

SHOT Talk for Dearborn 2014: Presidential Roundtables and Plenaries

Last year in Portland, we solicited your comments, feedback, and suggestions about the session topics and individual papers at the conference through online commenting - the first time SHOT had offered such an option tied to sessions and papers. Our goal was to stimulate a discussion among the Society's members about SHOT's intellectual directions and activities. We hope to do the same this year in Dearborn, and toward this end we invite you to comment on the three presidential roundtables featured in Dearborn, as well as the special plenary in honor of the life and work of Thomas P. Hughes.

Presidential Roundtable: Literature and Technology

Friday, November 7, 2:00-3:30pm

This panel focuses on the historical/intellectual stakes in bringing history of technology and literature into conversation, the methodological and explanatory implications. One way to characterize this is to look at the trajectory of theory/method since the 1960s, which has had from the historian's perspective the effect (to crudely simplify) of making the field of agency more complex, especially as to connecting the self/identity-making to larger social or political structures. As is well known, literature departments were one of the primary movers in this transformation. In turn, as part of that same intellectual trajectory, technology, in the modern era, is now taken as a critical cultural site in which such connection takes on special import—is inextricable from understanding how individuals and social orders get constituted. The roundtable, then, will look to bring forward two broad issues. One is historical: How has the boundary between literature and technology been framed and presented across time and place, with what consequence for contemporary historical inquiry. The other is methodological: How do the methods of literature and history relate and have relevance for one another, given especially our shared post-1960s immersion in method as problem.

Organizer and Chair: Martin Collins (Smithsonian Institution, United States)

Panelists:

David Pike (American University, United States)

Rosalind Williams (Massachusetts Institute of Technology)

Ann Larabee (Michigan State University)

Stephen Rachman (Michigan State University)

Presidential Roundtable: Promises and Challenges of Doing International History of Technology

Saturday, November 8, 8:30-10:30am

Organizers: Honghong Tinn (Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Germany) and the SHOT Internationalization Committee

Chair: Suzanne Moon (University of Oklahoma and Technology and Culture)

Discussants:

Marta Macedo (University of Lisbon, Portugal): STEP Forward: History of Science and Technology in the European Periphery

Natalia Nikiforova (Saint Petersburg State Polytechnical University, Russia): History of Technology in Russia: Research Traditions and Shifts

Xiaolei Shi (Harbin Normal University, People's Republic of China): Recent Changes in the Field of the History of Technology in China

Édison Renato Silva (Federal University of Rio de Janeiro State, Brazil): An Overview of History of Technology in Brazil

John Bosco Lourdusamy (Indian Institute of Technology, Madras, India): History of Technology in India: Some Reflections

Plenary in Honor of Thomas P. Hughes

Saturday, November 8, 11:00am-12:00pm

Organizer: Bruce Seely (Michigan Technological University)

Chair: Rosalind Williams (Massachusetts Institute of Technology)

Panelists:

Trevor Pinch (Cornell University, United States) -

Amy Slaton (Drexel University, United States) -

Arne Kaijser (Royal Institute of Technology, Sweden) -

The four of us have been asked to organize a Plenary Session in honor of Thomas Parke Hughes, who died on February 3 of this year. We have planned a session where collectively we will speak for about 40 minutes, leaving 20 minutes for comments and discussion.

This is a memorial session--but many SHOT members today do not have personal memories of Tom Hughes. It has been many years since he attended meetings, and even more since he had a leadership role in founding and promoting the society. We decided to plan a session that would speak not only to Tom's friends and colleagues, but also to the many people here who know Tom's name, and maybe his face from photographs, and to some extent his thinking from his books—but not more.

Accordingly, this memorial session probes the creation of scholarly memory, in looking at the ways scholarly influence takes shape, using Tom Hughes as an example. Here are some of the themes we will explore:

- the significance of personality (or, as Tom might say, of personal style) in scholarly influence
- the role of informal relationships and personal networks as well as of institutions like universities or SHOT
- the intellectual boundaries of the field: how Tom both helped define the field as a distinctive one, and also helped blur its disciplinary boundaries
- the national boundaries of the field: how Tom promoted transnational projects
- the role of writing in creating influence: Tom's choices of topics, publishers, formats, and words

- the dynamic of scholarly counter-influence: reaction to what has been left out in a scholar's work
Doubtless our discussion will raise more observations about the ways practicing historians shape their field. After the meeting, we expect to post our comments in an appropriate place on the SHOT website, where others can continue to join the conversation.

- Rosalind Williams

[\(click here to read more from Roz Williams on Tom Hughes\)](#)

[\(click here for a syllabus from Tom's 1965 MIT course, "Technology in Modern History," from Roz Williams\)](#)

[\(click here for a syllabus from Tom's fall 1966 Johns Hopkins course, "Technology and Society since 1750," from Roz Williams\)](#)

[\(click here for a letter from Tom to Roz from December 1971\)](#)

[\(click here for a letter from Agatha C. Hughes and Tom Hughes from December 1989\)](#)

Presidential Roundtable: Asia As Method

Saturday, November 8, 3:30-5:00pm

Organizer and Chair: Bruce Seely (Michigan Technological University)

Panelists:

Victor Seow (Cornell University, United States)

Tae-Ho Kim (Hanyang University, South Korea)

J. Megan Greene (University of Kansas)

James Lin (University of California, Berkeley)

Victoria Lee (Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, United States)