

**Society for the History of Technology (SHOT)
Annual Meeting – New Orleans (Louisiana)
18-21 November 2021**

Open Session Proposal

Computational Infrastructures

Organizer: Tasha Schoenstein (Harvard University – tschoenstein@g.harvard.edu)

Perhaps you've recently purchased a new refrigerator and been unable to buy one without a touch screen. Or perhaps you've read some recent news story claiming that computing is going to revolutionize politics or chemistry or some other field of life. But how did computing become one of the dominant infrastructures of contemporary life? What work did computing practitioners—whether in academia, industry, or government—do to make their field one that could underlie everything else, from other academic fields to the mundane technologies of everyday life? And what implications have these efforts to make computing happen everywhere had on aspects of social justice, whether in terms of gender, race, ability, or other identity categories?

In keeping with the theme of the 2021 conference, this panel will explore the infrastructural qualities of computing, broadly construed, how those infrastructural qualities came to be, and the implications of computing as infrastructure. Topics include but are not limited to histories of smart technologies and the industries that have embraced them; histories of the computerization of fields beyond those originally associated with computers or computing; histories of discourses about computing as a foundational or universal activity; histories of political, social, or cultural efforts to resist or embrace computerization of everyday life; and studies of the implications of computational infrastructures for social justice.

Procedure: Those interested in proposing papers for this session should provide a one-page abstract (max 500 words) and a CV or short biographical sketch. Please send to Tasha Schoenstein (tschoenstein@g.harvard.edu) by April 7, 2021.

First-time SHOT presenters who do not hold a tenure-track position and are no more than two years from receipt of a terminal academic degree might wish to be considered for the Robinson Prize. If so, please indicate this in your abstract. More information about the Robinson Prize is available on the SHOT website.