



Newsletter - February 2023

Dear SHOT community,

February is Black History Month in the US: a time to focus on the history, culture, and politics of African Americans, as well as on broader considerations of racial (in)justice. As [historian Chad Williams recently wrote in *The Conversation*](#), the occasion has a long history, one that began with the launch of Negro History Week in 1926. A quarter-century later, Williams writes, historian and sociologist W.E.B. Du Bois urged African Americans to pursue a “higher broader aim for their research,” not least by including the study of Pan-Africanism and anti-colonial struggle. These calls to intellectual action have acquired renewed relevance in today’s political atmosphere.

Technology is central to this history. Not just via brilliant inventors (though Black history certainly has its share of those), but also in the building of infrastructures, in everyday innovations and practices, and much more. In 1996, for example, Judith Carney wrote in the pages of *T&C* about how the agricultural knowledge of enslaved Africans shaped rice cultivation on Southern plantations. Today, SHOT scholars are probing many aspects of Black technological history. Charnell Chasten Long writes about the history of science and technology education in HBCUs (for non-Americans, that stands for Historically Black Colleges and Universities). Jason Ludwig is working on how ideas about race shaped the computerized systems that power federal assistance, law enforcement, public health, and other infrastructures. Edward Jones-Imhotep is using the history of “black androids” in 19th and 20th century America as a vehicle for exploring Black technological experiences in that period. These are just a few examples of how our community is exploring African American history of technology.

Black history extends well beyond the boundaries of the US. It has tremendous salience elsewhere in the Americas (consider the Caribbean, Colombia, and Brazil for starters), Europe (where it’s tightly imbricated with the history of empire), and of course Africa. As I mentioned in January’s newsletter, SHOT is making a concerted effort to bring African scholars into our community. Further on in this newsletter, you can read Emily Brownell’s account of the recent conference in Dar es Salaam, where our colleagues presented scholarship on a wide range of topics. Jethron Ayumba Akala (who also happens to be the chair of our 2023 Program Committee!) explored technical know-how in western Kenya’s pottery industry. Frank Edward has written about the vulnerability of colonial-era infrastructures, which embedded inequality into their spatial design. A group of about 25 scholars from around the continent, led by Njogu Morgan and Yusuf Madugu, are collaborating on [Cycling Cities: The African Experience](#) that focuses on the role of bicycles in African urban spaces since 1900. Again, this is just a taste of what our African colleagues have to offer.

All this ferment makes our annual meetings ever-more interesting places to gather and exchange new ideas. As you’ll see below, we’ve just posted the [CFP for Long Beach 2023](#), where we hope to see many of you!

Also in this newsletter: some community news ([check out our new submission system for news items](#)), and a few late-breaking job opportunities.

Last but not least: please remember to renew your membership!

With all good wishes,
Gabrielle Hecht
SHOT President

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Call for Proposals SHOT Annual Meeting 2023 Long Beach

The SHOT Program Committee is pleased to issue the Call for Papers and Sessions for the SHOT Annual Meeting 2023 to be held in Long Beach (California) 25-29 October 2023. Proposals can be submitted through our [virtual submission platform](#).

SHOT Program Committee

Jethron Akala ,Chair
Josh Grace, Associate Chair
Bess Williamson
Diana Montañó
Itty Abraham

For the 2023 Annual Meeting, the Society for the History of Technology (SHOT) will convene at the historic meeting place of land, sea, wetlands, and the built environment of Long Beach, California. Shaped by histories of dispossession, extraction, and pollution, as well as by innovation, connection, and resistance, the multicultural city of Long Beach offers an ideal site to explore technological pasts, presents, and futures from local, regional, and thematic perspectives.

Our Society invites participants to explore any theme related to histories of technology around the world. As it aims to foster more diverse and inclusive communities, the Society has decided not to propose a specific conference theme but rather invites submissions of panels and papers that explore anew what has traditionally been centered or overlooked in discussions about the relationship between technology and power. This includes any disciplinary approach to technological pasts, presents, and futures.

As SHOT continues to explore the future of annual meetings for a society with a widely international membership and commitment to accessibility, the conference will include hybrid participation options for both panelists and audiences. The proposal submission form includes the option to designate proposals as hybrid sessions, which might include pre-recorded presentations or a combination of both in-person and virtual presentations as supported by available facilities.

