

On Implementing the Digital Form: an Arabic-English Web-based Archive

Over thirty years ago, my parents (with a toddler me) walked through and the arabesque hallways in Cairo airport and boarded a Lufthansa flight to the United States. They did not look back. Egypt was at war with Israel. That was perhaps the most pivotal day of my life, and since, I have been in motion. After the Yom Kippur War, there were Israeli invasions in South Lebanon in 1978, 1982, and 2006, the Palestinian *Intifada* of 1987, the first eight-year Gulf War between Iran and Iraq, and then subsequent second and third Gulf wars in Iraq. There have been suicide bombings, large scale attacks on the U.S., conflicts over oil, civil war in Yemen, and border disputes throughout the Middle East. The homes and lives of the people of this region have gone through tremendous upheaval and change. Today, many Arabic speakers live in Diaspora.

I spent a lifetime moving back and forth between the U.S. and Egypt with many stops in Europe along the way. As a child, I remember always longing for the place I just left, and reconstructing it in my mind. This process of reconstructing did not end after childhood. After a series of geographic moves, I ended in Washington, D.C. for twelve years. I had initially moved to Washington, D.C. to pursue a Masters degree in Arab Studies at Georgetown University where I researched and wrote papers on subjects as diverse as the political role of poetry in the Arab-Israeli conflict, the history of resistance movements in North Africa, and information technology in the Arab Gulf (research that was presented as the InfoTech website in 1997). During my time in Washington, D.C., I co-founded media and art collectives, including the Guerrilla Poetry Insurgency and

Word of Mouth, and participated in organizing and community building. After 9/11, the work I had done at Georgetown University gained a sense of urgency, and I returned to Georgetown University to work at the Center for Contemporary Arab Studies as multimedia and publications editor. It was in that milieu that I saw the potential for what could come from cross-fertilization and conversations among the activists, scholars, and new media artists working on the Middle East. And so I began to conceptualize one platform where the exponential quantity of digital cultural productions could be collected and publicly accessed.

R-Shief was created in response to what I observed as a need to engage critically on the renaissance of knowledge production emerging on 21st century transnational Arab communities. The post-9/11 climate in Washington, D.C. enabled me to recognize emergent Arab public(s)—displaced yet networked online—within organizations and institutions, as well as through shared, social and historical experiences. *R-Shief* is designed for a transnational Arab public emerging from the series of 21st century historical events—the ongoing war in Iraq since 2003, the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon in 2005, the bombing between Israel and Hizballah across Lebanese national borders in 2006, the war on Gaza in December 2008.

These events have sparked a large number of cultural productions in digital form. The sheer scale of today's digital information production compels us to conceptualize how we navigate through and how we visualize information. Integrating art, technology, and reporting in the artistic production, the digital medium itself functions as a creative and dynamic *producer*, not just *reporter*, of knowledge. As a relatively new form, the history of and theory of the language of digital media have yet to be fully integrated in

knowledge production.

It had been clear to me that one's position within a bilingual community of researchers and thinkers moving to and from the Middle East locates one at a nexus, alongside various media, information, and other subjectivities. My experiences as a transnational citizen—explaining way through cultural misunderstandings about political representations of identity and state power—offer a double-vision¹ that allow me to know where to stitch between languages and cultures.

As nation-states enter a crisis globally, digital media increasingly dominates mediation in the Middle East, as well as other parts of the world. As Appadurai writes in his book, *Modernity at Large*, “[digital media] links producers and audiences across national boundaries, and these audiences themselves begin new conversations between those who move and those who stay.”² Transnational Arab publics, or Arab Diasporic spheres, I argue, are the crucibles of a post-national political order whose discursive engines of the discourse are digital media and the movement of refugees, activists, students, and laborers.

Edward Said was one of the leading American intellectuals of the late twentieth century, and, being a Palestinian-born American who grew up and was educated in Egypt, he chose to entitle his memoirs, *Out Of Place*³. The experience of the exile, the emigrant, the traveler, was a central theme in his work. Occupying an “in between” space, straddling two cultures rather than being grounded in one, Edward Said learned to

¹ This term references the works of several writers including W.E.B. Dubois's “double-consciousness.” The term has also been theorized extensively by Edward Said and Abdelkabar Khatibi among many others.

² Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 19-21.

³ Edward Said, *Out of Place* (New York: Random House Press, 1999).

develop a that “double-vision”—the ability to see each of his cultures both from the inside and the outside. Knowing a culture —or any human experience, for that matter, like motherhood,” “the military,” or “poverty”—by being a part of it is a very different thing from knowing it from the outside—no matter how thoroughly. And the insider’s view is not necessarily better. The insider’s and the outsider’s are two different ways of knowing. Indeed, seeing from a distance sometimes provides a better perspective than the close-up view with its subjective angle. Many of us are always locked up into one or the other of these two conditions—insiders or outsiders—especially when it comes to cultures and traditions. Being able to see both from the inside and the outside is reserved for a few groups—among them are emigrants, exiles, and expatriates—transnational publics.

A key principle in *R-Shief* is that disparate and discrete pieces of knowledge produced and promulgated in scholarship around the world could be (and should be) nuanced, revised, corrected, or enhanced by existing in concert with each other—that is, different forms of knowledge should be interactive and mutually engaged. Making this possible is one of the greatest values *R-Shief* offers.

The name *R-Shief* was chosen because it is the Arabic word for ‘archive.’ *R-Shief* itself is an Arabic-English website that integrates software to archive digital genres on the Middle East and its Diaspora. Notably, *R-Shief*—the website—is distinguished from the *R-Shief* Initiative— whose goal is to provide a cyber platform for digital genres in Arabic and English to be used for research, scholarship, and cultural production. The Arabic script and linguistic characteristics have traditionally isolated scholarship written in this language from the general international arena. *R-Shief*’s ability to incorporate the Arabic script and its semantics online is a primary reason for defining the scope of *R-Shief* in

terms of the landscape of a 21st century, mobile, Arab imagination. *R-Shief*, the project discussed in this paper, serves as an application of the theoretical premise concerning the agency of the medium, thus providing a case to illustrate its contribution in the production of knowledge.

The Beta Archive

To amass an archive is a leap of faith, not in the function of preserving data, but in the belief that there will be someone to use it, that the accumulation of these histories will continue to live, that they will have listeners. Perhaps that is why, in the contemporary art world, art historian and critical theorist Hal Foster explains that there is an “archival impulse at work”⁴ among contemporary artists who share a notion of artistic practice as an idiosyncratic probing into particular texts, objects, and events in the field of knowledge production. In “The Archival Impulse,” Foster discusses a series of art practitioners whose work, he argues, is archival in nature. He writes, “Archives...are material, fragmentary rather than substitutable, and as such they call out for human interpretation, not mechanical reprocessing.” The archive represents something even more palpable for the artist—an opportunity to provide a counter-collection, standing against the monumental history of the state. As Foster says of archives: “created as much by state organizations and institutions as by individuals and groups, the archive, as distinct from a library or collection, constitutes a repository or ordered system of documents and records, both verbal and visual, that is the foundation from which history

⁴ Hal Foster, “The Archival Impulse,” *The Archive: Documents of Contemporary Art*, ed. Charles Merewether (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004), 143.

