

CALL FOR PAPERS

18th SCREENWRITING RESEARCH NETWORK

ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Oxford Brookes University (UK), 9–12 September 2026

The 18th annual International Conference of the Screenwriting Research Network (SRN 2026) will be hosted by Oxford Brookes University in the UK, on Wednesday 9th through Saturday 12th September 2026.

The Conference is organized with the support of the School of Arts of Oxford Brookes University. The main location of the Conference will be at the Headington Campus. Oxford is well known for its history, culture, “dreaming spires” and... academic tradition.

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Calendar (summary of deadlines)

CfP out:	Mid-November 2025
Submissions of abstracts by:	20 February 2026
	EXTENDED: 6 March 2026
Shortlisting/notification of acceptance by:	End of March 2026
Website going live:	Early Spring 2026
Registration:	From May/June 2026
Conference:	9-12 September 2026

Keynotes speakers and/or special guests to be announced in Spring/Summer 2026.

Submissions via email and contact: paolo.russo@brookes.ac.uk

THE CALL FOR PAPERS (IN FULL)

The SRN is comprised of scholars, writers, and practice-based researchers. Started in 2006, the network has achieved substantial critical mass over the years – currently counting almost 800 members from 50+ countries.

The aim of the annual International Conference is to continue, and expand, discussions around screenwriting and to strengthen what has now become a global research network and community. So far, the conferences have taken place in Leeds (2008), Helsinki (2009), Copenhagen (2010), Brussels (2011), Sydney (2012), Madison-Wisconsin (2013), Potsdam-Babelsberg (2014), London (2015), Leeds (2016), Dunedin (2017), Milan (2018) and Porto (2019). After the forced hiatus of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the online symposium of 2021, the annual conference returned to its globe-trotting tradition with further stops in Vienna (2022), Columbia-Missouri (2023), Olomouc (2024) and Adelaide (2025).

It now returns to the UK for SRN 2026 in Oxford. The Conference theme is...

SHAPES

of the

FUTURE

It's a brave new world out there and, therefore, one obvious approach could look at representations of the future in screenplays ranging from science-fiction to utopian/dystopian and other speculative genres including, but not limited to, the recent comeback of time-travel stories, particularly in serial dramas.

Or...

Those of you who attended the 2019 conference in Porto will remember a fascinating keynote on future narratives and its application of game theory that echoed Borges' view of the future as a "garden of forking paths". And while wedding gardening with screenwriting might be pushing it a bit too far, besides and/or regardless of sci-fi tropes, the uses of time in/as key screen narrative devices that rely on future-oriented expectations can be explored through the still vastly uncharted territory of scenario planning and world-building – to cite but two options.

Or...

Paraphrasing a well-known philosopher, our thoughts might well be perpetually occupied with (a well-known poet would say monopolized by) the past and the future but, as researchers, we tend to focus on the past – for good reasons. Still, from a historiographic perspective one always looks at the past in order to better define the future. For that, papers that investigate either key turning points and major twists in the plot or weak signals of broader paradigm shifts in the history of screenwriting that paved the way to future developments of the craft and its practices are of course most welcome.

And now... to the elephant in the room.

Is AI the future of screenwriting? Will AI replace screenwriting? Will AI benefit or harm screenwriters? What will be the practical, professional and legal implications? And if AI will indeed change screenwriting, what models (e.g. LLMs) are bringing about this revolution? Will they alter the very ontology of screenwriting and of the screenplay itself? Will AI turn screenwriting into a form of prompt engineering? Most importantly... will you present a paper about AI and screenwriting?

If so, aside from the daily newsfeed hype diet we have gotten used to in the past few years as opposed to the doom-and-gloom collapse scenario *à la* "tomorrow is already late", consider researching and presenting foresight into a transformation scenario *à la* "images of the future". Yes, we will zoom in to the future, but what will make your paper stand out is how it reveals its possible SHAPES. Which is less about predicting one probable future than it is about exploring the causes of change and plural alternatives beyond dominant views.

And finally...

SRN 2026 will mark the 20th anniversary of the Network!

