Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in Australia: 
Resources, Research and Opportunities

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Medieval and Renaissance manuscripts have always been an important resource for disciplines dealing with the past, both those concerned with the transmission of knowledge and those which explore from age to age the workings of the human mind and imagination. Australians have a distinguished record in many of these fields, and it would be presumptuous to attempt to give a comprehensive account of the place of manuscript studies in these achievements. High-quality facsimile publications and new digital and computer technologies, however, together with increased opportunities for exhibitions of the originals, are radically changing the nature of access to the extant Medieval and Renaissance manuscript, with consequences which are reverberating world-wide. Stephanie Hollis and Alexandra Barratt have recently addressed the significance for Medieval studies of manuscript collections in New Zealand; it is also timely to reflect on the manuscript resources in Australia, on the growing opportunities they provide for scholarship and research and on their relevance and interest to the wider community in the global context of the twenty-first century.¹

Manuscript Collections in Australia

Australia has some two hundred and sixty Medieval and Renaissance manuscripts or significant fragments thereof, most of which found their way into the collections of the country’s public libraries and art museums, and certain other cultural and educational institutions, in the first half of the twentieth century.² Several of these manuscripts were donated to institutions as part of substantial private libraries consisting mainly of printed books, and their catalogue listings reflect this association. In the State Library of New South Wales, manuscripts are catalogued alongside printed books in collections named after David Scott Mitchell and Sir William Dixson, early major donors to the library, while the manuscripts in the collection of Nelson Moore Richardson of Weymouth, England, which were bequeathed to the same library in 1928, are listed with a Richardson call number in the Rare Books and Special Collections. In 1924, the Fisher Library at the University of Sydney received a generous bequest of thirty-two Medieval and Renaissance manuscripts from the

² See Keith Val Sinclair, Descriptive Catalogue of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in Australia (Sydney: University of Sydney Press, 1969). Sinclair lists 264 items, but this figure includes some once in private collections that are no longer traceable (see below, note 12). There have also been a number of additions to public collections since the publication of Sinclair’s catalogue.
family of Sir Charles Nicholson (1808–1903), one of the founders of the University and its first Chancellor. This University is one of the few institutions that have continued to acquire manuscripts, both by benefaction and by purchase. Its library now has a collection of over eighty items. Those donated by the Nicholson family are catalogued under his name (“Nicholson MS”); most of the others are described as “Rare Book Additional Manuscripts” (RB Add. MSS). The manuscripts given to the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery by the Honourable Colonel R. A. Crouch in 1944 are listed as “Crouch MS.” In some cases, manuscripts, purchased by public libraries as part of larger collections, also perpetuate the name of an earlier owner. In 1963, for example, the National Library of Australia acquired a collection of over 10,000 books and 1,500 pamphlets which formerly belonged to the Cliffs of Ugbrooke Park, Devon, one of the old Roman Catholic families of England. The small group of manuscripts in this collection, reflecting the family’s adherence to pre-Reformation Catholicism, are catalogued as a part of the Clifford Collection.

In Victoria, from very early times, the collecting policies of both the State Library of Victoria and the National Gallery of Victoria included Medieval and Renaissance manuscripts. The State Library of Victoria set out to acquire such works as part of the documentation of the history of the book, purchasing its first example in 1901. During the early decades of the twentieth century, when both institutions were housed in the same building and governed by the same Board of Trustees, a generous benefaction, called the Felton Bequest, supported the Library as well as the National Gallery of Victoria. The State Library of Victoria has twenty-four manuscripts and leaves, as well as a thirteenth-century missal made in Perugia which is on long-term loan from the Australian province of the Franciscans. The Library’s manuscripts are catalogued according to the Dewey system for printed books, with the prefix “RARE S” or “RARE SF.” Between 1920 and 1966, the National Gallery of Victoria acquired five illuminated manuscripts and one leaf through the Felton Bequest. All of these items are outstanding works of art. Individual leaves with

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7 See Stocks and Morgan, The Medieval Imagination, 56–57 (no. 12), with recent bibliography.

