

## **Al-Bustani's Arabic Encyclopedia (1870s-1900) and the Global Production of Knowledge in the Late Ottoman Levant**

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My paper examines the making of the first modern Arabic encyclopedia, *Da'irat al-Ma'arif*, which was launched by Butrus al Bustani in 1876, and over the following quarter of a century, produced eleven volumes covering the first ten letters of the Arabic alphabet. It analyzes the *Da'ira*'s role as a major marker and maker of its times, and as an oeuvre that sheds light on the production and hierarchy of knowledge Bustani and the *nahda* (or so-called Arab intellectual renaissance) were actively shaping and promoting. The *Da'ira* was a self-consciously global project: it sought to represent the world and provide information about it, both past and present; and, in the late 19th century, it relied on, absorbed, synthesized, selectively included, and engaged with works produced in different parts of the world and different languages through a vast project of translation. At the same time, the *Da'ira* was naturally heavily reliant on local Arabic (and less so, Ottoman Turkish) sources, both contemporary and historical. The paper examines the interplay between these various sources, their place, weight and the way they were woven together to create a new, unique narrative in the Encyclopedia. More broadly, it argues that late 19th century encyclopedias were a privileged site and medium for the making of global knowledge, and that their study sheds light on the circulation, translation, transformation and adaptation of words, concepts, discourses, information and texts that were becoming current currency, and in the case of texts, canonical, throughout the world in the late 19th century.