We have come a long way in ways that perhaps few would have expected two decades ago. What is the future of the SRN and of screenwriting research? Will we need a more holistic approach? The SRN is transdisciplinary by its own nature: does it need to reach even farther out to other, thus far less familiar domains? Do we need to adopt new or less frequented methodologies – e.g. scenario method, backcasting, cross-impact analysis, social network analysis etc.? How and how much will our traditional pedagogical and research practices be impacted? Will we be SHAPE (Social sciences, Humanities and the Arts for People and the Economy), STEEP (Social, Technological, Economic, Environmental and Political) or... alas!, STEM?

We look forward to receiving your proposals on any of the above.

What If Your Current Research Does Not Fit the Conference Theme?

The above is not intended to be prescriptive and proposals for presentations beyond the theme of the Conference are also welcome. The aim of the SRN being to foster research that analyses, uncovers and rethinks screenwriting in relation to its histories, cultures, theories, values and creative practices, any proposal underpinned by such research will be considered. Topics and perspectives may include (but are not limited to):

- Alternative forms of scripting
- Archival research on screenwriting, writers and screenplays
- Censorship and screenwriting
- Cross-cultural/transnational collaborations
- Evolving pedagogy of screenwriting (e.g. manuals, schools, academia, traditions, practices, trade press, Internet, etc.)
- Impact of SVOD platforms on screenwriting and writers
- Individual or multiple case studies (writers or texts)
- Issues of authorship
- National traditions of screenwriting and storytelling
- Neurosciences and screenwriting
- Practice-based research in screenwriting
- Reflections on screenwriting/narrative/storytelling theories
- Reinforcing/challenging canons, doxa and practices in screenwriting
- Screenwriting and adaptation
- Screenwriting as practices that produce complex relational configurations
- Screenwriting between mainstream, art, niche or independent cinema
- Screenwriting for immersive technologies (VR, AR, 3D)
- Screenwriting in international co-productions
- Writers' guilds, market deregulation and the professions of screenwriting
- Writers' rooms and highly-collaborative working environments

... All the above with reference to any media and platforms – e.g. fiction film, feature and short, television (public, SVOD, etc.), animation, documentary, experimental, videogames, digital media, interactive, web/online, new-media, transmedia, database etc.

Format of presentations/abstracts

All presentations, regardless of format, must be delivered in person (i.e. no pre-recorded presentations), in English, and be underpinned by original research work being conducted by the presenter (i.e. no recycling/repetitions from previous SRN or other conferences). Multiple presenters for co-written papers are allowed.

All proposals, regardless of format, should include: title, author's name, affiliation, contact details, an abstract (see below for specific wordcounts), 4-6 keywords, and a 150-word bio detailing the presenters' research activity, publications and/or screenwriting practice. You can also add links to your website, IMDB or similar online presence (but please no social media – e.g. Facebook, Instagram – in the proposal).

We accept proposals for presentations in the following formats:

Individual papers

Proposals for traditional 20-minute papers, followed by Q&A.

The abstract should be 250-300-words.

Audiovisual essays

Proposals to present an audiovisual essay of 15 minutes maximum, in which the presenter(s) express a position on one of the above topics related to the conference theme. It should NOT be a recording of a traditional paper presentation nor an experimental film; rather, it is an audiovisual discourse on a clear theoretical position/approach/method. Note: the presence of the presenter at the conference is required.

The abstract should be 250-300 words.

Pecha Kucha

Proposal for short presentations, ideal for work-in-progress research that relies substantially on visual materials over text. Although traditionally pecha kucha presentations consists of 20 slides, each timed to exactly 20 seconds, for a total duration of 6'40", we are going for a simplified format: any number of slides, as long as the presentation does not exceed 6 minutes.

Note: all pecha kucha presentations will be grouped sequentially in one panel up to a maximum of 6, followed by a regular Q&A.

The abstract should be 100 word.

Pre-constituted panels (3 presentations each)

Proposals are welcome for the following types of panels:

- a) Colloquium: 3 individual 20-minute papers + Q&A (as per guidelines above) on a shared topic.
- b) Focused discussion (working group) panels: proposed and submitted by working groups within or outside the SRN. Although similar in format to a Colloquium panel, Working group panels should reflect the work being done and the theme explored in the group and/or by its members.
- c) Critical discussion panels: each participant gives a condensed presentation of one of their publications (journal article or book chapter) in max 5 minutes, followed by a 15-minute structured debate based on a question line-up moderated by a nominated Chair. This panels entails that (preferably) the publications tackle similar issues, be

made available and read in advance by the participants so as to trigger relevant questions, and the Chair plays a crucial role in defining the overall approach.

