

The History of Packaging and Expiry Dates

The emergence of individual packaging was related to the arrival of technologies that extended the shelf-life and transportability of products. Patented inventions, such as canning (ca.1810), corrugated boxboard (1856, 1871), and later cellophane foil (1908) transformed both infrastructural configurations as well as the way in which consumers related to products. Building on the recent literature within the history of science on ‘Box studies’ one might want to explore the hypothesis that packaging not only contributed to the emergence of branding by means of trademarks, labels, and logos, but that it was also crucial to the development of design rights. But other topics are possible as well, for instance related to the long-term history of expiry dates. The proposed themes are only meant to illustrate a range of possible topics. Students are strongly encouraged to bring in their own proposals and interests. Some of the preliminary bibliography includes Susanne Bauer, Martina Schlünder, and Maria Rentetzi, *Boxes: A Field Guide* (Mattering Press, 2020); Monika Dommann, Philipp Sarasin, and Andreas Kilcher, “Handling, Flowcharts, Logistik: Zur Wissensgeschichte und Materialkultur von Warenflüssen,” in *Nach Feierabend. Zürcher Jahrbuch für Wissensgeschichte* (Zürich: Diaphanes, 2011), 75–103; Alexander Klose, *The Container Principle: How a Box Changes the Way We Think*, trans. Charles Marcum II, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2015).