



## **Annual Meeting Society for the History of Technology (SHOT): New Orleans, 7-11 October, 2020 – Call for Proposals**

Dear Colleagues,

The SHOT Program Committee is pleased to issue the Call for Papers and Sessions for the SHOT 2020 Annual Meeting to be held 7-11 October, 2020 in New Orleans. The 2020 SHOT Annual Meeting will be held jointly with the History of Science Society.

SHOT is an interdisciplinary and international organization concerned with the history of technological devices, systems, and processes as well as with technology in history, culture, and society. We explore the production, circulation, appropriation, maintenance, and abandonment of technology under specific historical conditions. And we scrutinize these epistemic, economic, social, cultural, and political conditions. Our approaches are informed by a broad concept of technology, encompassing knowledge resources, practices, artifacts, and biofacts (artifacts in the realm of the living). Accordingly, the Committee invites paper and session proposals on any topic in a broadly defined history of technology, including topics that push the boundaries of the field.

SHOT is committed to diversity. In addition to intellectual quality, we warmly welcome proposals that reflect diversity in their line-up of speakers, in particular with regard to career level, gender, and geography. The Program Committee will prioritize proposals that make a conscious effort to increase diversity: for example, proposals that are diverse in terms of temporal or geographic foci, proposals that include one or more female speakers, speakers at different professional stages, with different institutional affiliations, and/or different nationalities and geographies.

### **SHOT Annual Meeting 2020: New Orleans: Environment, Infrastructure, and Social Justice**

New Orleans. The name alone conjures a host of images: exotic food, magnificent architecture, distinct music and dialects, and devastating hurricanes. Playwright Tennessee Williams

famously labeled it the last frontier of Bohemia. For some, it is the most European of American cities. For others, it is the northern most Caribbean port.

Nicknamed the Crescent City because of its rather unique geography—the Mississippi River curves deeply around its urbanized core—New Orleans is a vital commercial center for both domestic and global trade and consistently ranks as a top destination for national and international tourists. Located near the mouth of the continent’s largest river, its port provides access to thirty-plus major inland hubs via 14,000 miles of waterways, six Class 1 railroads, and interstate roads. One third of all seafood consumed in the United States originates from Louisiana, with much of it harvested and processed near New Orleans. Additionally, with 88 percent of the country’s offshore oil and gas rigs located off Louisiana’s shore, the Greater New Orleans region is one of the world’s leading markets for energy and petrochemical production, processing, and transportation.

The city’s substantial cultural and economic presence belies its precarious environmental and social realities, however. Founded as a French colonial capital in 1718 on a deltaic lobe formed nearly two thousand years after the great pyramids of Giza were built, its residents have waged a constant battle to hold the surrounding water at bay. Today, nearly half of New Orleans exists below sea level. Indeed, the channelization of the Mississippi River, coupled with the vast pumping system constructed to drain storm water from the interior bowl created by the levees, has deprived the landscape of the sediment that a naturally overflowing river provides. The result is an actively sinking city, despite the injection of billions in federal post-Hurricane Katrina recovery aid. And with nearly twenty percent of its citizens, 60 percent of whom are people of color, living at or below the poverty line, New Orleans remains one of the nation’s poorest metropolitan areas, a grim reminder of its past status as the largest slave market in North America. Moreover, the 85-mile corridor of petrochemical and plastic refineries and plants above New Orleans, many of which are located on former sugar plantations, is widely reported to have some of America’s highest levels of cancer-causing chemicals in the air.

To assert that New Orleans has a troubled, dichotomous history is to state the obvious. And yet she persists, a fabled, hemispheric crossroads with an unmatched joie de vivre. That SHOT and the Society for the History of Science in New Orleans have chosen to co-locate in New Orleans in 2020, the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Hurricane Katrina and the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Deep Horizon oil spill, is no small matter. This co-mingling of associations offers scholars a splendid opportunity to reflect on the relationship between the environment, infrastructure, and social justice and how these elements contribute to the ongoing story of New Orleans and to the maintenance of our modern world. To pay tribute to the location of the meeting, we encourage proposals that relate to a broadly interpreted theme of “**Environment, Infrastructure, and Social Justice.**”

Infrastructure is an inherently social mode of modification of natural environments. It is the most basic form of technological collaboration; it is fundamental for society's functioning; and it is indispensable to other technological developments. Infrastructure requires vision, planning, engineering, management, and maintenance. It also necessitates considerations of risk and an anticipation of environmental events with potential to seriously impact human lives. Colloquially described as "natural disasters," these events become "disasters" for humans only when infrastructure fails.

At the same time, infrastructure is also a symbol of nationhood and civilization. It is often cited as a justification for conflict, imperialism, and displacement. The benefits that it offers and harm that it causes are not distributed equally. Those who are displaced or otherwise affected by new infrastructure projects too often do not experience their benefits. And when infrastructure fails, the harm often falls disproportionately on those who are already socially and economically disadvantaged.