8 This makes them easy to locate by the library staff but proves rather ungainly when citing references.

miniatures of high artistic quality also feature in the collections of the National Gallery of Australia and the Art Gallery of New South Wales.\textsuperscript{10}

The Library of the University of New South Wales, the University of Tasmania Library and the State Library of Western Australia each have a small number of manuscripts, the acquisition of which indicates an interest in this area at a particular stage of their history.\textsuperscript{11} Some Australian libraries, such as the State Library of South Australia, the Baillieu Library at the University of Melbourne and the University of Sydney Library, have been assisted in their acquisition of manuscripts by the support of groups like the Friends of the Library. University departments such as Classics and Law have collected manuscripts or leaves for teaching purposes, and small numbers of manuscripts and leaves, some of which are of considerable interest, are also to be found in schools, episcopal residences, seminaries or houses of theology and university colleges. It is not known whether the manuscripts identified earlier in private collections are still in Australia.\textsuperscript{12}

The Catalogue of K. V. Sinclair

The manuscripts in Australian collections first came to be known internationally through the scholarly endeavours of Keith Val Sinclair (1926–1999), a New Zealander with distinguished qualifications in Medieval French, codicology and palaeography. He was expert in the editing of Medieval texts and in both Continental and English systems of manuscript cataloguing.\textsuperscript{13} After postgraduate studies in Paris and Oxford, Sinclair settled in Australia, where he held academic positions in French and Medieval studies throughout his professional life, apart from a period at the University of Connecticut in the 1970s. Relatively early in his career, Sinclair set out to write the first detailed catalogue of the Medieval and Renaissance western manuscripts in Australia. His handling of this project was characterised not only by the highest professional standards but also by extraordinary persistence in the face of difficulties. In 1959, he finished the first draft of the catalogue, which he had begun two years earlier; but the draft was lost that same year on a flight to London, along with his luggage, and it was never recovered. Sinclair had not kept

\textsuperscript{10} Margaret M. Manion and Vera F. Vines, \textit{Illuminated Medieval and Renaissance Illuminated Manuscripts in Australian Collections} (London: Thames and Hudson, 1984), 95 (no. 34) and 228 (no. 94); and Stocks and Morgan, \textit{The Medieval Imagination}, 66–67 (no. 16).


a copy of the catalogue and had to re-write it. Teaching commitments intervened, and some freshly acquired manuscripts required further research. As a result, it was not until ten years later that the catalogue was finally published. By this time, however, Sinclair had already alerted the scholarly community to the existence of this material through a number of publications on both individual and groups of manuscripts.\textsuperscript{14} He had also written a summary catalogue for the first extensive exhibition of Medieval and Renaissance manuscripts in Australia, which was held at the Fisher Library in 1967.\textsuperscript{15}

The \textit{Descriptive Catalogue of Medieval and Renaissance Western Manuscripts in Australia} is a work of sterling scholarship, addressing, as the author notes in his Introduction, the needs of "the palaeographer, codicologist, art historian, bibliophile and the editor of texts."\textsuperscript{16} To be sure, later revisions and expansions were required, especially in the light of new information; but as Neil Ker observed in his complimentary review at the time of publication: "Errors and omissions are inevitable in work of this kind. It is a measure of the basic soundness of this catalogue that they can be detected and corrected."\textsuperscript{17} Sinclair's catalogue has, indeed, stood the test of time, and it remains the basic starting point for the study of Medieval and Renaissance manuscripts in Australia. This publication was, moreover, well distributed internationally, with copies being acquired by a large number of public libraries in Britain, Europe and the United States. Consequently, since its appearance, relevant manuscripts in Australia have been, with a few exceptions, cited in new or revised editions of Medieval texts and related literature.

Sinclair's catalogue revealed a surprising range and variety of types of manuscripts in Australian collections. Dating from the eleventh to the sixteenth centuries, they encompass works from England, France, the Netherlands, Spain and Germany. Liturgical books—missals, breviaries, pontificals and choir books—appear side by side with personal prayer books such as psalters and books of hours, and there is a variety of scientific and literary genres: musical theory, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, biblical commentaries, allegorical literature and histories, many of which are written in or translated into the vernacular. The collections also include a number of humanist books, both literary works composed in centres like fifteenth-century Renaissance Florence and copies of classical authors who were much sought after by the humanist scholars of the time.\textsuperscript{18}

Among his publications on individual manuscripts in Australia, Sinclair is best


\textsuperscript{15} Keith V. Sinclair, \textit{Medieval Manuscripts}, exhibition catalogue (Sydney: University of Sydney, Fisher Library, 1967).

