



THE WHITE ROSE GRID

e-Science Centre of Excellence

Worldwide University Network: Reading the Medieval Book



Introduction

"Reading the Medieval Book" (RMB) is just one of a handful of themes being pursued by medievalists at White Rose Consortium and WUN universities. Led by Peter Ainsworth (Sheffield), Craig Taylor (York) and Anne D Hedeman (Illinois at Urbana-Champaign), RMB is busy developing a gridsphere portal called INCIPIT (the first words in manuscripts of the gospels) to enable R&D and online sharing – for e-Learning and joint research – of materials of mutual interest to colleagues at Sheffield, York, Illinois, Madison and UCSD. Discussions are underway with the British Library, the Getty Institute in Los Angeles, the Arts and Humanities ICT Methods Network programme, and the Humanities Research Institutes at Sheffield and San Diego, with a view to digitising collections of manuscripts (medieval miscellanies) – to be

shared as digital surrogates for syndicated research and eLearning programmes.

Digitising Ancient Texts

The Jean Froissart Project (Department of French, University of Sheffield) is an integral part of "Reading the Medieval Book". Thanks to a HEIF Knowledge Exchange award, three early 15th-century manuscripts were photographed in their entirety between 2002 and 2004 by digital photography specialists David Cooper and Scriptura Ltd (Colin Dunn, Kidlington, Oxfordshire) at Stonyhurst College (Lancashire) and the Bibliothèque d'Etude et de Conservation, Besançon (Franche-Comté, east-central France). The photoshoot was the result of debate between scholars, conservators and librarians, and photographic specialists, all of whom had a major contribution to make to the project's success.

These three manuscripts have until now never been seen together; yet they are part of a group of about ten or so believed to have been produced in Paris *ca.* 1408-1413 by bookseller-entrepreneur Pierre de Liffol. Related manuscripts survive today in collections kept in New York (Pierpont Morgan Library ms M.804), Brussels (Royal Library ms II 88), Paris, (Bibliothèque Nationale de France, f. fr. 2662, 2663 and 2664), London (British Library, Arundel ms 67) and Toulouse (Bibliothèque du Patrimoine, ms 511).

Stonyhurst College ms 1 and Besançon ms 864 are thought to have been illuminated by a team of artists associated with the workshop of the Master of the Rohan Hours (responsible also for Toulouse ms 511 and Paris BnF ms 2664). The digital images were produced to the same professional standards and securely archived on the CBERS server at the University of Sheffield's ICoSS (Informatics Collaboratory of the





Social Sciences). The images are typically 133MB .TIFFs; however, .JPEGs have been created for editorial and other purposes. A facsimile edition of the *Chronicles* is in preparation and will draw on these materials (see <http://cbers.shef.ac.uk:8080/gridsphere/gridsphere> to access the sample images and tools please contact the project lead using the details provided below).

Collaboration Within WUN

Thanks to the resources of the Grid (developed by Peter Tillotson and Mike Griffiths at Sheffield, for the White Rose and WUN Grids), it is possible to provide scholars in the UK, USA and France with a complete facsimile of three closely related manuscripts copied by the same team of scribes and illuminated by artists from the same workshop. The images, captured by Cooper and Dunn are now in use by the research team (Ainsworth and two PhD students at Sheffield, plus associates at Liverpool and Pau), provide a wonderful array of materials for the study of the medieval manuscript. Each manuscript book (or 'codex') comprises some 450 folios (i.e. 900 pages) of text and image. Scholars are interested in exploring the texts, which are in excess of 3 million words, as well as the miniatures and other decorative ornaments.

The Froissart manuscripts are just the beginning. The Reading the Medieval Book consortium is currently exploring the feasibility of digitising the British Library's world-famous "Shrewsbury Book".

Side-by-side display allows for close comparative research.

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consortium is currently exploring the feasibility of digitising the British Library's world-famous "Shrewsbury Book", copied, decorated and offered in 1450 to Margaret of Anjou by craftspeople reporting to John Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury. This important compendium provided a virtual education for Margaret in statecraft, chivalry and royal demeanour. Housed today at the British Library as part of the Royal MSS collection, it offers scholars of society, chivalry, late medieval discourse, literature and iconography a remarkable source of



material for comparative and dialogic study. It is hoped that a high-quality digital surrogate of the manuscript will be captured and mounted on the Grid, serving thereafter as a pretext for international scholarly discussion and debate.

Further Information

Contact:
Peter Ainsworth (email: P.F.Ainsworth@sheffield.ac.uk)

The Project Web site:

<http://cbers.shef.ac.uk:8080/gridsphere/gridsphere>



The University of Sheffield.



THE UNIVERSITY of York

