



## PRESS RELEASE

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### The George A. and Jean S. DeLong Book History Book Prize 2019

The Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing (SHARP) is delighted to announce the award of the 2019 DeLong Book History Book Prize to **Brent Nongbri**, Professor, MF Norwegian School of Theology, Religion and Society, Norway and Honorary Research Fellow, Department of Ancient History, Macquarie University, Australia for his title *God's Library: The Archaeology of the Earliest Christian Manuscripts* (Yale University Press)

In announcing the Prize at SHARP's annual conference in Amherst, USA, Claire Squires, SHARP's Director of Publications and Awards commented:

This path-breaking contribution to the field of book history urges us to reconsider beliefs and concepts that have been fundamental in the formation of religious and cultural history while captivating the reader with its exciting, Indiana Jones-esque research story. Nongbri gives a fascinating, nuanced, and revisionist interpretation of a rich array of ancient manuscripts. In so doing he throws light on the origins of the Christian codex, and warns of the dangers of reading into the past an anachronistic view of the Biblical canon. Exerting his expertise in palaeography and codicology, including attention to stitching and binding techniques, Nongbri highlights the lack of certainty about the provenance, authorship, date, and place of origin of many influential papyrus and parchment manuscripts. The judges praise Nongbri's amalgam of thorough knowledge about techniques and materiality, his exhaustive archival research, and the analytical sharpness that he brings to bear on this important history. This is a story that involves untrustworthy antiquities dealers, private collectors spreading false information to put their rivals off the scent of discoveries, cave raiders, and the accidental discovery of papyri. *God's Library* is a must-read for anyone interested in the history of beliefs, which is, of course, also a history of books.

Brent Nongbri receives \$1,000 as winner of the SHARP DeLong Book History Book Prize.

Commendations were also made to **David McKitterick** (University of Cambridge) for *The Invention of Rare Books: Private Interest and Public Memory, 1600–1840* (Cambridge University Press) and **Adam Smyth** (University of Oxford) for *Material Texts in Early Modern England* (Cambridge University Press).

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## About SHARP

SHARP was founded to create a global network for book historians working in a broad range of scholarly disciplines. Research addresses the composition, mediation, reception, survival, and transformation of written communication in material forms including marks on stone, script on parchment, printed books and periodicals, and new media. Perspectives range from the individual reader to the transnational communications network. With more than 1000 members in over twenty countries, SHARP works in concert with affiliated academic organizations around the world to support the study of book history and print culture. See <http://www.sharpweb.org/>

## About the DeLong Prize

SHARP annually awards a \$1,000 prize to the author of the best book on any aspect of the creation, dissemination, or uses of script or print published in the previous year. Owing to the generosity of the DeLong family in endowing the prize, from 2004 it has been known as the George A. and Jean S. DeLong Book History Book Prize. Previous winners include Eric White, curator of rare books at Princeton University Libraries, USA, *Editio Princeps: A History of the Gutenberg Bible* (Brepols, 2017), Eva Mroczek's *The Literary Imagination in Jewish Antiquity* (Oxford University Press, 2016), Kristina Lundblad's *Bound to be Modern* (Oak Knoll Press, 2015), Daniel Wakelin's *Scribal Correction and Literary Craft: English Manuscripts 1375-1510* (CUP, 2014), Paula Rabinowitz's *American Pulp: How Paperbacks brought Modernism to Main Street* (Princeton University Press, 2014), David McKitterick's *Old Books, New Technologies: The Representation, Conservation and Transformation of Books since 1700* (CUP, 2013), and Helen Smith's *'Grossly Material Things': Women and Book Production in Early Modern England* (OUP, 2012). Details of the 2020 prize submission process will be available later in 2019, via <http://www.sharpweb.org/main/delong-book-history-prize/>.

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