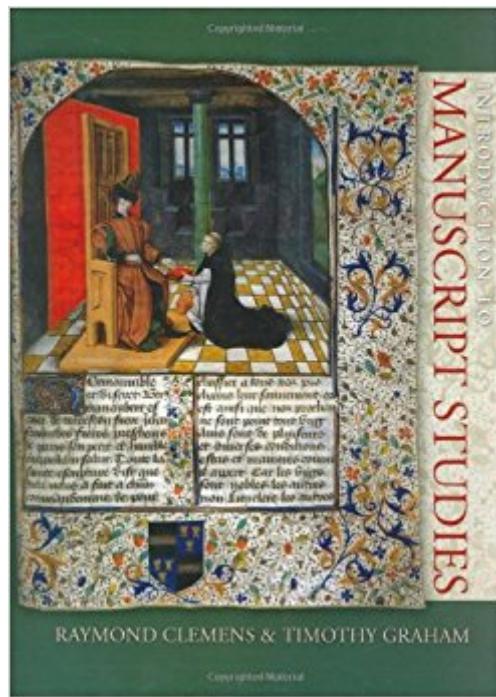


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Introduction To Manuscript Studies



Synopsis

Providing a comprehensive and accessible orientation to the field of medieval manuscript studies, this lavishly illustrated book by Raymond Clemens and Timothy Graham is unique among handbooks on paleography, codicology, and manuscript illumination in its scope and level of detail. It will be of immeasurable help to students in history, art history, literature, and religious studies who are encountering medieval manuscripts for the first time, while also appealing to advanced scholars and general readers interested in the history of the book before the age of print. Introduction to Manuscript Studies features three sections: ¢ Part 1, "Making the Medieval Manuscript," offers an in-depth examination of the process of manuscript production, from the preparation of the writing surface through the stages of copying the text, rubrication, decoration, glossing, and annotation to the binding and storage of the completed codex. ¢ Part 2, "Reading the Medieval Manuscript," focuses on the skills necessary for the successful study of manuscripts, with chapters on transcribing and editing; reading texts damaged by fire, water, insects, and other factors; assessing evidence for origin and provenance; and describing and cataloguing manuscripts. This part ends with a survey of sixteen medieval scripts dating from the eighth to the fifteenth century. ¢ Part 3, "Some Manuscript Genres," provides an analysis of several of the most frequently encountered types of medieval manuscripts, including Bibles and biblical concordances, liturgical service books, Books of Hours, charters and cartularies, maps, and rolls and scrolls. The book concludes with an extensive glossary, a guide to dictionaries of medieval Latin, and a bibliography subdivided and keyed to the subsections of the volume's chapters. Every chapter in this magisterial guidebook features numerous color plates that exemplify each aspect described in the text and are drawn primarily from the collections of the Newberry Library in Chicago and the Parker Library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.

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Customer Reviews

This stunningly printed and bound book doesn't end with its high quality format: the text itself is a highly accessible and extensively detailed examination at all aspect of medieval manuscripts. Starting with a comprehensive review of the various types of writing surfaces that have historically been used to carry written words (wood, wax, metal, paper, papyrus, and parchment), the book moves on to cover a detailed exploration of the medieval parchment manuscript (the most common type for all documents of the period), including sections on decoration, glossing, annotation, suggestions for reading and interpreting manuscripts, and a discussion on the various types of content that were reproduced on such manuscripts. The book is printed in an oversized format, with heavy semi-gloss paper and extensive use of color illustrations and photos, making the book itself a modern day equivalent of the medieval variant. The author's content is so extensive and wide ranging that it has lead a number of authorities to state that the book should be required reading for anyone studying the period. A quick review of the text will likely convince anyone to agree. It is unusual to see so comprehensive a text be also reproduced in such a stunningly gorgeous manner. The book is on par with the quality seen in the books published in France by its national library (the Bibliothèque Nationale de France), and if one has ever seen such books, that is quite a claim to make. That it is available for under \$40 is simply astounding. The content is as accessible as it is detailed. The author makes good use of explanations when introducing terms, and does not overwhelm the reader with abstract and arcane language, yet still maintains a scholarly tone throughout the volume.

Some of the most stunning and breathtaking artworks ever produced by humans remain bound in bundles of parchment stored away on shelves in exclusive libraries and museums. Direct access to these gorgeous works stays largely within the realm of those with proper credentials. The average person who desires to view an actual piece - in other words, those who want to touch flesh to (prepared) flesh and have the thrill of actually interacting physically with such a work - may find that such access hasn't really changed over the centuries. Though the reasons for such restrictions have changed, these restrictions nonetheless still exist. So, for better or worse, most of humanity

knows of these works either only vicariously through reproductions or through thick glass within heavily protected environments. Of course the reasons for limiting access today make perfect sense as these extremely fragile artifacts, many hundreds of years old, just become more fragile with time and use. Still, this exclusivity, historically social and economic and currently necessary for conservation, makes these nearly miraculous objects known as "illuminated manuscripts" harder to appreciate en masse than the enormous paintings and sculptures that dominate the vast interiors of museums. Perhaps that's why illuminated manuscripts still seem like an obscure or highly misunderstood genre of human artwork. Most people bit by the urge to know more about these seductive works will have to accept that direct access, for the most part, just doesn't exist except for the studied and credentialed few. Thankfully, plenty of fascinating vicarious resources exist.

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