

Chris Kobrak (1950-2017)

In early January, the distinguished business historian Chris Kobrak died suddenly in his house in Paris. Chris, who taught business history at Toronto's Rotman School of Management, divided his time between Paris and North America. Chris was a pillar of the international business history community and was a fixture at conferences such as the European Business History Association and the Business History Conference. He was also the driving force behind the new Canadian Business History Association, and recently served as a member of the program committee for the upcoming CHA annual meeting in May.

To understand why Chris became an important figure in the global business history community, we need to consider his family background. Chris's family history is connected to some of the great events of the twentieth century. His father, who was a German Jew, escaped Germany at the last possible moment, arriving in the United States in the late 1930s. Chris's mother was from Ireland and he was brought up near New York. Although Chris's father had every reason to hate Germany, he encouraged his son to learn German and to become familiar with German culture. This knowledge later allowed Chris to write so perceptively about German business history. Chris also maintained his connections with Ireland.

Chris began his doctoral studies in history at Columbia University in the late 1970s, working on a topic in German business history. Halfway through his PhD, he decided to quit and go into private industry to make some money. Chris had a successful career in business that included a stint running the Japanese subsidiary of a US company in the late 1980s, at the height of the bubble. After retiring from business, his personal life brought him to Paris, where he began teaching business at ESCP, which is one of the world's oldest business schools. After an absence of many years, he re-enrolled in the PhD program at Columbia. He then completed his dissertation and began a prolific career publishing books on German business history that were informed by massive archival research, a deep knowledge of many aspects of German history, and his immense knowledge of accountancy and business more generally.

Chris's research on German business history was always informed by a very strong sense of ethics, particularly his writings related to the period from 1933 to 1945. Chris was a strong classical liberal who believed in free markets. However, his belief that capitalism is a good system did not prevent him from calling out corporate misdeed or exposing evil actions by corporations. He was a critical friend of business who was not afraid to speak truth to power.

In 2012, Chris was hired as the L.R. Wilson|R.J. Currie Chair of Canadian Business and Financial History in Toronto's Rotman School of Management. This chair was created through



the generosity of donors who wanted to re-invigorate academic research into Canadian business history. Chris devoted his considerable energies to institutional work aimed at bringing about a renaissance in Canadian business history: he was instrumental in the creation of the Canadian Business History Association, a bilingual society devoted to the study of Canadian business history that brought together academics, businesspeople, and others. The CBHA was modelled on Germany's Gesellschaft für Unternehmensgeschichte (GUG), an organization Chris knew very well. Chris and his colleagues at Rotman were extremely energetic at securing financial support from a wide range of donors. In its short life, this organization has done a great deal to provide practical support to younger scholars both financially and through encouragement and feedback.

Chris played an important role in the global community of business historians. Many business historians are a bit parochial in the sense that they research the histories of companies in just one country and that country happens to be the one in which they were born and have spent their entire life. However, the scholars at the very peak of the discipline of business history are far more international in their outlook—their research tends to be comparative and transnational and their research collaborations and biographies are similarly international. Chris was very much a business historian of this type. His extensive connections to firms, business archives, and academics on multiple continents meant that he was able to play an important facilitating role. He could talk to the US business historians and the German business historians and the Japanese ones and then get them to agree a common plan of action.

Chris remained committed to the craft of history and to the writing of narrative accounts of companies. In that sense, he was a fairly traditional business historian. However, he did believe that business historians did have the capacity to speak on key debates in finance, strategy, and other core management disciplines and he used his position at Rotman to bring respected business historians into contact with respected scholars in strategy and finance.

Dr. Andrew Smith,
Senior Lecturer in International Business
University of Liverpool Management School

E. Lisa Panayotidis

E. Lisa Panayotidis, professor at the Werklund School of Education at the University of Calgary, passed away after a brief illness in December 2016. She was a widely-regarded researcher and scholar in history, education, and interdisciplinary studies. She joined the Faculty of Education in Calgary in 1997 as a Post-Doctoral Fellow after completing her doctoral degree at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. Prior to this, she earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts with a major in art history at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in Halifax and a Master of Arts in art history at York University.

Lisa's work in historical and contemporary research focused on examining the past and present social and cultural functions of art and artists as well as the impact of the arts and crafts movement in schools and educational systems. This led Lisa to collaborate with numerous professional and community stakeholders concerned with improving critical art pedagogies and curricula in the classroom in light of historical developments. As a result of Lisa's extraordinary reputation as an academic, she was often asked to give guest lectures to university and community audiences nationally and internationally.

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Combining her degrees in history of art and education, and passionate interest in visual culture theory, her published work delved into the socio-cultural histories of students professors, and the built, natural, and intellectual space of historical university campuses in dialogue with one another. Throughout her career, based on numerous SSHRC-funded grants, she received several research awards including: the **CAFE (Canadian Association for Foundations in Education) Publication Award for her co-authored book *Provoking Conversations on Inquiry in Teacher Education* (2012)**; national and international awards for best English-Language article in the history of education: "The Mythic Campus and the Professorial Life: A. Scott Carter's Pictorial Map of the University of Toronto, 1937" *History of Education Review* [Australia; 2011]; and research excellence honourable



mention for "Intellectual Space, Image, and Identities in the Historical Campus: Helen Kemp's Map of the University of Toronto, 1932." *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, (2004). Lisa's other work included the co-edited collections: *Historical Identities: The Professoriate in Canada* (2008); *Cultures, Communities and Conflict: Histories of Universities and War* (2012); and *Women in Higher Education, 1850-1970: International Perspectives* (2016). Having an intense interest in encouraging rigorous interdisciplinary historical research, she was also editor-in-chief of the international open-access peer-reviewed academic journal, *History of Intellectual Culture*.

Lisa was extremely popular and influential with undergraduate and graduate students alike. She was deeply involved as a supervisor and mentor in her students' research and personal, professional, and scholarly advancement. She was nominated for several University of Calgary teaching excellence awards, and in 2004, as president of the Canadian History of Education Association/Association canadienne d'histoire de l'éducation, she ensured that graduate students were well-represented on associated committees and encouraged them in particular to submit their on-going research for the biennial conference held in Calgary.

Lisa's passing is a huge personal and academic loss, and she will be greatly missed by family, friends, colleagues, students, and community members. If you would like to send any donations in her honour, please do so to a charity of your choice.

Paul Stortz
University of Calgary