

What Every Scribe Should Know About Books: Form, Format, and Function

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Outline

1. Common Source Material for SCA Scrolls

In the SCA, the source material we most frequently use for our award scrolls are illuminated religious manuscripts. Fragments of pages and images from books of hours, breviaries, and other religious texts fill the pages of the most popular anthologies of illuminated manuscripts.

We refer to these illuminated manuscripts to create completely different material: grants and patents of arms and other awards. Understanding some of the conventions of medieval manuscripts, particularly religious manuscripts, that span across our time period throughout Western Europe will help us as scribes better interpret our source material and adapt it to our use.

This class does not focus on material from any one time period or geographic location. Instead, we look at the broad range of material most commonly found in anthologies of illuminated manuscripts.

2. Limitations of Standard Anthologies/Sources

2.1. Fragments of images < Single leaves < Spreads

2.2. Deceptive images in anthologies

Slide show image:

(1) Spread is from *French Illuminated Manuscripts in the J. Paul Getty Museum* (Los Angeles: Getty Museum, n.d.). The images are Spitz Master Book of Hours, c. 1420, French: (left) folio 31r and (right) folio 89v.

3. Typical Book Layout

3.1. Margins and Proportions

Slide show images:

(2) *Belleville Breviary*, Jean Pucelle, folio 24v, c. 1325, French.

(3) *Decretum*, Gratian, folio 8v, c. 1170, French.

(4) Psalter with Gloss of Gilbert de la Porree, folio 91r, c. 1160, British.

(5) *De Differentia Spiritus et Animae*, Bibliotheque Nationale MS 12953, folio 276r, c. 1260, French.

(6) *Decretals*, Bodleian Library MS lat.th.b.4, folio 169r, c. 1234.

3.2 Composition of Spreads

Slide show images:

(7) *Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux*, Jean Pucelle, folios 148v–149r, c. 1325, French.

(8) British Library MS 15246, folios 66v–67r, c. 1450, Italian.

(9) Book of Hours made for Galeazzo de Sanseverino, folios 335v–336r, c. 1470, Italian.

3.2 Binding Process

Slide show images:

- (10) image of loose sheets and quires
- (11) Pocket Book of Hours, folios 47v–48r, c. 1300, French.

4. Some Conventions in Illuminated Manuscripts

4.1. Headings

Slide show images:

- (12) *Dover Bible* (opening of St. Matthew's Gospel), folio 168v, c. 1150, British.
- (13) *Winchester Bible*, folio 169r, c. 1160, British.
- (14) Calendar of the *Queen Mary Psalter*, folio 78r, c. 1320, British.
- (15) British Library Egerton MS 2019, folio 2v, c. 1440.
- (16) Peter Lombard's Great Gloss on the Psalms, folio 128r, c. 1200.

4.2. Large Capital Letters: Purposes

Slide show image:

- (17) Psalter printed by Johann Schonsperger, 1495, German.

4.3 Pictures: Purposes

Slide show images:

- (18) Bestiary, folio 59r, c. 1260, British.
- (19) Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 1431, folio 20r, c. 100, British.
- (20) *Godescalc Gospels*, folio 1v, c. 780, German.
- (21) Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux, folios 167v–168r.
- (22) *Hastings Hours*, folios 73v and 74r, c. 1480, Flemish.

Glossary of Common Terms

Antiphony: The responses sung during church services.

Bas-de-page: Images along the bottom of the page, below the text.

Book of Hours: Prayer books for laypeople. Includes a calendar, readings from the gospels, the Hours of the Virgin (prayers to Mary), and other prayers.

Breviary: Book containing chants, prayer texts, hymns, and antiphons. Used by clerics.

Evangelary: Book containing the four gospels.

Gloss: Marginal comments on the main text. These can be added when the manuscript is written (for example, a commentary on a biblical passage interspersed within or around the text of the passage) or can be added by readers at a later time.

Gutter margin: The interior margin of the page, closest to where the page meets the spine.

Psalter: Collection of Psalms from the Old Testament.

Quire: Group of folded sheets of parchment or paper. Several quires are bound together to make a book.

Recto: The front side of a leaf, equivalent to a “right-hand” page.

Sacramentary: Used by priests. Contained prayers and texts to be read aloud during mass.

Temporal: Texts for masses through the church year.

Thumb margin: Outside margin of the page, farthest from where the page meets the spine.

Verso: The back side of a leaf, equivalent to a “left-hand” page.

More Information

Alexander, Jonathan J. G. *Medieval Illuminators and Their Methods of Work*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992.

De Hamel, Christopher. *The British Library Guide to Manuscript Illumination*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001.

De Hamel, Christopher. *A History of Illuminated Manuscripts*. London: Phaidon, 1994.

Walther, Ingo F., and Norbert Wolf. *Masterpieces of Illumination: The World's Most Famous Illuminated Manuscripts, 400 to 1600*. Los Angeles: Taschen, 2005.