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In the Shadow of Innovation

Revolutions — technological, political or otherwise — are messy. But regardless of place or time, economists and historians often view industrial revolutions through the lens of innovation. However, stepping out of that particular shadow can lead to new insights into the nature of invention.

At a Chancellor's Community Breakfast hosted by UC Santa Barbara Chancellor Henry T. Yang and the UCSB Affiliates, W. Patrick McCray, a professor of history at UCSB, will discuss how these histories show industrial revolutions to be about much more than innovation and progress.

Rather, he suggests, they demonstrate how technology itself was — and remains — a work in progress.

McCray's talk, "Innovation's Shadow," will begin at 7:30 a.m. Thursday, Nov. 2, at El Paseo Restaurant, 813 Anacapa St., #10 in Santa Barbara. The cost is $25. Admission is free for UCSB Affiliates, Gold Circle and Chancellor's Council members and for UC Santa Barbara Foundation Trustees. Reservations may be made by calling Percy Sales at (805) 893-8260 or by sending a check — payable to the UC Regents — to the UCSB Affiliates, University of California, Santa Barbara, CA 93106.

A historian who originally trained as a scientist, McCray is a specialist in the history of modern technology and science. He is the author or editor of numerous books, including "Groovy Science: Science, Technology, and American Counterculture" (University of Chicago Press, 2016), a collection of essays co-edited with David

Kaiser, the Germeshausen Professor of the History of Science and a professor of physics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, that challenges the notion of the counterculture as anti-science.

Among McCray's other works are "The Visioneers: How an Elite Group of Scientists Pursued Space Colonies, Nanotechnologies, and a Limitless Future" (Princeton University Press, 2013), which received the Watson and Helen Miles Davis Prize from the History of Science Society as "the best book written for a general audience." The book also received the American Astronautical Society's Eugene M. Emme Award for Astronautical Literature.

McCray also is the author of "Keep Watching the Skies? The Story of Operation Moonwatch and the Dawn of the Space Age," which tells how citizen scientists helped track the world's first satellites; and "Giant Telescopes: Astronomical Ambitions and the Promise of Technology," research for which enabled McCray to spend nights at major observatories in the U.S. and overseas.

Questions about the Chancellor's Community Breakfast can be directed to Percy Sales at percy.sales@ucsb.edu.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.