The debates on materiality and sociomateriality, hailing from science studies and organization studies, allow information systems (IS) researchers to evade received distinctions between the social, natural and technical. The literatures that inform this Minitrack contest a purely information-based perspective that posit abstract meanings and immaterial data divorced from situated contexts. Instead the bodies of work that inspire this Minitrack draw on new materialist, pragmatist, and practice-oriented perspectives (amongst others) hailing primarily from the social sciences that analyze the social activities going into the manufacturing of documents through the manipulations of various material forms.

The notion of the document serves as a lens into the practical and material nature of what organizational members do day in and day out. Documents are sociomaterial in that they are artifacts—and, thus, embody the technical infrastructure—and social—as they embody both the work practices and shared orientations of those involved.

For example, our production and distribution of this mini-track introduction involved the technology of word processors, several different computers, cloud services, hard copies, email messages and PDF files. Your reading of this document 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-48 website; each case, again, depends on a set of web clients, computers, and cloud servers amid a web of social practices.

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 conference calls in general and HICSS calls in particular. Our shared activities are the basics of work practice. And, the heterogeneous material forms of this call for proposals are some of the infrastructures supporting HICSS and the broader information systems field. In short, the production of this call involves both the work of documenting and document work.

As increasingly complex information systems are adopted and adapted within and across organizational environments, there is pressing need for more careful study of document work and the work of documenting within such contexts. Two innovative papers address this topic in this year’s minitrack.

First, Samantha R. Meyer, Casey S. Pierce, Yubo Kou, Paul M. Leonardi, Bonnie A. Nardi, Diane E. Bailey explore the topic of offshoring. However, they do not focus on the impact offshoring has on communication between people at different sites. Instead they investigate impeded person-to-object interactions at two offshore work sites representing two different occupations: automotive engineering and graphic design.

Second, Mohammad Hossein Jarrahi studies how digital and physical properties play a role in shaping people’s perceptions and actions around the use of Fitbit devices. He argues that we cannot understand the role of information in those activities without examining how it is entwined with the technologies that record, process, share, and represent it.

The papers represent an emerging literature converging old and new approaches to sociomateriality and documenting practices. Notably, last year’s best paper award in the Digital and Social Media track went to a paper from the present minitrack authored by Megan Finn, Janaki Srinivasan and Rajesh Veeraraghavan. In that paper the authors explored how the circulation of everyday bureaucratic documents opens up the possibility for a population to gaze back and “see” the state. They did so by comparing the materiality of welfare documents in India and in the U.S. Building on work presented in prior HICSS tracks, this scholarship reignites a body of work on the genre of digital documents that has found a home in the Digital Media track since the mid-90s. Through its continued development, we find new practical and analytic relevance for study of information systems in the years ahead.