Specifically, the program committee invites works that revolve around themes such as:

- Race, including racial bias and racial equity
- Migration, refugees, circulation, and movement
- Internationalization and de-globalization tendencies
- Disability and Accessibility
- Non-Western Cosmographies and Periodizations
- Empire, Sovereignty, and Decolonization
- Labor (formal and informal), and women and minorities in the workplace
- Urban and rural economies and their corresponding transformations
- Humble, Non-Hyped Technologies
- Environment, Sustainability, and the Blue Humanities – including materialities of growth and de-growth
- Intersections of Gender, Sexuality, and Technology
- Energy and Waste
- Glocal Long Beach - connections between the Southwest U.S. and Latin America (especially Santiago, Chile, site of SHOT 2024) and the Trans-Pacific
- Technological tensions and conflicts
- Commerce, Infrastructure, and Development

We warmly invite scholars with diverse disciplinary backgrounds to join our conversations (including

those from Anthropology, American Studies, Black/African-American Studies, Communication, Gender Studies, Indigenous Studies, Latin Studies, Literary Criticism, Media Studies, Philosophy, Political Science, and Sociology). We especially encourage scholarship in African, Asian, and Latin American Studies.

SHOT's program practice consists of prioritizing: a) all underrepresented scholars, whether based on race, class, ethnicity, religion, gender identity, age, neurodivergence, disability, or geographic location; b) junior scholars hoping to enter into or learn from the history of technology.

The program committee especially welcomes the submission of non-traditional sessions including work-in-progress sessions, roundtables, flash-talks, unconference sessions, and interactive workshops.

Individuals and groups interested in finding others to join an organized session may propose an open session proposal that will be posted on the SHOT-website. Scholars interested in joining one of these sessions are encouraged to contact the organizers as soon as possible. The earlier an open session proposal is sent to SHOT, the earlier it will be posted on the website. Please make sure to leave sufficient time to enable interested scholars to respond, and for the organizers to prepare and submit a fully formed session proposal.

Participation is generally limited to one paper presentation and two additional roles, except by invitation of the SHOT program committee and/or SHOT officers.

Further proposal guidelines, submission instructions, and answers to frequently asked questions can be found [here](#)

Fully assembled session proposals, individual abstracts, and unconventional session proposals are due 1 April 2023.

[GO TO SHOT ANNUAL MEETING 2023 WEB PAGE](#) for more information.

SHOT Goes to Dar es Salaam!

Emily Brownell (University of Edinburgh)

Just a few days after the new year 2023, 60 participants from 14 countries (including 9 African countries) came together in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania for a conference on *Technology and Material Culture in African History: Challenges and Potentials for Research and Teaching*. The conference was co-convened by SHOT, the Eindhoven University of Technology, Foundation for the History of Technology, Mikael Hård's Global History of Technology project (funded by the European Research Council), and the University of Dar es Salaam. Our wonderful hosts, the Department of History at the University of Dar es Salaam—especially Hezron Kangalawe, Frank Edward, and Emanuel Lukio Mchome—welcomed us with warmth and generously shared their expertise. They hosted a reception, presented their own work, chaired panels, and guided our group around the city and the famous and beautiful campus.



Conference organizer Dr. Frank Edward in his role as make-shift tour guide!

As far as the conveners know, this was the first conference of this scope on the continent to highlight African technology and material culture. What a long overdue event! Our conversations unfolded over three days with the expectation that we were not just sharing scholarship, but laying groundwork for future networks, support, and events that will highlight the work of African scholars in the discipline and sustain transhemispheric scholarly exchange.

Panels and papers for the workshop covered a broad chronology as well as geography, productively setting aside the distinctions between archaeology, anthropology, and history that have sometimes thwarted deeper conversations about African technological pasts. Some papers highlighted technologies such as the mortar and pestle or the bicycle to show how these objects have been variably created and domesticated in different African cultures along with their role in making social and economic worlds. Other papers examined questions of skill and expertise in iron-making, bomb making, and in regimes of technical maintenance. Papers about infrastructure – human, animal, and material – highlighted how fruitful this direction of research remains in reclaiming a history of African technological agency and invention. Lively comments and questions fostered a real air of collaboration and a sense that participants were here to collectively “workshop” and think both through and across a range of rich case studies.



Participants in front of the conference venue

Another core goal of the workshop was to discuss pedagogy and the expansion of history of technology offerings in African universities. While there is now an ongoing project of making space for African histories in the broader field of history of technology, a crucial corollary, many participants noted, was to open up more space for history of technology in African university curriculum. The undergraduate level offers opportunities to share engaging histories of African technology that rework outdated stereotypes of the continent and create usable pasts. Graduate level programs, meanwhile, will be key to opening up the field by training a new generation of scholars.

