

We are very much looking forward to meeting you in Oslo, Norway, at the EBHA 2023 Congress.

The EBHA 2023 Congress Organizing Committee

### Requirements for paper proposals

Paper and panel proposals must be submitted through the EBHA online system. Please have the following information and documentation ready:

(1) Author information Affiliation

Short CV

Authored publications related to the paper proposal

(2) Abstract of no more than 600 words (preferably up to 300 words)

(3) Additional information important to the program committee

Clear statement of the research question (maximum of 150 words) Brief information on the theoretical/conceptual framework used Major research areas to which the paper relates

(4) Joint papers need one of the authors attending the conference if the proposal is accepted.

### Requirements for session/track proposals

The criteria for single paper proposals also apply to session (and track) proposals. There is, however, a specific template for session/track proposals:

Organized sessions tend to work better because all papers are focused on a single theme.

Sessions can be ninety minutes long (usually three papers) or two-hours to accommodate more papers. A successful session leaves significant time for the audience to raise questions and comments. Good sessions balance cohesiveness and analytical breadth.

Tracks combine up to three sessions (a whole afternoon) to allow for a broader discussion of a specific approach, or large themes important to the field.

Track sessions expect that the audience and the presenters engage in a wider discussion.

Possible convenors of a panel/track can make an open call for papers, which will attract more audience and generate interesting debates.