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Manifesto

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Manifesto

Abstract

Manuscript Studies is a new journal that embraces the full complexity of global manuscript studies in the digital age. It has been conceived with four main goals in mind. First, to bridge the gaps between material and digital manuscript research; second, to break down the walls which often separate print and digital publication and serve as barriers between academics, professionals in the cultural heritage field, and citizen scholars; third, to serve as a forum for scholarship encompassing many pre-modern manuscripts cultures—not just those of Europe; and finally to showcase methods and techniques of analysis in manuscript studies that can be applied across different subject areas.

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Manuscript Studies brings together scholarship from around the world and across disciplines related to the study of premodern manuscript books and documents, with a special emphasis on the role of digital technologies in advancing manuscript research. Articles for submission should be prepared according to the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 16th edition, and follow the style guidelines found at <http://mss.pennpress.org>.

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A New Journal for Manuscript Studies

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THIS IS THE FIRST issue of *Manuscript Studies*, a journal that embraces the full complexity of global manuscript studies in the digital age. It has been conceived with four main goals in mind. First, to bridge the gaps between material and digital manuscript research; second, to break down the walls that often separate print and digital publication and serve as barriers between academics, professionals in the cultural heritage field, and citizen scholars; third, to serve as a forum for scholarship encompassing many premodern manuscripts cultures—not just those of Europe; and finally to showcase methods and techniques of analysis in manuscript studies that can be applied across different subject areas.

The often-predicted decline of manuscript studies in the face of rapid technological change has not occurred. This journal aims to demonstrate that the digital developments of the last twenty years have made the study of manuscript culture and the material text ever more relevant to dialogues between different cultures, between the arts and the sciences, and between the past and the present. It also aims to provide a diverse array of cultural, methodological, and technological approaches with a badly needed common forum that can demonstrate the intellectual vitality and breadth of the field of manuscript studies in the twenty-first century.

Manuscript Studies welcomes submission of articles that concern the study of premodern manuscripts from any part of the world irrespective of

the methods and technologies that inform that study. While the journal welcomes discussion of digital developments, the use of these technologies in manuscript scholarship, and the results of digital projects, it also embraces the examination of manuscripts in which digital technologies play no part. In *Manuscript Studies* detailed codicological investigation can sit side-by-side with text encoding. For example, in this inaugural issue Christopher Blackwell, Christine Roughtan, and Neel Smith explore the history of Greek paleography and textual transmission using digital facsimiles of seven manuscripts of Homer's *Iliad*. They incorporate a deep understanding of the ways in which these different manuscripts were produced over time with the use of digital tools to align and identify a variety of letter forms throughout the disparate manuscripts.

The field of premodern manuscript studies is unevenly ploughed, and there are still many patches that remain relatively fallow. To help remedy this, the journal welcomes the submission of articles on manuscripts from any historical location or culture. The journal is especially interested in promoting conversation about manuscript studies beyond the borders of medieval and early modern Europe. We hope to create a forum that will encourage the common application of successful methods across the field of the material text. In this issue, we are especially excited to feature the work of Linda H. Chance and Julie Nelson Davis on the life of manuscript text in the early Japanese book, challenging the distinction between “printed” and “handwritten.” Likewise Benjamin J. Fleming reflects in his essay in this volume on the ways that Indic manuscript traditions regard the material form of a handwritten text and suggests the ways they trouble the notion that digitized manuscripts are divorced from any materiality.

The world is shrinking, not just because it is easier to communicate than it has ever been before, but also because the use of common standards and technologies across the world facilitates the study of the discipline and raises new questions that reveal more about how we became who we are. *Manuscript Studies* will publish articles that transcend time periods and geography, either through the methods that they propose, or through the questions that are being asked of the material. Within this issue, for example, Eryn Kopf takes a much-needed wider view of some of the fundamental questions in manuscript studies: What do we mean by a manuscript “surrogate”? Who is it that we are digitizing manuscripts for? How do we prepare for long-term use and preservation of digitized manuscript material?

