

# CFP: Building Book Labs Symposium

## Event Details

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- Event title: Building Book Labs: Hands-On Research & Teaching in Book History
- Event Dates: 20-21 May 2025
- Location: [Skeuomorph Press](#), University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
- Event sponsors: the [Andrew W. Mellon Society of Scholars in Critical Bibliography](#), the [University of Illinois' Rare Book and Manuscript Library](#), UIUC's [Humanities Research Institute](#), the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign [Department of English](#), [Skeuomorph Press & BookLab](#), the [Champaign-Urbana Community FabLab](#)
- Organizers: Ryan Cordell (University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign), Kadin Henningsen (University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign), Ayesha Ramachandran (Yale University), Noam Sienna (University of Toronto)
- Proposal Due Date: 15 December 2024
- Send Proposals to: [skeuomorph-press@illinois.edu](mailto:skeuomorph-press@illinois.edu)

## Call for Statements of Interest

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The past decade has seen a flourishing of creative-critical making in book historical research and teaching, evidenced in small part by the founding of many new bibliographical presses, humanities-focused makerspaces, and “book labs” around the country, as well as increasing numbers of scholars implementing hands-on elements in their book history courses and research. As this groundswell spreads across a variety of institutional and disciplinary contexts and settings, there is increasingly a need to bring together the communities of practitioners, scholars, teachers, curators, conservators and makers of all kinds. [A recent whitepaper on “humanities maker spaces”](#)—co-written by an organizer of this CFP—sought to lay “the groundwork for more robust communication and professionalization among such initiatives, building shared resources...that can be used for organization, advocacy, and fund-raising by scholars building and sustaining such programs.”

To that end, we are convening a symposium, "Building Book Labs: Hands-On Research & Teaching in Book History," at the [University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign's Skeuomorph Press](#) in May 2025. We seek to gather scholars and students to theorize experiential research and teaching in book history and adjacent fields; share practical advice about founding, growing, and sustaining such endeavors; and to make together through hands-on symposium activities. We hope to better understand the book lab movement in our particular current moment; contextualize it in light of historical phenomena such as the Bibliographical Press movement; and expand the conversation to a wider range of institutional, disciplinary, or pedagogical contexts. We envision a working symposium that prioritizes community discussion and hands-on activities. We invite brief statements of interest (200-400 words) which address the following questions: (a.) your interest/experience in this field; (b.) a specific topic or question that you would like to address or have addressed by the symposium; (c.) an indication of whether you would like to present something (e.g. a position paper, demonstration, workshop, informal remarks) or attend as a participant and fellow-traveler. We anticipate being able to offer limited travel support for junior scholars and those without institutional travel resources; if you would need such support to attend, please let us know in your statement of interest. Statements should be sent to [skeuomorph-press@illinois.edu](mailto:skeuomorph-press@illinois.edu) by 15 December 2024.

Symposium planners anticipate this will be the first gathering in a series, spread over the next three years, on BookLabs and Beyond: Imagining Futures. The series will comprise three symposia at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (2025), the University of Toronto (2026), and Yale University (2027). Additional series organizers include Claire Battershill, Alan Galey, Kit MacNeil, and John Maxwell. Our goal for the series is to catalyze a loose network of institutions and a community of practice in critical making in book history, book arts, and associated fields that can grow into a space for innovation, experimentation, and practical logistical support. Each symposium will build on the previous one, shifting in scope with participants and their needs; while each institution will provide a preliminary site for these conversations, we hope that the relationships and collaborations that emerge will be sustained into the future. Please do consider sending in a statement of interest even if you are unable to attend the initial May 2025 symposium, but are interested in future events; this will allow us to assess broad interest and plan accordingly.