SHARP DeLong Book History Book Prize - Citation
(Delivered at SHARP 2017 Annual General Meeting by Claire Squires, SHARP Director of Publications and Awards)

This year, the judges for the award – Helen Smith, Janine Barchas, Fritz Levy and Kristina Lundblad – read nearly 60 books for the SHARP DeLong Book History Book Prize, all copyrighted 2016. They were ably assisted by Vincent Trott, as SHARP’s Executive Assistant.

These works concern a rich variety of geographical areas and chronological periods, from 19th century Beirut, to the Arctic, to Chile, to Chicano/a Border Literature and Print, to studies of Albert Camus and Boswell’s books. As in previous years, the range of subjects with which they deal, and approaches they take, confirm the multiplicity and diversity of the history of the book.

And now to the announcement.

This year, we have one overall winner, but have also made two commendations, which we will announce first.

The first commendation goes to Jonathan G Alexander, Emeritus Professor at NYU in the US, for The Painted Book in Renaissance Italy, 1450 – 1650 (published by Yale University Press).

The book is a comprehensive account of the art of the book at a crucial moment in its history. Embracing both manuscript and print, this is a necessary work of scholarship, providing an unparalleled picture of an understudied art form. The book itself is sumptuously illustrated, and guides the reader through the aesthetics, the practicalities and the lineages of Renaissance illumination. Offering some surprising new judgements, Alexander also remains alert to the connection between book art and changing modes and fashions of architecture, art and visual culture. We also thoroughly commend the publisher for a beautiful production.

Our second commendation goes to Noah Millstone of the University of Birmingham in the UK, for his title Manuscript Circulation and the Invention of Politics in Early Stuart England (published by Cambridge University Press).

Millstone's meticulously-researched book transforms the study of early Stuart politics. Where recent scholarship has emphasised the spread and uses of political print, Millstone delves into the archives and unpicks the political import and influence of letters, libels, prophecies, and a rich variety of other manuscript forms. This compelling work traces the networks through which manuscript materials travelled, the makers who shaped them, and the readers who deployed them to personal and political ends, shedding new light on the cultures of news, personal relations and early to mid-century politics.

Finally, the winner! This year, the SHARP DeLong Book History Book Award goes to Eva Mroczek of UC Davis in the US, for her title The Literary Imagination in Jewish Antiquity (published by Oxford University Press).

The book is breathtaking and beautifully-written, taking issue with the notion of both 'the Bible' and 'the book'. Stripping away scholarly assumptions about early Jewish literary culture,
this study tackles the scraps, fragments and scrolls that have, over the centuries, been imaginatively ordered – often, as Mroczek shows, erroneously – into a coherent canon. *The Literary Imagination in Jewish Antiquity* asks readers to explore the literature of early Judaism on its own terms, and, in doing so, prompts us to rethink dominant paradigms which structure our imaginative approach to biblical literature and textual circulation. Despite its impressive and wide-ranging scholarship, the book is deft of touch, enjoyable and accessible, and should be read by any scholar interested in the history of the Bible, early Jewish literature, and the idea of the book.

We also note that Eva was previously winner of the *Book History Graduate Essay* prize, and congratulate the editors on their talent-spotting.

I’m afraid none of our commended or winning authors are able to be with us today to collect their award, but all have expressed their delight at their success, and thank SHARP and the judges.