Knowledge and coordination work is hard to observe. A focus on the more tangible aspects of this work, namely documents, provides a useful lens into the work practices of organizational members in general, and those working in distributed and virtual teams in particular. Studying documents in work allows us to position people’s immediate activities and situated routines in their larger social and organizational context. As documents carry institutional structures and point to both past and future activities they open a window to larger organizational practices.

We define documents as typified and material communication, whether electronic, paper-based, wall-mounted or set in stone, created or used in response to recurrent situations. The notion of document serves as a lens into the socio-technical or socio-material nature of what organizational members do day in and day out. Documents are socio-technical in that they are both material—and, thus, embody the technical infrastructure—and social—as they embody both the work practices and shared understanding of those involved.

For example, our production and distribution of the document in front of you involved the technology of word processors, several different computers, hard copies, email messages and PDF files. Your reading of this mini-track introduction likely involves numerous other technologies; you may be reading a paper version of this introduction, part of the conference packet, or you might have stumbled over it among many other mini-track introductions on the HICSS-45 website or in the IEEE paper repository. Shared social practices are reflected in the degree to which you, the reader, and we, the authors, understand and share common knowledge about the form and contents of the genre of conferences in general and HICSS mini-track introductions in particular and reflect this knowledge in this document. The work we have done and that you are doing represents the basics of the work practices. And, the various material forms of the proposal represent some of the infrastructure supporting these HICSS and the broader information field.

In short, the production and consumption of this introduction involves both the work of documenting and document work. The work of documenting falls close to the definition of the verb, to “document,” describing the act of providing factual or substantive support for statements made or hypotheses proposed; or to equip with exact references to authoritative supporting information (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary). At the same time we engaged in document work involving the production, use, collection, classification, storage, retrieving and dissemination of documents within and across organizational settings. The four papers in this track demonstrate a document perspective’s usefulness in a variety of ways.

Isto Huvila studies the assignation of authors to documents and develops a category system distinguishing four types of attribution: solitary, emergent authorship, light-weight, and heavy-weight peer-production. The paper offers insights relevant to authorship in crowdsourcing and beyond.

Alberto Pepe and Matthew Mayernik explore how microblogging can support the collection, ingestion, and publication of contextual information about digital artifacts produced in field research. The authors present their design and pilot evaluation of a microblogging application integrated with an existing data collection platform on a handheld device.

Grace Eden and Marina Jirotka discuss the evolving use of digital images within medieval musicology and their transformative effects on research processes. The durability of digital documents enables detailed manipulations of medieval manuscripts that would destroy the original documents.

Alain Ross and Chad Saunders explore the relevance of institutional ethnography for information systems research by examining documents from two studies focusing on 1) clinical information systems in a large Canadian healthcare organization and 2) the Intellectual Property Group of a large law firm.

The papers represent an emerging literature converging old and new approaches to document production and information sharing. Such work follows up work presented in prior HICSS tracks on the genre of digital documents that has found a home in the digital media track since the mid-90s.