

2025-26

BETWEEN KNOWING & DOING

# CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

NASA INDIA RESEARCH CONFERENCE

**AN EXISTENTIALIST DILEMMA**

## ABOUT NASA INDIA

The National Association of Students of Architecture (NASA India) is the world's largest architectural student-run organization. Founded in **1957** with just seven colleges, it has grown to include over **350 colleges** and more than **66,000 students**, making it a significant voice for architecture students across India. The association aims to provide a platform for learning and interaction among students from diverse cultural backgrounds.

NASA India functions as a **non-profit and non-political** organization. It is officially registered under the **Societies Act of 1860**, with its headquarters at the Department of Architecture, School of Planning and Architecture in New Delhi. NASA India organizes various events, programs, and competitions throughout the year. These include partnerships with organizations like ICOMOS, HUDCO, GRIHA, and CPK for design trophies. There are 11 design trophies in total, with the Annual NASA Design Competition being the flagship trophy and offering students a platform to showcase their creative talents and design innovations. Recently partnering with the Council of Architecture, India for the Student of the Year trophy. The association's flagship event is the **Annual NASA Convention (ANC)**, the world's largest gathering of student architects. This event attracts over 4500 students participating in workshops, masterclasses, and programs led by more than 200 esteemed architects. Additionally, regional Zonal NASA Conventions are held annually.

NASA India's initiatives extend beyond traditional academics. The **Summer-Winter school programs** offer immersive experiences that enhance students' practical skills and broaden their educational horizons. The **"Insider"** initiative allows students to engage directly with experienced architects, gaining insights into office management and professional practice. This interaction fosters mentorship and provides valuable guidance. The **Louis I. Kahn Documentation** series aims to preserve and disseminate architectural knowledge by documenting significant but often overlooked sites. NASA India hosts programs both nationally and internationally, in countries like Singapore, Japan, Sri Lanka, the USA, and South Korea. These experiences provide students with enriching learning opportunities and enhance their networking capabilities.

The NEXUS is an informal meeting ground where students can form bonds, share ideas, and collaborate. It emphasizes learning, mentoring, and networking, allowing students to showcase their talents. We have also expanded into podcasts with our **Spotify exclusive, The Archade**.

**NASA India Scholarships Fund** aims to provide aid to need-based and deserving students enrolled in NASA India associated colleges, who face hardships and have to find gainful employment while pursuing a full-time and extensive undergraduate architecture degree. NISF is a program where we wish to address this issue.

For more information, you can visit NASA India's website - <https://www.nasaindia.co/> Our social media pages are [@wenasaindia](#) and [@mynasaindia](#) on Instagram; on [Linkedin](#). Do check out our spotify originals [The Archade](#) and [Youtube Channel](#).

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## NASA INDIA RESEARCH CELL

UNLOCKING ARCHITECTURAL INSIGHTS: THE ROLE OF RESEARCH IN ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Research stands as the bedrock of academic enrichment, particularly in the field of architecture. It is the compass guiding students through the labyrinth of seminars, dissertations, and theses, providing the necessary tools for critical thinking and innovative problem-solving. In the realm of architectural studies, research is the linchpin connecting theoretical knowledge to practical application, fostering a comprehensive understanding of the discipline. The intrinsic linkage between research and academic pursuits becomes palpable in the production of seminars, dissertations, and theses, indispensable components in nurturing the intellectual prowess of budding architects.

### The GRASSROOTS - Inception and Successful Execution: The Start of NASA India Research Cell

In the 62nd year of NASA India (2019-2020), a visionary step was taken with the initiation of the NASA India Research Cell (NIRC). The inaugural year witnessed the successful execution of three seminal papers, each delving into critical aspects of architectural education and practice. These were categorized into Group A: Architectural Awareness, Group B: Course Structure and Duration, Education System, and Mental Health, Economics of Architecture Students, and Group C: Women in Architecture: The Past, Present, and Future. These papers served as the foundation, embodying the spirit of inquiry and exploration.

### NASA India Research Conference (NIRC)

The NASA India Research Conference (NIRC), an initiative of the NASA India Research Cell, was launched to give architectural research a focused and meaningful platform for students. Started in 2024, the conference was conceived to strengthen the role of research within architectural education, NIRC encourages students to critically question, investigate, and document the built environment, while introducing them to academic writing, research protocols, and peer-reviewed discourse. The conference also offers mentorship and dialogue with academics and professionals, culminating in students presenting rigorous research at the 68th Year Annual NASA Convention, the largest gathering of student architects in India.