is written."⁵

R-Shief joins a history of archival art works that urgently seek to critique historical information on the contemporary Middle East—information currently under siege, in real time and place, as cultures are destroyed or lost in conflict. For example, Walid Ra'ad's *The Atlas Group* is an intervention in the archive, where documenting and archiving processes dominate the screen and the archived data is fictitious. Akram Zaatar's Arab Image Foundation project, also situated in the Middle East, archives twentieth century photographs and portraits of everyday Arab families. Indeed, the *R-Shief* Initiative is inspired by a number of high quality, cultural, artistic, and intellectual endeavors including *Bidoun*, a print magazine on art and culture which is "conceptualized for a transnational audience at home in Cairo or New York, London or Beirut." *Bidoun* magazine reaches English-speaking audiences on issues related to the Middle East, and showcases cultural production from the Arab world, Iran, Turkey, Israel, and at times South Asia. However similar, *R-Shief* is a website that is concerned with archiving and indexing, rather than showcasing, on issues including but not limited to art and culture. Whereas *Bidoun* is a print-magazine that covers material on the Arab world and Iran (similar, though linguistically different cultures), *R-Shief* organizes its information based on language. The prototype, for example, is in both English and Arabic. *Arab Society & Media* is another example of an online academic journal that is a primary resource for information about the role of media in shaping Arab society. *Arab Society & Media* is an English-only site of predominantly text-based features. *R-Shief* curates a platform that

⁵ Foster, 143.

brings all these alternative publications together in one landscape.

To begin the project, I invited three individuals who have made considerable contributions to the field of Arab media—filmmaker and political scientist Bassam Haddad, Professor Marcy Newman, and Lebanese journalist Lynn Maalouf—to collaborate with me in conceptualizing how we would move forward with this archiving effort. How could we contain the scope into a more manageable scale? *R-Shief*'s first installation was at the Middle East Studies Association conference in November 2008. We found ourselves, as writers and researchers, most naturally addressing *R-Shief* as a publication and momentarily pursued building *R-Shief* as a peer-reviewed online journal—one that invites its readers into new forms of participation on issues relevant to contemporary transnational Arab communities. Aware of the need for language translation in today's global climate, we imagined that our journal would extend collaborative translation tools between Arabic and English into a biannual publication. In preparation for this event, the advisory board and I co-authored this call for submission via email:

We are seeking submissions around the subject of surveillance and sousveillance, the practice of watching from above (sur-) and below (sous-), as is relevant to contemporary transnational Arab publics. The first edition is dedicated to exploring the cultural and political implications of this panoptic behavior, which also unfolds in an era of increased self-surveillance, encouraged by both the government and the culture of participatory and "transparent" media. *R-Shief* publishes original essays, academic manuscripts, interactive and non-interactive projects, digital video, and project documentation. *R-Shief* will launch its first edition on June 5, 2009.

The decision to bring the focus back to the archiving principle came about after the conference where we saw a growing array of publishers in the field of Middle East Studies. Exhibiting *R-Shief* in the art exhibit of this conference means that your work is

located in the midst of the book exhibit; it was a key event in the early stage of development. The Middle East Studies Association conference was held in Washington, D.C. Bassam Haddad and I attended while Lynn Maalouf and Marcy Newman were in the Middle East. The social nature of academic conferences proved to be very useful as I had opportunities to talk about *R-Shief* with various members of the association as they visited the *R-Shief* exhibit: a small projection of a remixed video of possible material in the upcoming journal and a tutorial explanation of how it worked. I realized, at that point, that we were shifting the nature of our proposed project to fit the identity, aesthetics, and culture of the conference.

Ultimately, the decision to build *R-Shief* as an archive and not a journal, however, reemerged out of a threaded email discussion articulating our various roles within the *R-Shief* Initiative within an editorial process. Personally, I had felt disappointed when we seemed to have abandoned the idea of *R-Shief* as archive. It is as though the artistic call to reinvent the forms of remembrance—accumulated, stored, and recovered—was forgotten. As a publication, perhaps the content would have been similar—digital information—but the emphasis would have been on showcasing, choosing pieces; as an archive, the focus is on aggregating, storing, and recovering all of which are digital processes.

And so a pattern emerged, albeit informal, where with each public event or announcement about *R-Shief*, I would check in with each of the board members—collectively, or individually on IM, social networking sites, Skype—to make sure what I was writing was aligned with their ideas about our project. In the time following the MESA conference, I began to invite other people, whom we collectively decided on—to serve on the advisory board. At that time, I set up a Basecamp account for *R-Shief* in

order to begin documenting and recording all communications, milestones, to-do lists, and files into a SSL secure project management website that also documents the process of building the *R-Shief* Initiative.