We invite SHOT participants to reflect on these themes from an historical as well as a contemporary perspective, and with respect to a variety of socio-cultural environments. Among the aspects which deserve discussion are how infrastructure modifies human and natural environments; how risk assessment influences infrastructure planning; how different societies approach infrastructure vis-à-vis other forms of technological development; and how climate change brings about reassessments of infrastructural needs.

### **For the 2020 meeting the Program Committee welcomes proposals of these types:**

**Joint SHOT/HSS sessions:** since this meeting will be held in conjunction with HSS, it is possible to submit a proposal that speaks to both SHOT and HSS communities, and which would appear on both programs. When submitting a joint proposal, indicate this fact in the abstract and make sure to submit an identical proposal through the HSS website. The program committees of both societies will evaluate these joint proposals. Deadline: February 28, 2020.

**Traditional sessions:** sessions of 3 or 4 papers, with a chair listed in the session proposal. It is not necessary to have a commentator. However, if a commentator has a central role in the panel, they will be counted as an additional speaker. Deadline: February 28, 2020.

**Unconventional sessions:** sessions with formats that diverge in useful ways from traditional sessions. These can include (but are not limited to) round-table sessions, workshop-style sessions with pre-circulated papers, "you write, I present" sessions, and poster sessions. Poster proposals should describe the content and the visual material to be used in the poster. Individuals whose posters are accepted must be available to talk about them in a lunch/evening slot to be decided by the program committee. The Program Committee encourages other

creative formats to facilitate communication, dialogue, and audience involvement. The program committee will look favorably on formats that make sessions less hierarchical and reduce the 'distance' between audience and author and between author and commentator. Deadline: February 28, 2020.

**Open sessions:** Individuals interested in finding others to join panel sessions may propose Open Sessions, starting January 1, with a final deadline of February 15. Open Session descriptions, along with the organizer's contact information, will appear on the SHOT website (the earlier the proposal is sent to SHOT, the earlier it can be posted to the website.) For individuals who want to join a proposed panel from the Open Sessions list, please contact the organizer for that panel, not the Program Committee. In order to give the session organizer sufficient time to select proposals and assemble the final panel, the deadline for submitting your paper proposal to the organizer is February 15, 2020. Open Session organizers will then assemble full panels and submit them through SHOT's online system by February 28, 2019.

**Individual papers:** Proposals for individual papers will be considered, but the Program Committee will give preference to pre-organized sessions (traditional, unconventional, or completed open sessions). Scholars who might ordinarily propose an individual paper are encouraged to propose Open Sessions themselves or to join an Open Session. Deadline: February 28, 2020.

### **Other basic guidelines:**

SHOT allows the same speaker to present papers at consecutive meetings but turns down papers that are substantially the same as previously accepted ones. Any submission on the same topic should explain how the new paper differs from the prior presentation.

Most pre-organized panels, if accepted, will remain as proposed. In select cases, depending on the quality and coherence of the individual papers, *part of a panel may be turned down, merged into another panel, or combined with individual papers to form a new panel*. If the panel can only work as one single unit, please specify "**all or none**" in the abstract. In this case, the Program Committee may reject the whole panel despite the presence of qualified individual papers.

Individuals are permitted to take on multiple roles at SHOT, as well as additional roles at HSS. However, no individual is to give more than one titled paper or commentary *for both societies*. Additional presentations in SIGs, participation in roundtables, poster sessions, and other activities for which no title is listed in the SHOT meeting program are allowed; however, a paper at a graduate student workshop does count as a paper for this purpose. The SHOT Program Committee ensures there are no schedule conflicts between individual's various roles on the

SHOT program. However, SHOT and HSS cannot resolve conflicts between papers/commentaries and other roles *across societies*. In cases when an individual's presentation or commentary would conflict with additional roles on the other society's program, the individual will be asked to forgo the additional role.

Each panel proposal should be accompanied by a panel abstract that details: 1 the overall theme; 2 each individual panelist's contribution; 3 the role of a commentator (if any); 4 diversity statement (see above); 5 whether a given proposal desires "all or none"; and 6 whether any of the panelists is a candidate for SHOT's Robinson Prize. Individual paper proposals should indicate whether the presenter is a Robinson Prize candidate.

Specific instructions related to submission details appear on the SHOT webpage (<http://www.historyoftechnology.org>). For joint SHOT/HSS panel proposals, please submit proposals to **both** SHOT and HSS. For details about HSS panel submission, please visit the HSS webpage (<https://hssonline.org/>).

SHOT and the Program Committee look forward to a vigorous, enthusiastic, and intellectually stimulating annual meeting in New Orleans!