

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.

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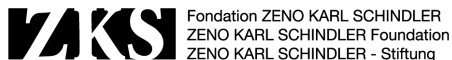
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Editorial



Again this year, *Fragmentology* returns with a host of fine articles, research notes, and reports pushing the boundaries of the discipline.

Jennifer Bain and Anna de Bakker bring an arsenal of analytical tools to bear on the liturgical fragments used to bind the famed *Riesencodex* of Hildegard of Bingen's work, to show that, while the book was rebound centuries after Hildegard's lifetime, the liturgical texts bound with it were temporally and geographically quite close to Hildegard. Maristella Feustle's research note also locates a liturgical fragment in twelfth-century Southern Germany. Both works show how the combination of paleography and musicology, and the integration of digital methods, especially the Cantus family of databases, can help to contextualize these pieces. Their work and conclusions show that systematic fragmentological research can illuminate both the most famous manuscripts, whose fragments have not gone unexamined, and those whose past is largely unknown.

Pieter Beullens plays Poggio Bracciolini, plundering Swiss digital libraries, chiefly for Carolingian fragments of ancient works; he further contributes a research note on a Cologne fragment of William of Ockham's *Brevis summa Physicorum*, a work that particularly resonated in German-speaking countries. Monica Brînzei also addresses an Ockham fragment, but of his *Sentences* commentary, and calls into question the received narrative of Ockham's importance to late-fourteenth-century thought. Besides revealing the treasure of manuscripts in situ in printed volumes, all three studies reveal the philological significance of manuscript fragments, which have the capability of providing new models for the development of a work, for its transmission, and for its reception. Their notes make clear, moreover, that their remarkable findings are the result of teamwork, and particularly the active, informed, and eager collaboration of librarians and archivists.

Beullens' *Iter* also shows how projects to digitize early prints have evolved a readership diverse from its point of departure. As

with manuscripts, the initial interest and immediate impulse for digitization was for the text that they transmitted. Publishing digitizations online allows researchers to appreciate that pre-industrial print remains an artisanal product; printed books and their bindings are unique historical witnesses, and digitization efforts will need to adapt to serve these research questions.¹ In the same vein, Bernasconi, Iacobucci, and Luraschi's project report details how fragment projects, especially *Fragmentarium*, need to adapt to present the immediate context of in situ fragments, that is, their carriers, especially volumes of early print. At some point, the documentation of the fragment's relation to the host volume becomes the documentation of the host volume as a unique artefact.

With these adaptations come new methodologies. Thijs Porck and Iris van Kuijk detail their successful tests with endoscopic and borescopic cameras and early-modern bindings, providing a working and cost-effective methodology for surveys of fragments in situ in the spines of books. A review focuses on the recent collective volume from Giuseppe De Gregorio, Marta Luigina Mangini, and Maddalena Modesti, the first book dedicated to the problem of documentary fragments.² This book is only the start, Mangini, together with the other editors and researchers from several universities, recently launched the Italian Research Project of National Interest *REcycled meDieval Diplomatic fragmentS*, to help develop the methodology for describing and analyzing these fragments.

Eleonora Celora provides a report on a conference held on liturgical fragments in November in Paris. While numerous other conferences and round tables held in the past year deserve notice, only a few can be mentioned here. First and foremost is the conference on the *Use and Reuse of Paper in the Pre-Industrial World*, held this August in Cork, Ireland, and organized by the *Early Paper in Iceland Project*. Thijs Porck and Monika Opalińska organized at the

1 Such observations converge with the material turn in Early Print studies, and the important work being done in support of the *Material Evidence in Incunabula* database (<https://data.cerl.org/mei/>), and by the *Sammelband 15-16* project (<https://sammelband.hypotheses.org/>), just to name a few.

2 Readers of *Fragmentology* will also want to study Mangini's presentation of the genre in English, M.L. Mangini, "Recycled Medieval Documentary Fragments: Methodological Remarks", *Manuscripta* 67 (2023), 113–138.

Regionaal Archief Alkmaar in September the conference *Medieval Fragmentology and the Fragmented Old English Glossed N-Psalter*, which provided a unique opportunity to bring together the strands of history pertaining to a famous eleventh-century Psalter, its fragmentation, and reuse as binding material in Leiden around 1602.³

Among the many publications on fragments this year, likely the most significant is volume 13 of *Digital Philology*, guest edited by Benjamin Albritton, Siva Mihan, and Elaine Treharne with Mateusz Fafinski, and entirely dedicated to Fragmentology in the global sense.⁴ The studies they assemble provide both concrete results and rich theoretical and methodological considerations for working digitally with medieval fragments. The special issue deserves a lengthier treatment than can be had here, but mention should be made of a few common themes that emerge from the studies, as they intersect with what appears in this issue of *Fragmentology*.