The initial archiving effort began in December 2008. When the war on Gaza escalated, my inbox was inundated with posting notifications, Twitter feeds, Facebook messages, email messages, YouTube videos, fundraiser announcement, new music, new art, new political debates, and new media. The urgent need to participate in deepening understanding became quite clear by the winter months of 2009, as the war on Gaza continued. While the culture and land of Gaza, Palestine was being invaded in real-time, all I could do was archive material. When a civilization's museums libraries, schools and universities are destroyed, their history defertilized and leaves them with no documentation to pass along, no legacy. *R-Shief* is a digital archive that satisfies an urgent need to accumulate and aggregate the cultural artifacts the people and culture of Gaza, Palestine while more and more cultural artifacts are destroyed. As a starting point, we—the board and I—decided to build the prototype of *R-Shief* around the archive of my own collection of media, websites of organizations, journalism, multimedia, art, and collective action in response to the war on Gaza, Palestine.

Design Constraints and the Significance of Scale

The design constraints for archiving digital information with exponentially growing output are multiple. Designers of digital architecture have to consider issues of scalability, designing for future speculative outcomes. It is as if the craft is for a living,

growing intelligence. How does one visualize hundreds of twitter feeds a day onto a computer screen? In his publication, "Very Large-Scale Conversations," Warren Sack argues that, "Very Large-Scale Conversations pose a fundamental challenge to existing social science methodologies because it constitutes a different scale of conversational interaction, a scale that has not previously been addressed by social science."⁶ He goes on to investigate what it means to have conversations among hundreds and thousands of people.

In his analysis, Sack makes a distinction between information architecture and discourse architecture. He argues that whereas information architecture asks "librarians, database developers, web designers to connect people to machines by making it easy for people to find information on networked machines," discourse architecture "is the practice of designing environments to connect people to people through networked environments to support conversation, discussion, and exchange between people."⁷ He then builds his analysis of "Very Large Scale Conversations" as productions within discourse architecture.

I would go further with Sack's analysis and argue that vibrant discourse architecture is predicated on the aesthetics and overall success of its information architecture. In other words, before you get people engaging in online discourse, these people need to be *comfortable* with their relationship to the machine. The aesthetic experience a person has while searching for information online has an effect on her relationship with networked computers overall. Designers and developers need to help

⁶ Warren Sack "Discourse Architecture and Very Large-Scale Conversations," in *Digital Formations*, Robert Latham and Saskia Sassen, Editors Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002.

⁷ Sack.

users overcome feelings of alienation towards the machine. It is only when confidence is built that groups of users will dedicate themselves to using the computer for meaningful exchange of ideas with other people. In this model, the design for *R-Shief's* prototype focused on its information architecture. The intention was to design an aesthetically appealing, easy-to-use website that would enhance a confidence among its newly networked community. How will users navigate around the site and actually archive, research, and comment on the site's content? The groundwork for engaging discourse to occur has been laid; however, attention to the social network aspect of *R-Shief* has been planned for the next phase of development.

In building the information architecture of *R-Shief*, I faced challenges in scalability while designing the interface, particularly while archiving digital information like Twitter feeds or Flickr feeds. See Fig 2.1 *R-Shief* web interface listing of Twitter feeds. It is the digitization architecture—whether informational or discursive—that makes the numbers of actants exponential. Organizing hundreds of daily feeds in a way that makes it user-friendly and searchable on a computer screen is a difficult enough task, especially if you are targeting both Arabic and English speakers. The prototype design for *R-Shief*, then, was focused simply on establishing a comfortable relationship between *R-Shief* and its networked community of users.

Translation

Presently, *R-Shief* does not have an on-going translation person or machine to translate strings from either English to Arabic or vice versa. Translation is done manually, when necessary. When I state that *R-Shief* is a “bilingual” site, people most

often assume means that all material on the site somehow appears in translation. This is not the case here. Integrating Arabic script is a large enough task, and the issue of translation is a field of study in and of itself. *R-Shief* is concerned with Arabic script on the web being optimized and integrated with other languages. And so, for now, only the menu and user-interface for the content-management-system have been manually translated and uploaded. *R-Shief* can archive any content in either language, and offers a translated menu of taxonomies; however, the content itself is not translated—at least, not in the prototype.

