

In Memoriam: A MEBB Special Session in Honor of Kathryn Schwartz

April 24, 2023

Introductory Remarks by Malika Zeghal

I want to welcome all of you to the Middle East Beyond Borders (MEBB) Graduate Workshop's *Tribute to the Work of Kathryn A. Schwartz*.

The MEBB workshop started exactly 10 years ago. In it, PhD students discuss their peers' drafts dissertation chapters, which are read in advance by all participants. Students from NELC, Religion, Anthropology, History, History of Science, and Comparative Literature, to cite only a few departments, have presented their work and received important feedback.

Kathryn Schwartz started attending the workshop during the year 2015, after she defended her dissertation *Meaningful Mediums: A Material and Intellectual History of Manuscript and Print Production in Nineteenth Century Ottoman Cairo*. She immediately became one of the intellectual pillars of the MEBB, and we sorely miss her. I personally immensely enjoyed reading and discussing her work in progress, her intellectual generosity, and how she illuminated our discussions with her deep insights, energy, and above all else, her joy.

In the very spirit of our graduate workshop, we are here to celebrate Kathryn's published work. Her publications centered on the history of the written word in modern Egypt and beyond, although she also ventured into other fields of inquiry such as legal pluralism. She also actively participated in multi-authored digital projects related to Book History. As many other historians of Egypt, she was not given access to the Egyptian archives, which makes the breadth and depth of her contributions all the more impressive. She scoured public and private libraries to gather her material, and she skillfully used discrete bodies of texts to illuminate broader themes, to recast the historiography, and to dislodge old ideas from its canon.

Indeed, as I am sure we will see in the discussions today, her scholarship questioned deeply ingrained assumptions, and will have a lasting impact in her field. She paid attention to the technologies and to the materiality of various types of print and to the political economy of a whole world involving authors, commissioners, and printers. She underlined the continuities between print and manuscript cultures in nineteenth century Cairo, challenging the paradigm of the European "print revolution" when applied to the Middle East.

To speak in more details about Kathryn's contributions, our speakers today will each take no more than 8 minutes. After that, we will open the floor for a general discussion.

1-Ann Blair, Carl H. Pforzheimer University Professor at Harvard University

From a Graduate Exam Reading List to a Great Article: on 'Did Ottoman Sultans Ban Print?'

2-Ahmed El Shamsy, Professor of Islamic Thought at the University of Chicago (via Zoom)

Arab Bibliophilia meets Orientalism: on 'An Eastern Scholar's Engagement with the European Study of the East.'

3-Chloé Bordewich, Public History Post-doctoral Associate at Boston University and an alumna of the workshop (via Zoom)

Rethinking Egypt in the 1870s through 'The Political Economy of Private Printing in Cairo.'

4-Ari Schriber, Post-doctoral Fellow in the Department for the Study of Religion at the University of Toronto and an alumnus of the workshop (via Zoom)

The Introspection of Kathryn Schwartz: Printed Word as the Historian's Vocation (on 'Book History, Print, and the Middle East').

5-Youssef Ben Ismail, Fellow at the Society of Fellows, Columbia University and an alumnus of the MEBB (via Zoom)

Ottoman Legal Pluralism and Extra-Territoriality in 'A Printer's Old Plea to Reform Legal Pluralism in Khedivial Egypt.'

6-Mary Elston, Alwaleed Bin Talal Postdoctoral Fellow in Islamic Studies at Harvard University, and an alumna of the MEBB

Kathryn's Bookends: From 'Charting Arabic Cryptology's Evolution' to 'The Official Urge to Simplify Arabic Printing.'

7-Adam Mestyan, Associate Professor of History at Duke University

Adam could not be with us today because he is on a plane to Cairo. He sent me his text, which I will read on his behalf.

An Egyptian Shaykh's Literary World: Digitally Reconstructing Islamic Print Culture Through Mustafa Salama al-Najjari's Books, Cairo 1870

I want to thank Ann Blair for her support and encouragements while preparing today's event, all the speakers who prepared interventions on Kathryn's works, and last but not least, I would like to thank Omar Abdel Ghaffar and Mohamed Adam Koutajian, the student leaders of the MEBB workshop for their invaluable contributions to the organization of this event and for their leadership this year.