Twenty years ago, contributions to the study of the premodern manuscript took the form of printed articles and full-length monographs. The economy of academic production made it difficult for citizen scholars to make contributions. The audience for premodern manuscripts has grown as access to digital images has exploded, and the ease of digital dissemination has meant that many contributions in the field are being made through websites, blogposts, and other new media. *Manuscript Studies* looks forward to submissions that embrace this source material, and help to disseminate it. The journal will play its part in this process; the reviews section will not be restricted to the printed word, but embrace digital projects and exhibitions including, in this issue, a review by Michael Madrinkian of the critical edition of Bx (the lost ancestor of all surviving B version manuscripts of *Piers Plowman*) edited by Thorlac Turville-Petre and John Burrow and recently published on the *Piers Plowman* Electronic Archive.

The material and philosophical origins of *Manuscript Studies* are inextricably linked with entrepreneur, collector, technologist, philanthropist, and friend to so many in the field of medieval manuscripts, the late Lawrence J. Schoenberg. With Larry Schoenberg's help, Penn Libraries have been exploring the possibilities of manuscript digitization since 1996, when the Schoenberg Center for Electronic Text and Image (SCETI) was founded. When SCETI started, digital manuscript images were sparsely available, and then largely on CD-ROM. That same year the Aberdeen Bestiary appeared on the web, and was a harbinger of things to come.¹ Twenty years later, the landscape is completely different: millions of images of medieval European manuscripts are available online and electronic resources of all kinds are indispensable to the modern researcher. SCETI itself has captured more than two million images of cultural heritage objects, the majority of which are medieval and Renaissance manuscripts, including more than three hundred manuscripts that Larry Schoenberg and his wife Barbara

1 Aberdeen University Library MS 24. See Michael Arnott, Iain Beaven, and Jane Geddes, "The Aberdeen Bestiary An Online Medieval Text," *Computers & Texts* 11 (1996): 6. For more, see this archived version of the Aberdeen Bestiary online from 16 January 1999: <https://web.archive.org/web/19990116230859/http://www.clues.abdn.ac.uk:8080/besttest/firstpag.html>. Shortened URL: <http://tinyurl.com/AbdnBestiary>.

Brizdle themselves donated in 2011. Web publication of research, in many different forms, is becoming an increasingly accepted part of our research environment, and manuscript libraries and scholars have frequently been at the forefront in realizing the potential offered by digital technologies. Based on Larry and Barbara's vision, the Schoenberg Institute for Manuscript Studies was founded in 2013, with the support of the University of Pennsylvania Libraries, to bring manuscripts, technology, and people together for the advancement of learning. The Institute was founded to foster a community of scholars and students, potentially worldwide, that could exploit all of the potential of current technologies, as well as the power of different approaches, to the study of the medieval manuscript.

Manuscript Studies is a publication of the Schoenberg Institute. For the last eight years, the annual Schoenberg Symposium has been held at Penn Libraries. Two conference proceedings have been published as independent books.² The papers from the 2014 conference "Thinking Outside the Codex," held 21–23 November 2013, form the first issue of this journal. The journal will be published twice annually hereafter, and will not be limited to papers delivered at the Schoenberg Symposium.

Manuscript Studies is published by the University of Pennsylvania Press, which has a long and distinguished history of publishing on the material text, and indeed is the publisher already of the Rosenbach lectures, held annually at Penn Libraries. The journal will be released in printed and digital form through the Penn Press to subscribers in order to support the dedicated editorial and material labor provided by the Press. Given the editorial intent of the journal and our commitment to expanding scholarly conversation and engagement, we have ensured that after one year, each article from the journal will be made available openly through the Schoenberg Institute's website.

2 See volumes 1 and 2, respectively, of The Lawrence J. Schoenberg Studies in Manuscript Culture: Justin Thomas McDaniel and Lynn Ransom, eds., *From Mulberry Leaves to Silk Scrolls: New Approaches to the Study of Asian Manuscript Traditions* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Libraries, 2015); and Emily Steiner and Lynn Ransom, eds., *Taxonomies of Knowledge: Information and Order in Medieval Manuscripts* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Libraries, 2015).