Life wants to climb and to overcome itself by climbing. -- Nietzsche

The history of climbing is intertwined with the handbook or manual. From the copy of Augustine’s *Confessions* which Petrarch takes with him to the top of Mount Ventoux, to the alpine travel manuals and early technical guidebooks of the 19th century, to the digital *vade mecums* of the present day, the pursuit of climbing orients itself towards its objects of ascent via texts providing both practical and theoretical handholds. Such volumes guide us not only technically, but experientially, projecting and recording one’s movements—corporeal, imaginative, intellectual—through the act of climbing.

Correlatively, the history of theory is no less caught up with the imperative to ascend, with the ladder of vision as variously conceived by spiritual, philosophical, and scientific traditions. Derived from the Greek *theoria* (‘vision’), the concept of theory comprises practical and speculative poles, referring both to the knowledge of practice and to the discipline of contemplation. The impulse to see, to look out, is borne aloft through the desire to climb. So Petrarch announces his intention, “My only motive was the wish to see what so great an elevation had to offer.”

This volume aims to take the climbing manual to the next level by creating a handbook of *climbing theory* in the mutually reflective sense: theory of climbing and climbing of theory. *Climbing Theory: A Handbook* will combine reflections on climbing/theory from a multitude of disciplinary perspectives. As elevation is measured via triangulation, the editors trust that this method of coordinating plural approaches into a single text will bring into view new visions of climbing and future of theory. We want a book that simultaneously opens the world of theory to climbing and the world of climbing to theory.

The text will take the form of a collectively generated matrix of entries, primarily about climbing and mountaineering, but also about thinking, theorizing, sensing, and writing. But the relationships between entries will also be collectively generated, so that, rather than having entries ‘about’ theory, we will allow the climbing of theory to happen performatively, resulting from the way the entries build on each other. We will expand the traditional ‘see also’ internal reference format to include ‘compare to’ and ‘consider in light of’ and each contributor will be invited to annotate entries written by others.
Selected entries:

Analogy
Altitude
Blindness
Bivouac
Chasm
Crack
Death
Desire
Freedom
Frostbite
Height
Hold
Ice
Impact
Mountain
Mysticism
Perception
Peripatesis
Risk
Rock
Style
Sublime
Time
Training
Vision
Void
War
Weather