The first is the dynamic tension between a discourse that pretends its objects—digital, intellectual, and material—persist and the reality of a constant cycle of production, destruction, and reuse. While the phenomenon of World Wide Web “link rot” makes this tension most evident,⁵ Mateusz Fafinski (“In an Archive of Fragments: The Loud Silences of Cod. Sang. 1394”) argues that the problem is much more systematic and working with digital surro-

3 For a report, see A. Pasco-van Zyl, “Report on the Medieval Fragmentology and the Fragmented Old English Glossed N-Psalter Conference held 4 and 5 September at the Regional Archive”, *Trinity Centre for the Book* (blog), 21 October 2024 (<https://www.tcd.ie/thebook/news/latest-news-/2024/tcblog-report-on-n-psalter-conference/>).

4 *Digital Philology: A Journal of Medieval Cultures* 13 (2024), no. 1 (<https://muse.jhu.edu/issue/52472>) and no. 2 (<https://muse.jhu.edu/issue/53571>).

5 The article by E. Treharne, “Board of Books: The Tablets of the Sienese Biccherna”, *Digital Philology: A Journal of Medieval Cultures* 13 (2024), 302–314, linked to images published on the website of the Archivio di Stato di Siena. Unfortunately, in November 2023, that is, less than two months before the Special Issue was published, the Archivio di Stato changed its web address and abandoned the previous domain. From the day the article was published to the present, the links lead to an e-commerce site. As of this editorial, the corrected links are: n. 6: <https://archiviodistatosiena.cultura.gov.it/home/museo/museo-delle-biccherna>; n. 9: <http://san.beniculturali.it/web/san/dettaglio-oggetto-digitale?pid=san.dl.SAN:IMG-00438144>; n. 17: <http://san.beniculturali.it/web/san/dettaglio-oggetto-digitale?pid=san.dl.SAN:IMG-00438137>.

gates compounds matters. Fafinski's focus is the Saint Gall fragment volume Cod. Sang. 1394, one of originally eight volumes assembled in 1822 by Ildefons von Arx from binding fragments taken from the Abbey Library. In exquisite detail, and with remarkable charity, Fafinski explains the various fragmentations worked upon the collection, including those by the highly selective descriptions published alongside it on e-codices, notably the *CLA* entry:⁶

The fragments in Cod. Sang. 1394 might be fixed to pages, but the codex continued to be modified after Arx died. On p. 30, we find a librarian's note that Albert Dold took a fragment from its original place (probably from Cod. Sang. 248) in 1940/41 and "glued [it] here," which Lowe wrongly noted as "pasted to p. 49" even though it should read "pasted to p. 33." It will come as no surprise that modern catalogs do not reflect this information. A facsimile narrative is at play here—both Lowe's and Scherrer's catalogs are digitized and appended to the digitized facsimiles of the manuscripts, but they exist in the state of a snapshot.

Navigating to the description on the e-codices website, we find information that lines 675–678 of the *Aeneid* are pasted to p. 49, and a helpful hyperlink takes us there with one click. But we will look in vain for the lines from the *Aeneid* there; they are, as indicated by the handwritten note, on p. 33. Is this an error? No, it is not. It is a prime example of how the newest digital tools often reproduce the narratives and categorizing efforts of past scholarship. We think we are navigating to an entry made in 2009, but the hyperlink structure that we follow is from 1956 and fails to reflect the change to the manuscript that occurred 1940/41. There is no foul play here: e-codices's interface informs us (if we are willing to pay attention) that the description comes from Lowe. But we must be willing to see this narrative of translation from the analog to the digital realm—it is not made evident nor are the digital records updated.⁷

6 E.A. Lowe, *Codices Latini Antiquiores. A paleographical guide to Latin manuscripts prior to the ninth century. Part VII: Switzerland*, Oxford 1956, 39–41, nos. 977–983, <https://e-codices.ch/en/description/csg/1394/>.

7 M. Fafinski, "In an Archive of Fragments: The Loud Silences of Cod. Sang. 1394", *Digital Philology: A Journal of Medieval Cultures* 13 (2024), 290–291.

The digital records have now been updated, but Fafinski's point stands; indeed the situation is worse than the one he described: the codex that Lowe saw is not completely identical to the one that Ildefons von Arx assembled, nor to the one that was photographed in February/March 2009 and published on e-codices on 31 July 2009, nor even to the one that was apparently rephotographed in March 2011.⁸ Fafinski does not explicitly state which version his own access comes from, but it almost certainly is the set of 2011 images currently on the e-codices site, since he repeatedly speaks of the volume as if it were whole. In fact, some years ago, Cod. Sang. 1394 was dismantled for conservation purposes, and now exists as a series of discrete folders. The only place Cod. Sang. 1394 remains a whole is as a sequence of images on the internet. As Fafinski underscores, working with fragments requires us to confront just how volatile our historical sources are and the need to be conscious of when, where, and how our sources—material or digital—were produced.