### Why RESEARCH?

Research is what gives architecture its depth, direction, and relevance. It trains students to *look beyond form and aesthetics*, to question contexts, uncover hidden narratives, and *respond meaningfully to social, environmental, and cultural realities*. Through research and writing, architects learn to articulate ideas with clarity, build arguments with evidence, and contribute knowledge that extends beyond individual projects. In doing so, architecture moves from being merely built work to a discipline that **reflects, critiques, and shapes** the world it inhabits.

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## THE THEME

**AN EXISTENTIALIST DILEMMA**

Architects who have aimed at acquiring manual skill without scholarship have never been able to reach a position of authority to correspond to their pains; while those who have relied only upon theories and scholarship were obviously hunting shadows, not the substance. But those who have a thorough knowledge of both, like men armed at all points, have sooner attained their object and carried authority with them.

**Vitruvius the Roman** (4C CE)

1. **The phenomenon** of less than ten Schools of Architecture across the country in the 60s/70s increasing to over five hundred in the intervening fifty odd years can best be described as a rampant case of mass production. Most of these were not in urban centres but in small towns. The over-riding reason for this has been that, over those years, academia buckled and became a business; and continues to be a flourishing one. The obvious result was that standards dropped and students were pushed into the 'market' ill equipped for serving the discipline. Neither as practitioners nor as teachers.
2. **The sheer weight of numbers** made schools build an infrastructure based on quantum rather than on excellence. Pedagogy gave strict precedence to the curriculum; few schools dared innovative and imaginative methods. How far we have strayed from the gurushishya tradition! Students then were encouraged to explore and experience the world around them and return for an exchange of ideas with the guru. A concept still valid today. Surely these explorations would open up different ways of seeing and of experiencing, being closer to a more craft based and intuitive world. One of self help and the use of materials from the land. And I suddenly thought, whatever happened to that image of the bare-foot architect? Would that need an alternate approach to a pedagogy?
3. **Added to this** there have been, for very long, divisive strands in the relationship between architectural practice and education in our country. On the one hand teachers, in small town schools, have not been encouraged to practice and, on the other, successful practitioners spurn, and are spurned by these schools. A situation that amplifies a statement (partly in jest) by the writer, academic and architecture critic Kenneth Frampton that goes something like: those who can practice, do; and those who cannot, teach. Listening to Vitruvius might be more enlightening for both practitioners and educators.



**4. In this existentialist dilemma** students gravitate towards what is now becoming the sign of the times: a quick-fix. The deep well of digital information allows for an extraordinary retinal addiction. A singular sensory perception without searching for ways that might help imagine it's haptic and experiential qualities. So, bereft of any sense of place, culture or value system, architectural design is being homogenised. A globalisation of the mind, matter and spirit? A soulless transfer from one part of the world to another without the accompanying transformation?

**5. Architecture is, after all,** not a singular form but a collective practice that shapes our environment. It affects us all, in one way or the other. In a school supportive of reflective teaching, teachers would challenge the prevailing knowledge structure. Both research and hands on learning would give meaning to the institution. Just as the exposure to the teaching by practitioners would enhance problem solving through actual project site experience. So, must thinking practitioners consider sabbaticals and venture into the hinterland and (non-practising) educators delve into the world of building sites so as to create an exciting transfer between the theoretical, the imagined and the ground reality?

**6. References of contrarian positions:**

- The Bauhaus School in Weimar/Dessau, Germany
- The Rural Studio in Alabama, USA
  
- The Studio system at CEPT, Ahmedabad
- The Architectural Association, London, UK
  
- The Academies in European cities
- The Technical Universities/ ETHs and TU

**FORMAT AND GUIDELINES:**

Failing to comply with any of the guidelines may lead to disqualification at the discretion of the executive council.

NASA India Research Conference '25-26 will be a two stage research paper process, which includes the initial abstract submission, followed by the final paper presentation submission of the shortlisted abstracts.

Students get an opportunity to present the final research paper at the largest student architects gathering of 68th year Annual NASA Convention.

**Submission Requirements:****1. Abstract**

We are looking for 300-word abstracts (in .doc format) that explore the listed themes with fresh ideas and clear insights. Please specify the relevant sub-theme and ensure your submission is original, thoughtful, and contributes to **research in architecture**.