\textsuperscript{16} Sinclair, \textit{Descriptive Catalogue}, 1.

\textsuperscript{17} Neil Ker, \textit{Historical Studies} 14 (1971): 642.

\textsuperscript{18} Sinclair's definition of "western" manuscripts excludes the Byzantine Gospel Book in the National Gallery of Victoria (MS Felton 710–5).
known for his detailed study of a splendid volume of the French translation of Livy's *History of Rome* in the National Gallery of Victoria, MS Felton 411-4 (Figure 1).\(^{19}\)

He not only carefully analysed the text of this manuscript but also studied the style of its miniatures and laid a sound foundation for later art-historical investigation.\(^{20}\)

Another valuable area for research opened up by Sinclair was that of the origins and provenance of particular groups of manuscripts in Australian collections, especially those produced by or for different religious orders, such as Cistercians, Franciscans and Augustinians, and particular monastic foundations.\(^{21}\) There is a wealth of material awaiting further investigation from this perspective.

**Manuscript Studies and Art History**

The study of manuscript illumination—painting and illustration in the hand-crafted book—has been part of the art history program at the University of Melbourne since its inception, and this too has helped to direct the attention of local researchers to the manuscript resources available in Australia. Because of their strong codicological base and a focus on the relationship between text and visual presentation, many art-historical projects in this area have contributed significantly to the advancement of manuscript studies in general, often involving collaboration with specialists in other skills and disciplines, such as palaeography, music, theology, history and literature.

A few years before Sinclair began working on his catalogue, the University of Melbourne had established Australia's first academic courses in art history. Among the highly competent staff which Joseph Burke (foundation Herald Professor of Fine Arts) had gathered around him were Ursula Hoff and Franz Philipp. Hoff was a graduate of Hamburg University, where she studied under Erwin Panofsky, whose pioneering work in art history included the shedding of fresh light on the relationship between Netherlandish panel painting and book illumination. Hoff later worked in London at the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes before coming to Melbourne in 1939. She joined the staff of the National Gallery of Victoria in 1943, and became a part-time member of the newly-formed Department of Fine Arts in 1948. Franz Philipp, formerly a student of the distinguished art historian Julius von Schlosser in Vienna, joined the Department in 1950. Both Hoff and Philipp belonged to a European tradition of teaching which advocated direct engagement with the work of art, and they made constant use in their classes of the collections of the National Gallery of Victoria, including its illuminated manuscripts.

**Postgraduate Research**

From these beginnings, the study of manuscript illumination developed into one of the strengths of the University of Melbourne Fine Arts Department, and a steady

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stream of research theses in this area at honours, masters and doctoral levels continues into the present. Projects, which began with the study of a single manuscript in an Australian collection, have contributed to the knowledge of a whole genre or enhanced our understanding of types of manuscript production and patterns of patronage in particular regions and periods. Bronwyn Stocks and Cecilia O'Brien, for example, shed light on the development of the Italian Book of Hours in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Stocks takes as her starting point an unusual fourteenth-century example of such manuscripts in the State Library of South Australia (br 096 C 363), while O'Brien examines the Strozzi-Acciaiuoli Hours, a late fifteenth-century Florentine book of hours in the National Gallery of Victoria, (MS Felton 869–5), which was illuminated by the Renaissance painters Gherardo and Monte di Giovanni del Fora. O'Brien and Stocks have also investigated several fine humanist manuscripts in Australian collections, including a history of the Roman Emperors, known as the Scriptores Historiae Augustae in the State Library of Victoria (RARE SF 096.1 AU4), which was illuminated for Lorenzo de' Medici in 1479 (Figure 2). Joan Naughton's interest was captured by a fourteenth-century antiphonal in the State Library of Victoria (RARE SF 096.1 R66A) made for the Dominican nuns of St Louis de Poissy. In her doctoral thesis, she investigated the manuscript holdings of this monastery from its foundation in 1304 by Philippe le Bel, in honour of the canonisation of his grandfather Louis IX, up until its dissolution at the French Revolution. Naughton identified over seventy manuscripts associated with Poissy, which are now dispersed world-wide, and charted a history of this religious community and its members through their books. Her research has also facilitated the identification of Dominican liturgical books made for particular religious houses.

