

Fragmentology

A Journal for the Study of Medieval Manuscript Fragments

Fragmentology is an international, peer-reviewed Open Access journal, dedicated to publishing scholarly articles and reviews concerning medieval manuscript fragments. *Fragmentology* welcomes submissions, both articles and research notes, on any aspect pertaining to Latin and Greek manuscript fragments in the Middle Ages.

Founded in 2018 as part of *Fragmentarium*, an international research project at the University of Fribourg (Switzerland) funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation, Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF), and the Zeno-Karl-Schindler Foundation, *Fragmentology* is published by the University of Fribourg and controlled by the Editorial Board in service to the scholarly community. Authors of articles, research notes, and reviews published in *Fragmentology* retain copyright over their works and have agreed to publish them in open access under a [Creative Commons Attribution](#) license; images may be subject to other licenses. Submissions are free, and *Fragmentology* does not require payment or membership from authors or institutions.

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Instructions for Authors: Detailed instructions can be found at <https://fragmentology.ms/about/submissions/>. Authors must agree to publish their work in Open Access.

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Fragmentology 6

Editorial



Fragmentology #6 continues the practice of publishing articles, notes, and reviews on the study of medieval manuscript fragments. While the mission of the journal remains substantially the same since its inception, some changes have occurred over the past few years.

Most noticeably, starting with *Fragmentology* #5, the journal has been hosted by the Shared Open Access Publishing Platform ([SOAP₂](#)), a collaborative project of Swiss universities and university libraries. Migrating to SOAP₂ required that *Fragmentology* switch to the Open Journal Systems (OJS) software. An adaptation of the website is planned to enhance its appearance and utility.

Other changes with *Fragmentology* #5 include a change to Veronika Drescher's title, from Book Review Editor to Associate Editor, to reflect better the range of work and the impact it has had on the quality of the journal. In addition, Trine Wismann has volunteered her time for typesetting. This issue features some of her illustrations as well.

Fragmentology #6 includes, for the first time, a conference report. In addition to the time-tested formula of articles, research notes, and book reviews, *Fragmentology* has included since its beginning reports on fragment projects; this mission has now expanded to include summaries of conferences, workshops, and colloquia that are entirely or substantially dedicated to manuscript fragments.

A few years ago, I heard a distinguished colleague comment on the perils of the current practice of entrusting work with fragments to early-career scholars. As objects of analysis, fragments present far more technical challenges than do codices, and thus relative beginners cannot adequately describe and publish this material. In fact, this observation raises two separate points. First, what are the technical challenges, and how do we meet them? Second, should fragments, especially the description and publication of fragments, be used in the training of scholars?

The studies of particular fragments published in this issue show that seasoned experts can meet the technical challenges required. A single leaf, a series of quire guards, or even the ghost of a fragment imprinted on the boards of a binding provides the opportunity for a detailed examination of a handwritten object and its place in multiple contexts. Moreover, the varied situations that gave rise to these studies deserves consideration, as they include work within a library's collection (Mullins), a recent auction listing (Schabel), a survey of fragments in digitized early prints and manuscripts (Beullens), and research on a text carried by the host volume (Costantini). For those with experience working with early prints, manuscripts, and documents, a fragment can provide the opportunity for an engaging historical narrative.

On the other hand, these studies build on prior discoveries, themselves the fruit of expertise. Schabel's analysis would not be possible without Donadoni's auction catalogue entry; Barratt's publication of manuscript fragments in Auckland enabled Mullins to identify Dublin fragments from the same book and even from the same parchment. Beullens once again shows that digitization and publication of incunables without detailed analysis of the fragments still helps. Analysis requires discovery, and with countless pieces of manuscripts, documents, and early prints, even the most basic description makes the object more likely to be found by researchers capable of assessing it more fully.

While they require specialized expertise, fragments also lend themselves well to teaching. Unlike a relatively complete codex, a fragment is conceptually manageable and encourages the student to consider its minutiae. By analyzing a series of fragments, a researcher can develop a range of experiences and observations rapidly, and learn to appreciate books in their entirety.

Fragments are abundant enough for both seasoned experts and beginners to work on them, provided they share a common descriptive language. A quick examination of what is published on *Fragmentarium* shows the diversity of skills and approaches taken, with some aspects showing more homogeneity of language than others. Indeed, one of the unmet goals of the original *Fragmentarium* project was to develop guidelines for fragment descriptions.

Part of the challenge was that we did not have as clear an idea of who would be fragmentologists and what skills they would bring. Part involved the impossible task of finding consensus among disparate national and disciplinary traditions of working with cultural heritage. But the core problem remains: we need to document how to relate the fragment to multiple wholes, including the original and the circumstances of fragmentation and reuse, but we need to make accessible the vocabulary, the methods, and the conceptual apparatus for that purpose.

In this spirit, my own contribution to the volume represents a small step, treating how to relate fragments of books to a prior whole that now has only notional existence. Hopefully, *Fragmentology* can serve as a place for methodological dialogue, criticism, and experimentation to meet this challenge.

The findings presented here depend on the work of prior specialists and demonstrate the need for familiarity with fragments more broadly. Yet, that distinguished colleague is correct insofar as, by extending that awareness and providing the tools, and by encouraging work with fragments, we propagate the imperfect: transcription errors, dating and localization mistakes, even incorrect identifications. If such imperfection aids discovery and does not hinder improvement and later correction, then it benefits our understanding and helps build the discipline. We strive to minimize error, not to stigmatize it.

William Duba
Editor of Fragmentology 6 (2023)
Fribourg, 31 December 2023

Erratum

In the review of *The Bristol Merlin: Revealing the Secrets of a Medieval Fragment*, published in *Fragmentology* V (2022), 95–98 the list of authors was inaccurately presented. It has been corrected to read: Leah Tether, Laura Chuhan Campbell, and Benjamin Pohl, with the assistance of Michael Richardson.