Many participants felt it was important that the call for papers explicitly mentioned material culture. Some scholars working on material histories noted that they had not previously recognized they were writing histories of technology, which reflects the circulation of a narrower definition of the field. Seeing “material culture” in the call became an opening for discussing shared ground across fields. Signaling these overlaps helps to bring new people into the fold and continue to broaden the field.

In the workshop’s final session, participants discussed viable ways forward for supporting African scholars on the continent. The first step, many suggested, could be creating and sustaining a network for sharing information, work, and funding opportunities with each other. The most important commodity to sustain lively research agendas, however, is time. In order to do the research, and to write and publish, scholars need time protected from the overwhelming teaching and administrative obligations placed on scholars in African universities. Keeping this reality at the center of the conversation is very important.



Nkrumah Hall on the campus of the University of Dar es Salaam

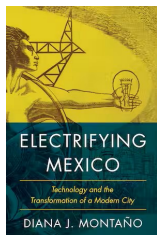
Being in Dar es Salaam next to the beach for four days meant that it couldn't all just be talks and meetings! Perhaps the most memorable day of the conference was our field trip on Saturday. With the indomitable Dr Frank Edward at the helm, we toured the campus of University of Dar es Salaam, soaking in its historic role in both national and Pan African politics. We then headed to the back alleys of Tabata, where mechanics eviscerate and reconstitute a dizzying array of automobiles. From remaking chassis and reupholstering seats, to painting autobodies and iron forging, this amazing world of skill and creativity blew us all away, even as we tried to keep the midday heat at bay. Some of us chose better footwear than others for the occasion! Luckily, we had a lovely lunch in the city center at the other end, picking our way through the shady streets of the historic downtown as a perfect end to the event.



Tabata Matumbi mechanics district, where vehicles are repaired and remade. If you can't find the part you need, forgers and sand casters will make it for you!

Community News

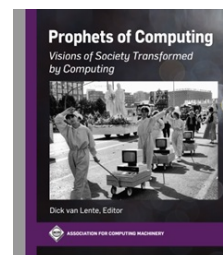
Have you curated an exhibit? Published a book? Was your work mentioned in a media outlet? Do you have a new job? Please tell us about it! You can enter your Community News [here](#), and we will publish it the next newsletter.



Diana Montaña's *Electrifying Mexico: Technology and the Transformation of a Modern City* received its third award: the Bolton-Johnson prize from the Conference on Latin American History.

Dick van Lente, ed., *Prophets of computing. visions of society transformed by computing.*

When computers were introduced in the US and Britain after WWII, experts predicted that they would cause changes more profound than the Industrial Revolution. Much speculation and debate has ensued, which continues to this day. This volume examines how expectations of how computers would change society differed around the globe.



Fifteen years after its publication, **Paul Josephson's** 2008 *T&C* article on "The Ocean's Hotdog" appeared on the TV game show "Jeopardy"! Alas, the contestant failed to guess that Josephson was referring to fish sticks. He argues that these resulted from overproduction, innovation in catching and processing, and brilliant advertising—not from consumer demand. (Though once they existed, desperate parents of toddlers doubtless contributed to their popularity... — SHOT ed.)

[Read the full story here](#)

Job and Grant Opportunities

- **European Research Council funded project CLIMASAT** is recruiting 2 postdocs and 1 PhD student: For full details please go [here](#)
- **University of Edinburgh** is hiring a historian of technology and/or capitalism: Find full details [here](#)
- **University of Portsmouth**, working with the National Railway Museum has a PhD opportunity available. Further details available [here](#)
- **School of Communication at Simon Fraser University** invites applications for a Tenure-Track Assistant Professor in Gaming, Media, and Communication. Full description is available [here](#)
- **Notes and Records** is calling all historians of science - [enter the 7th Notes and Records Essay Award](#)
- **The Department of History at Stanford University** invites applications for a 3-year Lecturer position in any sub-field and historical period. Please see [here](#) for full details.
- **Alfred P. Sloan Foundation** announced an open call for grants supporting original research in the history of science, technology, economics, and social science. <https://sloan.org/grants/open-calls/history-loi>

Announcements

- **The Lincoln Center for Applied Ethics** at Arizona State University hosts the [2023 NEH Summer Institute](#), titled 'Our SHARED Future', June 12-July 7, 2023. (Applications due March 3, 2023).
- **ICOHTEC 2023**, [Annual Meeting](#), Tallinn/Tartu, Estonia (14-18 August).

Thanking our SPONSORS for their support of the SHOT Annual Meeting 2022



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