22 The first M.A. thesis was my "A Study of the Wharncliffe Hours" (MA diss., University of Melbourne, 1962). This study of the Wharncliffe Hours (National Gallery of Victoria MS Felton 1072-3) was followed by my The Wharncliffe Hours (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1972), a publication in the series of the Australian Academy of the Humanities, and a partial facsimile, The Wharncliffe Hours, with introduction and commentaries by Margaret Manion (London: Thames and Hudson, 1981).


La Trobe University also later developed illuminated manuscript studies as part of its art history program. A recent doctoral thesis on the Medieval pontifical by Suzanne Halstead, a student of Professor Nigel Morgan, includes a fine fourteenth-century example, now Crouch MS 5 in the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery.26

Postgraduate research in manuscript illumination in Australia has not, of course, been confined to items in local collections. Regardless, however, of the starting point of the investigation, this research has often resulted in the association of individual manuscripts in Australian collections with wider issues. A group of projects which demonstrate these inter-relationships may be instanced here. Peter Monks's doctoral study (1986) focused on a manuscript of the Horloge de Sapience in the Bibliothèque Royale, Brussels (MS. IV 111), which was illuminated ca. 1465 by the Master of Jean Rolin II. This artist was the predecessor of Maître François, the illuminator of the Wharncliffe Hours in the National Gallery of Victoria (MS Felton 1072-3).27

Monks's research expanded our knowledge of this Parisian workshop, illustrating the ways in which compositional and iconographical designs were handed on to successive generations of artists working in the capital. Subsequently Monks also wrote the introduction and commentary to a partial facsimile of a book of hours in Sydney University Library (RB Add. MS 58), which was illuminated by a close associate of the Rolin Master.28 In 1987 Judith Pearce completed a doctoral thesis at the Australian National University, Canberra, on the Salisbury Breviary (Paris, BnF MS lat. 17294), an elaborately-illustrated manuscript which was made in Paris for the Duke of Bedford, ca. 1424–28, during the English occupation. Later fifteenth-century Parisian-based illuminators were greatly influenced by the principal artist of this ambitious project—the so-called Bedford Master—and his workshop. Thus, Pearce's research also shed light on the artistic origins of both the Rolin Master and Maître François.29

Hilary Maddocks's doctoral research on the illumination

26 Suzanne Halstead, “Imago Episcopi: Episcopal Ritual as Represented by the Illustration of Pontificials Produced in France and Italy c. 1220–1380” (PhD diss., La Trobe University, Melbourne, 2007).
28 Peter Rolfe Monks, Patrons and Devotion. The University of Sydney's Hours of Anne la Routye (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1995): See also Margaret M. Manion in Stocks and Morgan, The Medieval Imagination, 166–67 (no. 54).
of the French translation of Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda Aurea* included the
study of manuscripts produced during the last phase of this workshop under the
Master of Jacques de Besançon. At this time, the workshop was also involved in
the decoration of early printed books, and Maddocks has gone on to research and
publish on the relationship between illumination and printing in Paris at the close
of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century, drawing on examples
of this collaboration in the collections of the State Library of Victoria.

**Manuscript Research and International Collaboration**

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, the late Dr Vera Vines and I embarked on
the production of catalogues of both the Australian and New Zealand manuscript
collections that focused on their visual aspects. In the case of the Australian material,
this complemented Sinclair's earlier work, and he kindly wrote an Introduction to
the volume, *The Medieval and Renaissance Illustrated Manuscripts in Australian
Collections*, which was published by Thames and Hudson (1984). While there was
no earlier catalogue of the manuscripts in New Zealand, detailed descriptive notes
written by Dr Christopher de Hamel, then head of the Department of Rare Books
and Manuscripts at Sotheby's, London, had been lodged with the major collections.

De Hamel grew up in New Zealand and has longstanding research interests in this
material, as his article in this issue of *Script & Print* attests. He agreed to collaborate
with us in the production of the New Zealand volume (1989): the detailed codico-
logical information, together with the sections on text and provenance are largely
his work, and the Australian team are responsible for the art-historical elements of
the entries.

