

**ITA Winner
Kathryn Steen**

Kathryn Steen, associate professor of history, presented a paper July 29, 2009, at the 23rd International Congress of History of Science & Technology. Scholars from 66 countries around the world converged on Budapest, Hungary, to share historical work on everything from ancient Greek astronomical mechanisms and Silk Road numerical tables to eastern European software and the Hubble telescope.

Dr. Steen's presentation, "Isolation & Innovation: German Chemicals and American Political Economy after World War I," discussed the American effort to build a domestic synthetic organic chemicals industry after the war. Synthetic dyes and related chemicals had been the high tech industry of the age--and one dominated almost entirely by Germany. When the war severed the supply of German chemicals to the United States, Americans determined to develop their own industry. In the intense xenophobia of World War I, Americans deemed it patriotic to become self-sufficient in the chemicals and manufacture the most German of products. Americans embraced autarky and isolation in the 1920s, recoiling from the war's toll, and the anti-German sentiment became institutionalized in high tariffs, confiscated German chemical property, and peace treaty provisions. Dr. Steen's paper was part of a larger symposia that considered many aspects of the global chemical industry in the aftermath of World War I.

The Hungarian hosts not only showed off Budapest's beauty (the conference venue was on the Danube River), but also shared their history of science and technology: the ex-patriots like John von Neumann (computers) who did well elsewhere, the devastating impact of 1956 and 1968 political upheavals on the conduct of science and technology, and field trips to science and technology museums.