While building *R-Shief's* site, I encountered a typical problem we all face in multilingual websites with Arabic as one of the languages. Because of how Arabic characters are defined in fonts, Arabic script appears significantly smaller than Roman script, illegibly so for some people. In the case of *R-Shief's* bilingual interface, simply increasing the font size makes the Roman script look disproportionately large in comparison. Using Drupal, I was able to enable the jquery bidi module (http://drupal.org/project/jquery_bidi), which determines the directionality of every bit of your markup and then adds a dir attribute to it. After that I was able to add selectors to choose the HTML elements with dir attribute "ltr" to have different font sizes than those with "rtl." This did not solve the case of an Arabic paragraph with some English terms/email/etc. in it. But it did solve it in lists and tags.

Thus, much of my effort in building the prototype of *R-Shief* has been focused on how to get Arabic script working together with Roman script. However, by building in this social networking dynamic to our archive, *R-Shief* may find its users developing bilingual folksonomies with translations included. This another starting point from which

I hope future development will research further into the topic.

R-Shief fills a need by offering one platform—a website—where activists, scholars, and new media artists can archive, discuss, and visualize “global cultural flows”⁸ on the Middle East and its Diaspora in various languages (initially Arabic and English, and later Turkish, Hebrew and Farsi). In response to the dominance of English-language media, *R-Shief's* accessibility to speakers of various languages initiates transformational change in information sharing and becomes meaningful to various communities and disciplines, ultimately affecting the terms on which cultures interact.

Conclusion

The *R-Shief* Initiative approaches popular digital media—Twitter and Flickr feeds, blogs, videos, PDFs, digital maps, Second Life projects, etc...—as well as alternative epistemologies with the same rigor and depth of critical analysis that characterizes traditional scholarship. This project is designed to provide a scholarly working environment for those interested in exploring innovative and non-traditional platforms and methodologies in their processes of production and publication.

Since *R-Shief's* prototype went live in early June 2009, it has received over 2,000 hits. Up to this date, the project has involved building a usable site, archiving my own research on Gaza, and organizing a twelve-member advisory board. The next step is to discuss how we begin to invite numbers of members.

⁸ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 33.

R-Shief's intervention is its ability to enable these conversations to occur, even if in discreet bits of knowledge, across barriers in languages and geographies. This interdisciplinary and multi-sited project is long overdue. *R-Shief* serves across a broad spectrum of discourses and practices including database aesthetics, digital media research, social computing, collaborative art practices, Middle East initiatives, and transnational social theory. Its implementation and aims affirm the importance of generating new data banks of qualitative and quantitative knowledge through increasingly egalitarian and participatory modalities of sharing, collaborating, and creating across boundaries. I hope that results of the project will provide rich data sets to a variety of audiences (scholars, journalists, activists, artists, community organizers, NGOs, policy analysts), and last but not least, the project will create an enduring archive of events as well as the media through which these events are made known and meaningful. The project's potential to generate and influence auxiliary projects—workshops, books, pamphlets, documentaries, educational materials, websites, blogs, music, art, and policymaking—is as exciting as it is revolutionary.

History can be a source of trauma and stress for a group of people. The War on Gaza, the Separation Wall across Palestinian lands, the War in Iraq, the bombings after across the Lebanese and Israeli borders, the many who take to the road in migration—displacement, war, loss—are among the traumatic historical events that occurred to Arabic speaking people since the turn of the century.

Laila Shereen Sakr
Yale University, February 19, 2010
*Digital Humanities Conference: "The Past's Digital Presence:
Database, Archive, and Knowledge Work in the Humanities"*

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Appendix 1: Biographies

Advisory Board Member/ Historian

Osama Abi-Mershed, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor of History at Georgetown University. His research interests include colonial Algeria, colonial education, modern France, and Franco-Maghribi relations. He teaches courses on the history of North Africa and the Western Mediterranean (medieval and modern); of Muslim Spain; of the Muslim and Arab worlds; and of the modern Middle East.