The timing of this project was opportune, since it coincided with similar
activities in libraries and art museums world-wide. Not only were valuable up-to-
date research models available but international collaboration proved remarkably
forthcoming. In our extensive travels in Britain, Europe and the United States, we
found that the Australasian holdings attracted great interest, since in most cases
these manuscripts had never been reproduced in detail before and had been rarely
seen by our overseas colleagues. Instead, therefore, of having to consult incomplete
and unillustrated catalogues, we were invariably invited by the professional staff of

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30 Hilary Maddocks, "Illuminated Manuscripts of the *Légende Dorée*: Jean de Vignay Translation of
Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda Aurea*" (PhD diss., University of Melbourne, 1990); Hilary Maddocks,
Manion and Muir, 1-23.

Journal* 79 (Autumn 2007): 42-54; Stocks and Morgan, *The Medieval Imagination*, 172-75 (nos. 57,
58).

32 Margaret M. Manion, Vera F. Vines and Christopher de Hamel, *Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts
the institutions visited to display and discuss the visual material with which we were laden—multitudinous coloured slides of the decorative and illustrative elements of each manuscript. Thus we learnt from those most familiar with specific collections where precisely to direct our investigations. The scholarly networks formed through this interchange have also contributed significantly to the further development of manuscript studies in this country.

In keeping with the growing codicological emphasis in illuminated-manuscript studies the Australian and New Zealand catalogues recorded the program of decoration and illustration for each manuscript, and each entry was accompanied by photographs not only of the relevant catalogue item but also of comparative material from other manuscripts wherever this was thought to help locate a manuscript within the œuvre of a particular illuminator, workshop or region.

American and European scholars have also published on individual manuscripts in Australian collections.33 Professor Nigel Morgan's contribution, in this respect, has been exceptional. He was Professor of Art History at La Trobe University for several years and the Helen Macpherson Smith Professorial Visiting Fellow at the University of Melbourne from 2002 to 2005. During his time in Melbourne he continued his research on Late Medieval English and French book illumination, a field in which he has a distinguished international reputation. He also fostered the study of manuscript illumination at La Trobe and Melbourne Universities at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, and extended his own research to manuscripts in Australia.34 Since his return to England, where he is head of research for a manuscript digitisation and cataloguing project at Corpus Christi


College, Cambridge, Morgan has continued to collaborate actively with Australian colleagues. His most recent substantial contribution to the Australian scene has been as co-editor of the catalogue for the exhibition of illuminated manuscripts from Cambridge, Australia and New Zealand at the State Library of Victoria in 2008.35

Manuscript Research and Medieval Music

Researchers other than art historians have made significant contributions to our knowledge of the manuscripts in Australian collections and elsewhere, as articles in this issue of *Script & Print* testify. More detailed reports on these contributions will come in due course, it is hoped, from appropriate specialists. Mention is made here of certain active research areas where collaboration between disciplines has been marked. In the 1980s, stimulated by items encountered in the preparation of the catalogue of illuminated manuscripts in Australian collections, the musicologist John Stinson and I studied together the art, text and music of a group of fourteenth-century Dominican choir books made and still located in Perugia and Bologna, with a view to defining the contribution of the friars to art and music in fourteenth-century Italy.36 Later, Stinson analysed and recorded in digital format the chants of the fourteenth-century French antiphonal from the Dominican monastery of St Louis de Poissy in the State Library of Victoria, which, it has been noted, was the subject of Joan Naughton’s art-historical investigations. More recently, he drew attention to the palimpsest nature of parts of an antiphonal dated 1328, which was illuminated by the North Italian artist Neri da Rimini (State Library of New South Wales, RB Richardson 273).37

Investigation into Medieval and Renaissance music manuscripts and early printed works, with special reference to Australian holdings, is also being actively pursued by a research cluster recently formed under the aegis of NEER (The Australian Research Council’s Network for Early European Research). Musicologist Jane Hardie at the University of Sydney is the co-ordinator of this cluster, entitled “Cathedral, Court, City and Cloister: Western Music and its Sources 1100–1750.” Its stated aims are to raise the profile of Australian scholarship into early European music through conference presentations, symposia, publication and training. In particular, it will address ways in which documentary materials (musical and liturgical manuscripts,

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36 This project, “Text, Decoration and Music in the Italian Choir Book,” was supported by the Australian Research Grant Scheme (1983–85).

