



Scientific
Instrument
Commission



CALL FOR PAPERS, SESSIONS AND POSTERS

SIC 2026

LA CHAUX-DE-FONDS / NEUCHÂTEL

7-11 September 2026

The 45th Scientific Instrument Symposium (SIC) will take place in Switzerland from 7 to 11 September 2026, jointly hosted by La Chaux-de-Fonds and Neuchâtel, two cities with a long-standing tradition in precision, horology, and scientific innovation. The conference will offer the international community of historians, curators, conservators, and collectors of scientific instruments an opportunity to reflect critically on the role of instruments in the making and circulation of knowledge.

Across Centers and Peripheries: Scientific Instruments in New Perspectives

The study of scientific instruments has long been framed around the dynamic between centers and peripheries. Instruments were designed, manufactured, and standardised in recognised centers of excellence, yet they circulated across regions, disciplines, and cultures, acquiring new roles and meanings along the way. However, centers and peripheries are not fixed points on a map: they are relational positions that shift according to context. A place or practice may be “central” in one network and “marginal” in another, and instruments often travel laterally between multiple margins without ever passing through a center.

This theme calls for fresh ways of thinking about instruments *across* centers and peripheries — emphasising movement, transformation, and reinterpretation rather than static locations or one-way diffusion. Instruments may embody multiple identities as they cross disciplinary boundaries (from sciences to pedagogy to industry), as they shift from functional tools to museum objects, or as they move between geographies — from imperial metropolises to colonial outposts, from local workshops to global exhibitions, and between peripheries themselves.

By adopting these new perspectives, we can ask: how do instruments gain meaning in different contexts of use? How does their materiality support or resist adaptation? What can conservation, digital reconstruction, or artistic reinterpretation reveal about instruments as mediators of knowledge? And how does rethinking the relation between centers and

peripheries — including their overlaps and reversals — open new possibilities for global and comparative histories of science?

We particularly welcome contributions that challenge conventional boundaries — between science and craft, use and display, or European and non-European traditions. Object-centred studies, methodological innovations, and critical reflections on museum practices are all encouraged.

As always, the Scientific Instrument Commission welcomes proposals for sessions, papers, and posters on any topic related to the history of scientific instruments. Interdisciplinary and cross-cultural approaches are especially valued, and we invite both established and emerging scholars to contribute to the discussions in La Chaux-de-Fonds / Neuchâtel in 2026.

Please note that the excursions will take place at the beginning and end of the conference. If you are interested, please mark your calendar accordingly. More information about the excursions will be available on the website soon.

Format

The symposium will take place as an in-person event by default, assuming there are no public health restrictions. To encourage a wider participation, the conference languages will be English and French. Abstracts will be provided in both languages, and we welcome oral presentations in either language.

- Oral presentations will be 15 minutes followed by 5 minutes discussion.
- Poster presentations should consist of 1 poster up to A0 size.
- Session organizers may devise alternative formats if they wish e.g. panel discussions or multiple short pitch papers (5-10mins each).

Important dates

Deadline for the submission of abstracts is **28 February 2026**.

Presenters and session organizers will be informed by 31 March 2026 whether their proposal has been accepted.

Early registration will close on **15 May 2026**; late registration will close on **15 July 2026**.

How to submit your abstract, poster or session proposal

Please submit your session, article and/or poster proposals by 28 February 2026 using the form available at the following link: <https://form.jotform.com/241903918139057>.

Registration

In order to register, you must fill-in a registration form which will be available in the website of the conference (in preparation); when registration opens, a notice will be circulated.

Travel grants

We have a limited number of fixed-amount travel grants available for postgraduate students and early-career scholars (within five years of completing their studies). Thanks to the generous support of the Watch Academy Foundation, we are able to support a few more scholars this year. We are particularly keen to support those who have not attended the SIC Symposium before or coming from countries that are currently under-represented within our community. The grant application will be submitted via a dedicated form at the time of acceptance of your submission. The amount of the grant will be assessed by the organisers and communicated after receipt of the grant forms. The organisers reserve the right to reject certain applications and to limit the amounts awarded, depending on the available budget, the number of applications received and the quality of the submissions.

Letters of invitation for visa requests will be provided on demand.

Any questions?

In case of questions about the conference, please email to sic2026.ch@gmail.com

We look forward to receiving your abstracts in due course.

Best wishes,

Julien Gressot and Romain Jeanneret
co-organizers and coordinators of the LOC

Ileana Chinnici, Rebekah Higgitt and Taha Yasin Arslan
SIC Board