

Call for Abstracts

Documenting Architecture in the Digital Age: Between Human and Machine Learning

Co-editors:

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Overview

Digital-assisted and automated modes of building documentation are rapidly transforming methods of recording architectural heritage worldwide. Technologies such as laser scanning, aerial drone survey, and machine-learning/AI for typological recognition can quickly and accurately record information about architecture that had traditionally been collected by hand. In addition, these technologies provide new ways of representing buildings and sites, redefining the very goals of documentation and challenging the theoretical and legal frameworks of Historic Preservation. Many scholars promote largely relying on digital methods when surveying historic buildings and sites (Kwoczynska et al. 2016; Lo Brutto, Luculano, and Giudice 2021). At the same time, other scholars argue for retaining traditional survey methods, which build on the intellectual traditions of historians, archaeologists, and field architects, as well as ethnographic methods that engage the knowledge of local communities (Vitti 2016, Arnold 2017; Zhao 2022; Williams et al. 2023). These methods do not stop at measurement and illustration, but aim to record building rituals, design intent, artistic and construction processes, and the perceived meanings of place. Such careful study offers insight into a place's past that is not always detectable in automated digital representations. Crucially, this learning can inform and guide the documentation strategy.

We invite papers that compare the merits of new and traditional architectural survey methods, from automated scanning devices and AI to more traditional forms of documentation based on the specialized knowledge of scholars and local communities. We welcome case studies based on the contributors' own documentation campaigns that focus on any combination of the following questions:

How do advanced digital technologies offer new perspectives on the built environment?

What are the values of local knowledge in architectural recording?

How do these methods handle visual communication, abstraction, and ways of representing uncertainty?

Can traditional survey methods and ethnographic fieldwork be integrated with digital-assisted and automated modes of building documentation?

Papers focusing on the challenges of integrating digital and human-oriented methods are particularly encouraged.

Invitation

We are pleased to invite scholars, researchers, and professionals to contribute a paper to the above subject. The collection of essays will be published either as an edited book or special issue of a peer-reviewed journal. Please submit an abstract (400 words) of your proposed paper and a two-page CV to Joseph Williams (jcwillia@umd.edu) and Windy Zhao (weizhao4@illinois.edu) by **October 31, 2024**. In the abstract, please include images and additional materials (no more than two pages) that illustrate the methods adopted in the building surveys. We also ask that the abstract indicate how the essay will address two points:

1. Cite a documentation campaign of a historical architectural or urban setting that you either directed or participated in at a high level, which can provide samples of documentation to analyze.
2. Describe a particular methodological question on the theme of architectural documentation today, complete with a review of literature relevant to the problem.

Process and Timeline

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| October 31, 2024: | Abstract submission deadline. |
| November 30, 2024: | Editors notify authors regarding the status of the proposal. |
| March 31, 2025: | Full paper (7,000 – 10,000 words) submission deadline. |
| Summer 2025: | Receipt of peer reviews. |
| Summer 2026: | Tentative publication date, contingent on successful peer review. |