

# Attitudes Toward Technology/Technology's Attitudes

## Fast Facts

**Conference Dates:** July 17-20, 2014

**Proposal Deadline:** January 31, 2014

**Proposal Window:** October 1, 2013 to January 31, 2014

**Acceptance Notification:** March 1, 2014

**Early Registration:** March 1, 2014 to June 1, 2014

**Conference Website:** <http://kbjournal.org/2014conference>

**Conference Chairs:** Paul Lynch ([plynch11@slu.edu](mailto:plynch11@slu.edu)) and Nathaniel Rivers ([nrivers1@slu.edu](mailto:nrivers1@slu.edu))

## Conference Theme

Attitude mediates action and motion. Attitude is incipient action. Media have attitudes. Media are incipient. We act through media and media act through us. This dance of attitudes, both human and nonhuman, shapes action. Action is always *in media res*.

Taking both Burke's *attitude* and his *rhetorical philosophy of technology* as points of departure, The Ninth Triennial Conference of the Kenneth Burke Society welcomes proposals that focus on *attitudes toward technology* and *technology's own attitudes*. We also welcome proposals that focus on any Burkean subject. The conference will be hosted by [Saint Louis University](http://www.grandcenter.org) in historic Midtown, home of the Grand Center (<http://www.grandcenter.org>), *the place for the arts* in St. Louis, from July 17-20, 2014. Saint Louis University is also home to the Walter J. Ong, SJ, Center for Language, Media and Culture as well as the Ong Archives. In the middle of the country, in the middle of the city, we will grapple with being *in media res*.



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In a retrospective to *Attitudes Toward History*, Burke defines attitude as “the point of *personal mediation* between the realms of nonsymbolic motion and symbolic action” (394). For Burke, these realms are tightly knitted, and as Debra Hawhee reminds us, we should see them as “an irreducible pair, contiguous but distinct” (*Moving Bodies* 158). Stuff and story dance in attitudes.

In his reexamination of Burke's status as a luddite, Ian Hill reminds us that “Burke's writing was fraught with technological anxiety, and his negative attitude toward technology developed over many decades.” Nevertheless, Hill demonstrates how Burke developed a “rhetorical philosophy of technology.” “Burke's concept of technology entailed that rhetoric motivates technology, and that technology motivates behavior. For Burke, the realms of technology and rhetoric are inseparable because technology and motivation are fundamental conditions of human existence.”

The [Kenneth Burke Society](http://www.kbsociety.org) conference welcomes not only those who are particularly invested in Burke but also those who ask the same sorts of questions, explore similar avenues of scholarship, and see rhetoric as tightly knit to symbols, bodies, and environments. We are building a big tent in St. Louis. The [Ninth Triennial Conference](http://www.kbsociety.org) will feature participation by students and scholars from a wide range of fields, and we welcome proposals that address topics of continuing relevance in Burke studies, including Burke and his circles; archival research in the Burkean corpus; the meaning and relevance of particular Burkean texts; Burke in the fields; the future of Burkean studies; and new applications of Burke's insights to contemporary issues. We especially encourage those proposals that focus on attitude and technology: the range of conceivable connections and potential points of departure is limitless.

The theme of *attitudes toward technology* and *technology's own attitudes* calls on conference participants to engage Burke in a contemporary scene increasingly saturated and mediated by technology:

- In what ways can we revisit, challenge, or augment Burke's work in light of contemporary, digital technology?
- In what ways has Burke's work (in particular, his notion of "technological psychosis") been prescient of contemporary popular treatments of technology (*What Technology Wants*, *Alone Together*, *The Shallows*, *You Are Not a Gadget*)?
- How might Burke's thought anticipate or inform rhetorical theory and related areas as it rethinks the place of the material and of objects in rhetorical activity? Recall Burke's discussion of air conditioners in "(Nonsymbolic) Motion/(Symbolic) Action": "Such bodily responses as increased warmth and accelerated respiration place a greater burden upon the air conditioning device, which is equipped with mechanical 'sensors' that register the change in conditions and 'behave' accordingly" (834).
- How might Burke's interest in the body inform discussions of race and gender in digitally mediated environments? Likewise, how might contemporary scholarship in these areas inform Burke (challenge, discount, or otherwise augment him)?
- How does Burke's focus on the nonsymbolic resonate with new materialist and feminist new materialist approaches (e.g. Jane Bennett, Karan Barad)?
- How do the above questions expand Burke's circles? How can we use such questions to bring new thinkers into the Burkean parlor?

We invite individual *presentations*, *panels*, and *seminar topics* exploring the above sets of concerns.

Over the course of the conference, a combination of keynote speakers, featured presenters, and seminar leaders will explore our attitudes toward technology and technology's own attitudes. Keynote speakers, seminars, and seminar leaders will be announced in January 2014.

## Registration

Attendees may register for the conference online starting March 1, 2014. As with past conferences, affordable registration fees will include all meals and special events. Further details will be published on the conference website, <http://kbjournal.org/2014conference> from now until the conference.

## The Venue

Saint Louis University is located in St. Louis, MO. The Busch Student Center (<http://www.slu.edu/bsc.xml>) is located in bustling Midtown St. Louis (<http://www.grandcenter.org>). On-campus lodging is available at the recently built Hotel Ignacio (<http://www.hotelignaciostl.com>) and in the recently renovated Marchetti Tower West (<http://www.slu.edu/housing-and-residence-life/housing-options/marchetti-towers>).

## The Hosts

The conference chairs are Paul Lynch ([plynch11@slu.edu](mailto:plynch11@slu.edu)) and Nathaniel Rivers ([nrivers1@slu.edu](mailto:nrivers1@slu.edu)). The conference is sponsored by Saint Louis University (<http://www.slu.edu>), the Walter J. Ong, SJ, Center for Language, Media and Culture (<http://www.slu.edu/the-ong-center>), and the Kenneth Burke Society (<http://kbjournal.org/kbs>).