37 John Stinson, “The Rimini Antiphonal: Palimpsest, Music and Renaissance Liturgical Practice,” in Muir, *Reading Texts and Images*, 57–92. Stinson is also engaged with other Australian colleagues in a study of the liturgical books made for the Medici church of San Lorenzo, Florence and held in the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Stinson’s particular interest being in the way the music in these books was performed in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.
archival documents, letters, church/state/city documents and so on) can lead to new interpretations and understandings of musical cultures and practices.38

The University of Sydney Library has recently acquired a number of Medieval and Early Modern Spanish choir books, which are the subject of enthusiastic research by this cluster and their overseas colleagues.

Professor John Griffiths, head of Early Music at the University of Melbourne and a member of this research cluster, is also editor-in-chief of the Lyrebird Press, successor to the distinguished European Editions de l'Oiseau-Lyre. A rare collection of fifteenth- to nineteenth-century music imprints, first editions and music manuscripts formerly belonging to Louise Hanson-Dyer has also been donated to the University. As Griffiths has noted, this donation "positions the University of Melbourne music collection as probably the richest in the southern hemisphere with regard to early European music materials." A significant strength in the resources for the study of early music in Australia is the strong link that exists between musical performance and manuscript research.39

Digital Manuscript Editions and the History of the Book

Bernard Muir, Professor of Medieval Language and Literature at the University of Melbourne, is a specialist in both Anglo-Saxon literature and Medieval Studies. He has lively research interests in the manuscript holdings in Australia. Muir and I have co-edited two collections of essays on Medieval manuscripts by Australian scholars,40 and he is the sole editor of a festschrift volume based on papers given at an international conference in Melbourne in 2002 which was largely dedicated to manuscripts, including several in Australian collections.41 Muir's palaeography course, taught regularly to students at Melbourne, has also been developed in a digital version which is available to students world-wide.42 In addition to several other digital editions of Medieval texts, he has produced an electronic edition of the eleventh-century Life of St Wilfrid by Edmer, secretary of St Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury. This includes a full photographic facsimile of the eleventh-century manuscript of this work in the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery (MS Crouch 10), which is the subject of his article in this issue of Script & Print.43 Muir is currently working

39 This area can only be mentioned here. It deserves detailed chronicling and discussion by both musicologists and performers.
40 Manion and Muir, Medieval Texts and Images; Manion and Muir, The Art of the Book.
41 Muir, Reading Texts and Images.
on a project titled *The Digital History of the Manuscript Book*, which uses manuscript resources from the State Library of Victoria and the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery to illustrate both the evolution of scripts and the preparation and presentation of texts preserved in manuscript format.

In recent years there has also been productive collaboration among scholars with a variety of specialist interests in the history of the book. One particularly effective initiative is the extension of the Rare Book Summer School, conducted in Dunedin, Melbourne and Wellington, to include sessions on Medieval and Renaissance manuscripts. A recently-formed research cluster for Manuscript Studies under the auspices of NEER, based at the University of Melbourne, which I co-ordinate, is interdisciplinary in scope and consists of senior scholars, middle and early career researchers and postgraduate students with related interests. The cluster is committed to the fostering of research in manuscript studies in Australia and New Zealand and to the strengthening of international links in this field, especially with respect to research on Australian manuscript collections and the provision of collaborative opportunities for scholars and curators in Australia and New Zealand.

**Timely Opportunities**

To date, the rich resources of Medieval and Renaissance manuscripts in public libraries and museums world-wide have been, for the most part, inaccessible to all but a few specialist scholars. At a time when there is growing recognition of the value of this material and of its interdisciplinary interpretation, Australia is well placed to take advantage of the technological and other developments which are rendering it more available to a wider readership. Three of the most important avenues of access today, apart from the privileged study of the original on a one-to-one basis, are the high-quality facsimile, the occasional exhibition and the digitised text and image.

