

About This Issue

This omnibus issue contains four articles that address an array of topics in contemporary research and scholarship relating to the design, planning, and management of land. Article topics examine theoretical constructs of design, digital technology in landscape architectural education, and trends in landscape architectural research. Among the four principal authors, two are assistant professors, one is an associate professor, and one is a professor of practice. Three hail from universities in the United States, and the fourth is from a Canadian university.

In his article “Landscape Design through Maintenance: Field Case Studies in Parametric Mowing,” Michael Geffel examines the generative capacity of maintenance as a design instrument in landscape architecture. He presents a series of field explorations that use mowing to investigate how maintenance operations mediate landscape design. The article offers four principles of maintenance design to synthesize the findings of the design inquiry. The principles allow landscape architects to engage the medium in a fundamentally different way by exploring how design and implementation of a maintenance program moderates realization of initial design intent.

Richard leBrasseur evaluates the use of a digital tablet with a coordinated audio/visual application in conducting critiques of student work in a design studio. Using a tablet helped students grasp new ideas. Students reported that using digital tablets enhanced their performance in the studio, facilitated instructor–student communication, and was more

useful in conducting design review than traditional paper-based review techniques.

Following up on the use of digital technologies in design studio education, Danielle Oprean and colleagues examine how landscape architecture students can use visually immersive technologies (HTC Vive, MobileVR, and WebVR) to explore virtual environments (VEs) in an informal settlement in Brazil. The study compared virtual and in-person experiences and found that VEs establish familiarity with a site and are used for examining details. Subjects found control of the VE experience to be enjoyable and useful, and the ability to move through the site was more important than realism. The findings suggest that a VE experience cannot replace an in-person experience but provides familiarity with the site when used alongside other secondary materials.

Using latent Dirichlet allocation models to examine the content of abstract submissions for presentation at CELA annual meetings from 2013 to 2019, Galen Newman and colleagues identify the top 20 content topics among the 2,426 entries. This article evaluates the published CELA abstracts to determine what topics are most relevant to current LA-based research. It also assesses how the CELA track system parallels these trends. The analysis suggests that community-based approaches involving climate change, hydrology, land reuse, and social equity issues are at the core of much recent CELA research. The profession also continually seeks to embrace new technology and tools.

David Pitt