Finally, the studies in *Digital Philology* touch upon the problem involved with defining fragments. In De Gregorio, et al., *Documenti scartati, documenti reimpiagati*, reviewed here, the problem arises of calling 'fragment' a more-or-less complete object, such as a charter, when it is reused for a material purpose. The argument made by Solidoro there is contextual: we can consider these things fragments, because they have been removed from their archive. Fafinski combines this contextual definition with two others:

But because Arx saw them as fragments or extracted them from a binding, they became fragments when added to this volume. Thus, their categorization depended not on their physical state or contents, but on the act of extracting them from their previous physical context and putting them together with other fragments.⁹

8 I conclude that a second round of digitization occurred in 2011 on the basis of metadata alone. The archival masters for Cod. Sang. 1394 have two sets of TIFFs, timestamped 2009 and 2011, respectively. The 2011 photos differ from 2009 concerning, among other things, pp. 31–33. The earlier photos included the pasted-in piece above pp. 31–32, and p. 33 has no fragment on it. The 2011 reshoot has the pasted-in piece by itself as pp. [32a–32b](#), and again on p. [33](#).

9 Fafinski, "In an Archive of Fragments", 288.

For Fafinski, while he may or may not have considered the charters in Cod. Sang. 1394 as fragments, the fact that they were perceived and treated as fragments makes them fragments.

This leads to the ambitious phenomenological argument for fragments in the contribution by Alessandra Molinari et al.¹⁰ The authors point to the ambiguity of the use of the word ‘fragment’, which has come to refer both to a physically separate piece of something (*fragment*₁), and, at least when speaking of medieval manuscripts, to a collection of pieces from the same thing and surviving in the same context (*fragment*₂). While the authors are critical of *fragment*₂ as it refers to an material collection that has merely rational unity, it has the merit of emphasizing the common origin and reuse of the pieces; Renzo Iacobucci has recently taken to calling such multi-piece fragments ‘fragmentological units’. Including a rich table of the terms related to fragments in several European languages, the authors set forth a working definition:

Therefore, in this study, we will define manuscripts heuristically as fragments *when we perceive them as such*: either because they look mutilated, or because their (written or visual) content lacks something, or analogically because we find them in the same context and destination of use as other fragments.¹¹

Here we have a practical definition of fragments: we perceive of things as fragments because they appear to us to have some relation to the focal meaning of ‘fragment’. For a formal definition of ‘fragment’, the authors cite an earlier definition in another paper published by Molinari in collaboration with co-authors:

A manuscript fragment is a manuscript object along whose history a specific intentional or non-intentional event occurred which was experienced by its users as a turning point, as a *point of no return*, such that their perceptions, evaluations, and experiences of that

10 A. Molinari, R. Rosselli Del Turco, K. Janz-Wenig, E. Meyer, A.A. Gasparini, and F. Aurora, “The Multi- and Interdisciplinary Relevance of Fragment Studies: Two Cases from a State Archive in Italy”, *Digital Philology: A Journal of Medieval Cultures* 13 (2024), 102–123.

11 Molinari et al., “The Multi- and Interdisciplinary Relevance of Fragment Studies”, 104.

object changed forever in a way that we now subsume under the word *fragment*.¹²

One might object that the practical definition seems circular: fragments are fragments because we treat them as such, and that the second is vague: a fragment is something that has undergone an irreversible trauma such that it is now a fragment. On this logic, a dead body would qualify as a fragment: it is the lifeless remnant of something living, and, according to the rules of nature, that transformation is irreversible. Perhaps therein lies the point: we apply a method to things that we perceive as corpse-analogues: we study their life, death, and rebirth. As the authors emphasize, fragments are fundamentally relational; for fragments of manuscripts and early print, those relations are between the fragment, the original object, and their current functional whole that they (help) constitute (the ‘carrier’, ‘host volume’, ‘loose leaf’, etc.). Those objects, their contexts, and the events that brought them about are interrelated and irreducible.

The discussion will continue in the coming years. From allusions in footnotes and casual remarks, we can expect to see at least two handbooks of Fragmentology soon. Professors Matthew Collins, Tuomas Heikkilä, Lars Boje Mortensen and Åslaug Ommundsen were recently awarded a massive ERC Synergy Grant for the project *CODICUM*, which aims to work on the 50,000 Nordic manuscript fragments, including material analysis and digital publication. They will join other ongoing European projects and networks with a focus on fragments, such as *Books of the Medieval Parish Church*, *RESTORY: Recovering Past Stories for the Future*, and *Ant-Com, From Antiquity to Community*, as well as many national undertakings, in ensuring that our fragmented future has fragmentologists.

William Duba
Editor of Fragmentology 7 (2024)
Copenhagen, 20 December 2024

12 Molinari et al., “The Multi- and Interdisciplinary Relevance of Fragment Studies”, 108; citing A. Molinari, N. Biondi, and E. Abate, “*Textus invisibilis*. An integrated research approach to the study of the manuscript fragments preserved at the State Archive in Urbino”, in *Urbino in età moderna e contemporanea*, ed. G. Dall’Olio and S. Pivato, Rimini 2019, 215–260, at 236.