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The digital medieval manuscript

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<u>Propositions</u>

The digital medieval manuscript: approaches to digital codicology
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1. Digitisation continues the life of the medieval manuscript outside of its bookish borders, translating the parchment book into pixels and data. And even though the digital medieval manuscript is bound to the original medieval book in many respects, the digital object exists and functions as its own object with its own history and as part of historical and cultural narratives.

2. The reflection on the digitisation of medieval manuscripts and, in line with this, digital codicology as a method benefits from a materialist point of view. Acknowledging and consequently investigating the materialities of the digital medieval manuscript is essential to understand what it is and how it functions, and to allows us to frame it as dynamic, acting and complex object.

3. Digitisation processes are ruled by editorial choices and institutional protocols, that fundamentally affect the way the digital medieval manuscript looks and functions. The digital manuscript-facsimile does not 'liberate' the book from its institutional context. Rather, it is an object crafted and positioned in a carefully curated online environment (as the institutional environment always mediates the way we see the medieval book).

4. The digital medieval manuscript is the product of technological *and* creative processes, created and defined by both machines and humans. The digital images are products of skill, of creative and emotional involvement of the photographer, as much as they are products of a digital camera. Similarly, metadata is created within the confines of technical standards, but also with the touch of human hands. Therefore, the labour of digitisation specialists should be more at the forefront when we are looking at digital manuscripts

5. The digitisation of medieval manuscripts contributes to the fragmentation and propagation of medieval material in online space, opening the book up for new uses and appropriations (especially on social media). The banal uses of digital fragments in remixed images and jokes stimulate the making of new meaning in the face of the old, and with that provide a new kind of beauty and creativity.

6. The copy (or a multitude of copies) informs and changes how we see the original. What's more, if the original is scarcely or no longer available, the copy can become culturally very significant.

7. Seeing the digitisation of medieval manuscripts (or other historical objects) as the ultimate democratisation of cultural heritage is false. Online accessibilities to the medieval manuscript, though itself already challenged by social inequities, can even emphasise and reinforce the inequities that rule access to the special collections reading room.

8. By not taking the sustained existence of the digital facsimiles into consideration, the sustainable preservation of the medieval book is being bypassed. Moreover, collections of digital medieval manuscripts deserve to be preserved in their own capacity. We are responsible for the safekeeping of the digital objects that we put into the world.

9. An image on a screen will never be a replacement of a loved one, but seeing their encouraging smile on a phone screen can offer a feeling of presence.

10. Always check a medieval manuscript for trapped demons before you digitise them.