Advisory Board Member/ Asset Management Expert and Bibliographer

Brenda E. Bickett is the Middle Eastern & Islamic Studies Bibliographer at Georgetown University Library. Educated at the University of Texas-Austin & the University of Michigan, where she earned master's degrees in Middle Eastern Studies and Library/Information Science, her languages include Arabic, French, Italian, Persian and Turkish and she has traveled /studied/worked in Egypt, France, Sultanate of Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, Her research interests are all over the maps of the region, by discipline and geography. She is active in the Middle East Librarians and the Middle East Studies associations where she has worked on digital initiatives for preservation and creation of new media.

Advisory Board Member/ Lawyer and Musician

Laila Shereen Sakr
Yale University, February 19, 2010
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Shahid Buttar is a civil rights lawyer, hip-hop MC, independent columnist, grassroots community organizer, singer and poet. Professionally, he will in May 2009 assume leadership of the Bill of Rights Defense Committee as Executive Director. He also leads a U.S.-based organization supporting international movements to defend the Rule of Law. Buttar also served as a spokesperson for grassroots resistance at the 2005 Counter-Inaugural and the 2004 Republican National Convention—where *Democracy Now!* named one of his public addresses among "The Best of 2004." Shahid graduated in 2003 from Stanford Law School. As a musician, Buttar has performed around the world for audiences as large as 50,000. His debut CD, *Get Outta Your Chair*, was released in 2008 and features music from the funk, blues, hip-hop, house, drum 'n bass, and South Asian fusion. He also writes a column on politics and constitutional law on *Huffington Post*.

Advisory Board Member/ Literature Scholar

Carol N. Fadda-Conrey is an assistant professor of English at Syracuse University. Her research and teaching interests include the study of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, war, trauma, and transnational identities in Arab and Arab-American Literature texts. Her essays on Middle Eastern and Arab American literature have appeared in *Studies in the Humanities*, *MELUS*, and *Al- Raida*, as well as in the edited collections *Arabs in America: Interdisciplinary Essays on the Arab Diaspora* (2006) and *Arab Women's Lives Retold: Exploring Identity through Writing* (2007).

Advisory Board Member/ Researcher and NGO Director

Laila Shereen Sakr
Yale University, February 19, 2010
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Kathryn M. Coughlin is President of the Global Research Group, a non-profit organization that produces scholarly research on and engages in public diplomacy in the wider Islamic world. She completed her doctoral exams (with distinction) in Islamic History at Georgetown University specializing in Islamic law, but abandoned her dissertation for active public service. Ms. Coughlin has taught, lectured and/or delivered papers in the Middle East, North America, Europe and Asia on a wide range of subjects including religion and gender; Islamic law; religion and modernity; and US foreign policy and the Middle East. Ms. Coughlin's research has been supported by a number of American and international foundations including the U.S. Social Science Research Council and the Arbeitskreis Moderne Und Islam (Germany). Her publications include a reference work on Muslim cultures in sixteen countries (*Muslim Cultures Today: A Reference Guide*, Greenwood Press, 2006), a biographical dictionary on post-Saddam Iraq (forthcoming late 2009). On sabbatical from GRG in 2008-2009, Ms. Coughlin is a Research Fellow with the Islam in the West Program at Harvard University's Center for Middle East Studies.

Advisory Board Member/ Political Scientist and Filmmaker

Bassam Haddad is Director of the Middle East Studies Program at George Mason University and Visiting Professor at Georgetown University. He serves as Founding Editor of the *Arab Studies Journal*, a peer-reviewed research publication, co-producer/director of the award-winning documentary film, *About Baghdad*, and director of a film series on "Arabs and Terrorism". He is currently working on his book on

Syria's political economy, provisionally titled "The Political Economy of Regime Security: State-Business Networks in Syria." Bassam recently directed a new film series on Arab/Muslim immigrants in Europe, titled The "Other" Threat. He also serves on the Editorial Committee of *Middle East Report*.

