

Session at SAH 2025 (Atlanta, 30 Apr–4 May 2025)

Society of Architectural Historians, 2025 Annual International Conference, Atlanta, GA

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Building Manuals as a Global and Local Medium of Development.

Session Co-Chairs: Frederike Lausch, ETH Zurich; and Jie Shen, The University of Tokyo.

Recent architectural history research examines the knowledge transfers between different regions of the world in postwar development programs, revealing the persistence of colonial narratives and the renegotiation of development on a local level. Within this framework, there is a predominant focus on manuals as a medium for expertise transfer from the Global North to the Global South, overshadowing to some extent the South's self-crafted building manuals that disseminate construction experiences within the region and across the South, questioning the North's imaginaries of the South. This panel aims to spotlight manuals crafted by institutions, organizations, and individuals for and within the Global South, asking how these manuals differ in intentions, expertise notions, knowledge and technology transfer approaches, labor considerations, and economic interests. Rather than pursuing a universal history of manuals, the panel embraces diverse histories of manuals across the Global South.

We propose to connect the discourse on building manuals with their longstanding tradition, such as China's Yingzao Fashi (营造法式, 1100–1103), in order to question the "rediscovery" of a supposedly lost "local" building tradition in post-war manuals by foreign experts. Given that these manuals often promote "new" technology and construction methods, emphasizing affordability, simplicity, and user-friendliness, we aim to inquire about the specific standards they adhere to. We invite situated histories exploring the production and usage of building manuals, and their embedded technological concepts. Questions may include how technology concepts in manuals connect to local construction practices, as transmitted through historical manuals. Did manuals produced within the South generate alternative concepts of technology or adopt terms such as appropriate, alternative, and intermediate technologies? Additionally, how did manuals reflect the implications of industrialization and "modern" technology? Through our panel, we aim to illuminate the intersection of global architectural history, construction history, and the history of technology.

Submission Guidelines:

Confirmed 2025 Session Chairs are not eligible to submit to the Call for Papers

Abstracts must be under 300 words.

The title cannot exceed 65 characters, including spaces and punctuation.

Abstracts and titles must follow the Chicago Manual of Style.

Only one abstract per conference by an author or co-author may be submitted.

A maximum of three (3) authors per abstract will be accepted.

Please attach a two-page CV in PDF format.

Please submit an abstract no later than 11:59 p.m. CDT on June 5, 2024, via SAH website:

<https://www.sah.org/2025/call-for-papers>

Reference:

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