Thanks to recent developments in printing, high-quality facsimiles of Medieval and Renaissance manuscripts provide an extremely close approximation of the original in almost every respect: colour, size, texture, script, decoration and illustration, and importantly, a sense of the three-dimensional nature of the book and the way it communicates its contents through the turning of its leaves. Such facsimiles are expensive and remain institutional or collectors' objects. Several of the public libraries of Australia, however, are endowed with fine collections of manuscript facsimiles. The Baillieu Library, for example, has a world-class collection of these masterpieces and a continuing policy to acquire such works for teaching and research.

Exhibitions have always been an important aspect of manuscript studies, especially of illuminated manuscripts. While it is rare for such material to be permanently on display (for conservation reasons), occasional exhibitions almost invariably result in

44 The Rare Book Summer School is conducted in Dunedin (2005, 2009), Melbourne (2006, 2008) and Wellington (2007). The courses are organised Shef Rogers (University of Otago, Dunedin), Wallace Kirsop (Monash University, Melbourne) and Sydney Shep (Victoria University of Wellington).
fresh discoveries, as well as appealing to the general public, of whose heritage they form an important part. Several major manuscript exhibitions have been held in Australia over the last fifty years. The exhibition at the Fisher Library in 1967 consisted of over eighty items, most of which were drawn from the collection of the University of Sydney and the State Library of New South Wales. Many were unadorned fragments of historical rather than art-historical interest, but the display of diverse and ancient manuscripts assembled together for the first time in this country must have been impressive. In 1989, Lyn Nossal curated at the University of Melbourne Museum of Art an exhibition of forty-eight illuminated manuscripts drawn from Australian and New Zealand collections, and in 2000, illuminated manuscripts from these collections complemented the display of the Gospel of St Mark from the great Celtic masterpiece, the Book of Kells, at the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra. Both these exhibitions caused people to marvel at treasures that have, for the most part, been hidden away in Australasian libraries and art museums.

The exhibition that has recently concluded at the State Library of Victoria differed significantly in several respects from those preceding it. Approximately half of the manuscripts were drawn from Cambridge collections (the Fitzwilliam Museum, Corpus Christi College, Trinity College and Cambridge University Library). The other half came from Australian and New Zealand collections. Together they told the story of the illuminated hand-made book from the eighth to the sixteenth centuries, and the sections into which the exhibition was divided helped to highlight both the consistency and the variety of that tradition. The response of the public, moreover, was one of overwhelming enthusiasm. Visitors averaged more than a thousand each day and reached a total of well over one hundred thousand by the end of the exhibition. This success was due in no small part to the vision of the management and staff of the State Library of Victoria, who insisted on free admission to the exhibition in keeping with the Library's traditional policy. Wide and effective advertising and the presentation of a rich array of supplementary events—exquisite Medieval concerts, talks and lectures on manuscripts and Medieval culture, an all-day "Medieval Faire" which attracted crowds of delighted families, and extensive educational programs for school children—were all powerfully supporting features. So, too, was the beautifully illustrated catalogue, which went into a second printing and was exhausted by the last day of the exhibition. At the same time, the concentrated and prolonged attention of the viewers, observed day after day, made it abundantly clear that it was

the manuscripts themselves, rather than the supplementary events, that captured their enduring interest.

In addition to the high-quality facsimiles and occasional exhibitions, digitising the contents of Medieval and Renaissance manuscripts, both textual and decorative, and making them, together with up-to-date related research, accessible worldwide, via the Internet or other computer technology, is playing a major role in the advancement of manuscript studies today. Not only does this approach open up a vast store of hitherto unexplored riches; it also provides the opportunity for scholars to collaborate ever more effectively, and from a variety of perspectives, in an understanding and appreciation of these works and of the cultures that produced them. These developments are especially relevant to collections in Australia and New Zealand, which are geographically so far removed from their origins and from the large repositories of such material that need to be consulted for comparative and contextual purposes. Australian institutions have not been slow to recognise the value of digitising these resources, but at present this is on a selective basis, in response to the request of individual researchers or to highlight the outstanding imagery and decorative aspects of particular manuscripts. Our manuscript collections are relatively modest in size; it is timely to address the tasks, on a comprehensive and collaborative basis, of their digitisation and the updating of their documentation in the light of the developments of the last thirty years which will support and foster both Australia-wide and international research in this area.

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