Arabic-language Programming Consultant

Manal Hassan is an IT Consultant, experienced web developer and designer and a FOSS enthusiast, currently in South Africa. Her main interest is adapting and delivering technology to non-technical experts, and training them in making it their own. She co-founded the Egyptian GNU/Linux Users Group (EGLUG) in 2004, and has extensive experience in working with NGOs, human rights activists, and children on web technologies and new media. She won the Best of Blogs (BOBs) and Reporters without Borders award together with her husband in 2005. Hassan's specialties include Drupal, HTML, PHP, CSS, training, Linux, FOSS, websites, portals, multilingual websites, RTL designs, mentoring, Drupal theming.

Advisory Board Member/ NGO Director

Steven Keller has served since January 2006 as country director in the West Bank and Gaza for America-Mideast Educational and Training Services (AMIDEAST), a private, nonprofit organization that strengthens mutual understanding and cooperation between Americans and the peoples of the Middle East and North Africa. Prior to his current post, Steven worked at AMIDEAST's headquarters for more than three years heading up the organization's new business and program development. His interest in and focus on

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education and development in the Arab World began in Tunisia, where he served during the early nineties as a volunteer in the United States Peace Corps. His experience also includes working as an independent contractor for USAID in Washington, DC as well as a year-long graduate internship at the Galilee Society—The Arab National Society for Health Research and Services—which strives to achieve equitable health, environmental and socio-economic conditions for Palestinian Arabs in Israel. Mr. Keller holds a Master's degree from the Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, part of Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service, as well as a Bachelor's degree from the College of Architecture and Urban Studies at Virginia Tech. He currently lives in the West Bank in Ramallah, Palestine.

Advisory Board Member/ Anthropologist and Editor

Laurie King holds a Ph.D. in social anthropology and Middle Eastern Studies from Indiana University-Bloomington. She has done anthropological field research among Palestinian citizens of Israel, and in post-war Beirut. King is currently managing editor of the *Journal of Palestine Studies*, the quarterly journal of the Institute of Palestine Studies (published by the University of California Press), and was editor in chief of *Middle East Report (MERIP)* from 1998-2000. Laurie King is co-founder of the online news sources, *Electronic Intifada*, *Electronic Iraq*, and *Electronic Lebanon*. King is also currently an adjunct faculty member in the Master of Arts in Arab Studies Program at Georgetown University.

Advisory Board Member/ Journalist and Film Writer

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Lynn Maalouf manages the Lebanon program of the International Center for Transitional Justice (www.ictj.org), a New-York based human rights NGO, focusing on such issues as the missing and enforced disappearances, political initiatives dealing with post-war reconciliation, and archiving. She is the Beirut correspondent for the English-language service of *Radio France Internationale* and was formerly a correspondent for *The Washington Post*. She is a board member and contributor to the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World's publication *Al Raida*, affiliated with the Lebanese American University. Prior to that, she was editor of the English-language website of the pan-Arab publication *Al Hayat* between 2002 and 2004, and then became correspondent of *Radio France Internationale*, covering the assassination of Prime Minister Rafic Hariri and the ensuing political developments until 2006. She has written a script for a short film that is currently in production, and co-written a script for a feature film, selected at the Sundance Screenwriters' Lab in November 2006.

Advisory Board Member/ Literature Scholar

Marcy Newman joined the faculty of Al Najeh University in Nablus, Palestine in the fall of 2008. She has taught at Boise State University, American University of Beirut, the University of Jordan, and Al Quds University. She is a scholar, teacher and activist invested in human rights. She teaches comparative American/ Middle East literature courses. She is the editor of Jessie Redmon Fauset's *The Chinaberry Tree & Selected Writings*, *The Sleeper Wakes: Harlem Surge Stories by Women* and the author of *Beyond Slash, Burn, and Poison: Transforming Breast Cancer Stories into Action*.