Note: book launches will have a separate non-presentation slot.

- d) **Audiovisual essay panels:** 3 individual video-essays grouped thematically + Q&A (as per guidelines above).
- e) **Practice-based panels:** these assume that some information is not adequately conveyed by words, visual aids and logical reasoning alone, thus implying practical/ artistic stimuli as well. Each participant will present their practical work in the first 10-12 minutes, and follow this up with a theoretical/methodological reflection (8-10 minutes).
- f) **Workshop panels:** these may have a flexible format comprising either one 1-hour workshop, two 30-minute workshops, or three 20-minute workshops. There are no prescribed guidelines as to how to organize the content of a workshop and the way it is presented or run, as long as it is centred around specific practical activities with (possibly) elements of interactivity.

Proposals for pre-constituted panels can be submitted by any of the presenters or the Chair of the panel and should include the title of the panel and a brief outline (100 words maximum) of the overall topic. All proposals should indicate “PanelProposal_SRN2020” in the file title and in the subject heading of the submission email.

Abstracts of all presentations in a panel should follow the guidelines for individual papers as above, and include short bios and contact details of all the speakers and the panel Chair. Wherever possible, the Chair should not be one of the presenters, although exceptions might be considered. With the exception of Critical discussion panels (which need their own pre-designed Chair), if a proposal for a pre-constituted panel does not include a Chair, the Conference Committee will appoint one.

Note: panel presenters may submit a separate abstract (for the same or different paper) individually. The individual submission will be considered a) in case the panel proposal is rejected as a whole, or b) in case the panel proposal is accepted but, subsequently, the panel cannot confirm attendance in its entirety.

Table reads

Table reads of various types of scripts have become a successful option at recent SRN conferences, thanks to the efforts of one of SRN’s working groups. While we’d like to encourage submissions for table reads, since we do not have acting students we cannot guarantee proper feasibility unless the presenter is able to make all the necessary arrangements.

Proposals should include a 250-300-word abstract.

Posters

This format is ideal for presenting preliminary results of work in progress or for projects that lend themselves to visual displays. The layout is not prescribed but posters (maximum 121.92x91.44 cm or 4x3 feet) should include a brief abstract outlining the purpose and methodology of the research being undertaken, panes with current and expected outcomes, and visual references of sources and other materials. Handouts may also accompany the posters.

The proposal should include title, author’s name, affiliation, contact details, a 150-word abstract outlining the expected layout of the poster (this can be replaced by a concise draft layout), 4-6 keywords, and a 150-word bio detailing your research activity, publication and/or screenwriting practice.

Note: space to display posters will be provided, however all materials to be displayed must be organized by the presenter on their first day of attending the conference. If a presenter cannot attend the conference, the Committee will try and arrange the display.

Submission of abstracts/proposals

Proposals/ Abstracts can be sent as either a Word or PDF document: please indicate “Yourname_PROPOSALTYPE” (i.e. PAPER, PANEL, ESSAY or POSTER; see above) clearly in the file title and in the subject heading of your submission email to paolo.russo@brookes.ac.uk

Deadline for submission of all proposals: **20 February 2026**.

Earlier submissions are very much welcome.

Peer-reviewing and shortlisting

The Organizing Committee will adopt a rigorous triple blind peer-review process for the shortlisting of the abstracts received by the deadline.

We acknowledge that not all presenters might be experienced conference-goers and that papers are usually work in progress, especially at the time of submitting a proposal. However, we warmly recommend that the abstracts be as well-drafted as possible with a well-defined research question, a clear focus, and a short summary of the intended content of the presentation at the time of submission.

We aim to notify acceptance/rejection of proposals by the **end of March 2026**.

Website and registration

The SRN 2026 website will go live in the coming months – likely by early Spring 2026.

It will include a wealth of useful information (e.g. registration, travel, accommodation options), as well as all the updates and, eventually, the programme leading up to the Conference.

We aim to keep registration fees in the region of £100-£120 (GBP) with a discounted rate for early career researchers (e.g. post-docs) and PhD students. However, we are looking for ways to reduce the fees amount: to that end, we will soon circulate a quick online poll that will help the organizing committee work out best options.

Contacts

An official conference email address will be available when the website goes live.

Meanwhile, please address any query regarding abstracts, registration, programme, etc. to paolo.russo@brookes.ac.uk