Abstract submissions should include:

- Paper title
- Author names and designations
- Abstract (300 words) with 3-5 supporting images
- Key words
- A brief author bio (up to 100 words, not counted in the 300-word abstract)
- All text should be in English

**Template Link:** [@Abstract](#)

**2. A5 poster** supporting your abstract and sub-theme. This needs to be submitted separately in high resolution .jpg/.pdf format. The poster must have the registration code mentioned in bottom right corner.

**3. Authentication Letter** - Duly signed and stamped by Head of Department/ Principal for each individual entry stating that work submitted is genuine and they have endorsed copyrights for the same, with the name of participant, registration code and unit shall abide by whatever may be the final results.

**4. Declaration Letter** - Participants must sign stating that work submitted is genuine and done by them, they have endorsed copyrights for the same and adhere to all the rules and regulations, jury process and the final results.

[@Link to Authentication and Declaration Letters](#)

**Author Guidelines:**

A maximum of two(02) students per paper currently enrolled in undergraduate course of architecture.

**Mentor** - Professor of the same college to guide the research paper.

If the students do not have a mentor, NASA India will allocate based on the research topic and the quality of the initial abstract submitted for the further proceedings of the paper.

**Key Links:**

All registrations, query submissions, and abstract submissions to be done through NASA

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**Key Dates and Deadlines:**

- Call for Abstracts: 05.01.2026
- Queries Submission Deadline: 16.01.2026, 18:00 Hrs
- Registration Deadline: 07.02.2026, 18:00 Hrs
- Abstract Submission Deadline: 08.02.2026, 18:00 Hrs

Further stages and submissions would be announced after the shortlisting of the initial abstracts.

**Important Information:**

- **Multiple entries will be accepted per college for the NASA India Research Conference 2025-26.**
- Queries to be put forward through the trophy page on the website (<http://www.nasaindia.co>).
- Registration should be done individually on NASA India website before the registration deadline.
- Registration of the trophies will be final and cannot be changed or withdrawn henceforth.
- Late registration and submission will not be entertained and henceforth the defaulters shall be disqualified.
- **NASA India will publish the shortlisted abstracts as part of the Annual NASA Convention proceedings in a Book of Abstracts.**
- **The soft copy (non-editable format) of the deliverables along with authentication letter, declaration letter and any other required documents prescribed in the submission requirements should be uploaded on the website by the submission deadline.**
- The soft copy file of the deliverables should not be corrupted or incomplete or in low resolution.
- It is mandatory to produce the original copy of the Authentication Letter for each entry(entry code should be mentioned if allotted) with the name of participant(s) and stating the unit will abide by whatever may be the final results and also agree that this entry is the property of NASA India.
- **The Authentication Letter should be signed by the HOD/Principal/Director of the unit. Failing to which the entry will be strictly disqualified.**
- It is mandatory for the colleges to produce the original copy of the Declaration Letter for each entry(entry code should be mentioned if allotted) signed by the participants stating the work submitted is genuine and they have endorsed copy- rights for the same and to adhere by all the rules and regulations, jury process and the results.
- **Any disclosure of a college's identity through any method or medium will result in disqualification.**
- **The paper/abstract submitted for the NASA India Research Conference shall remain the property of NASA India and may not be used or published elsewhere without prior consent from the Executive Council.**

**Plagiarism Policy:**

All students are hereby strictly warned that plagiarism and the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in any form for preparing research papers and presentations is strictly prohibited. The council will be using advanced plagiarism detection software as well as AI-content detection tools to verify the originality and authenticity of all submissions. Maximum of **15%** plagiarism/AI/similarity is permitted. Any submission exceeding this limit will be subject to disqualification.

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**MODERATOR** *(Brain behind the theme)***Ar. Edgar Demello***Principal Architect, EDA, Bangalore*

An architect with four decades of private practice, he studied at SPA Delhi and TU Delft, and worked in Amsterdam and Vienna, travelling extensively across Europe before returning to India. He has taught at several schools in the south, most recently as adjunct faculty at RVCA Bangalore.



In 2000, he founded tAG&B, the Architecture Gallery & Bookshop, a platform for practitioners, academics, and students, which later evolved into CoLab, a virtual gallery exploring how other disciplines, especially the arts, inform architecture.

In 2022, he self-published Architecture Travelogues, a “pandemic book” in which he revisits 11 places, including his village in Saligao. Two years later came 5 Architecture Fables, a critical appraisal of the discipline through familiar fable characters. He lives and works between Bangalore and Goa and was a student and close friend of Professor Bruno Souza.