



Call for Papers

Entangled Manuscripts

An International Conference of the 'Practices of Knowledge Selection' Project

24-25 May 2019

@ University College Dublin

Organisers

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www.practicesofknowledge.org

This conference interrogates the medieval manuscript book as a dynamic, constantly changing object, entangled in intellectual and cultural networks, constructed and deconstructed by different people, and transmuting in both form and meaning over time. By considering manuscripts not as static, permanently bound and delimited, but rather as bodies of evidence for the layered relationships between texts and their material supports, we gain a clearer view of medieval manuscript culture as driven by the agency and intellectual exchange of the people behind it. This conference will therefore investigate early medieval Western European manuscripts as entangled objects, focusing on the connections between knowledge selection, material representation and scribal agency.

The complex road from selecting a text in the early middle ages to producing a copy of it in a book is still poorly understood, yet it is the key to the historical context of medieval manuscripts. The practice of knowledge selection consisted of three key stages: the intellectual selection of the textual content of manuscript collections; the pragmatic action of arranging the textual content in a draft form by authors or editors; and the material representation and aesthetic exposition of texts in manuscripts. These stages were part of a linear development, but also exercised reciprocal influence upon one another. By tracing this process in surviving manuscript collections, we can better understand in what practical ways knowledge was encoded, and how these often innovative and experimental practices contributed to the emergence and consolidation of intellectual and scribal traditions. This has important implications for how we understand education, reform and the exercise of power in the early middle ages.

We now invite abstract submissions around these themes. Papers are welcome on every aspect of book production, from the practices of sewing and binding textblocks to the marginal annotation and commentary of individual texts. Key questions include but are not limited to the following:





- What were the practices behind the selection of texts and text extracts?
- Who made the choices and why?
- In what different physical and textual forms did scribes put together collected texts?
- What can we know about the relationship between manuscript collections and their draft forms (e.g. wax tablets/schedulae)?
- What influence did these draft forms have on practices of knowledge selection?
- What new developments in book culture might have arisen as a direct result of increasingly sophisticated text selection practices?
- How was knowledge acquired and organised generally?
- What role did paratext play in the development and / or use of the book as a whole?
- What are the parallels between texts and quires, when seen as collections of units that could be stacked differently, reshuffled, transformed and processed?
- How do the practices associated with creating the textual support, and the crafts that inform them (leatherworking, sewing etc.), influence the use, storage and transportation of the finished book?
- How did parchment makers and scribes work together?
- How do individual versus collective production contexts (widely understood) impact on the material book and the format of its texts?
- How do the people producing books resolve perceived conflicts, inconsistencies and problems? What effect does this have on the physical book?
- What links (whether conceptual or material) exist between complex texts and text compilations, and the manuscripts in which they are inscribed?

The conference expands on themes raised at our N&N-PoKS workshop at University College Dublin, 20 October 2018. Revised papers from the workshop will be circulated to conference speakers in advance, to facilitate discussion. Accepted conference and workshop papers will be published in open access with N&N-Punctum Books (subject to peer review). We invite abstracts from both early career and established historians, conservators, museum professionals and archivists. The focus is on early medieval Western Europe, but papers exploring the preconditions for this period (including influences from other traditions, such as the Byzantine) are also welcome. We intend to cover all related costs for speakers.

Abstracts exploring different approaches to studying the relationship between physical manuscript structures and their texts, of no more than 400 words, should be sent to Dr. Anna Dorofeeva at anna.dorofeeva@ucd.ie by Friday 18 January 2019. Other enquiries should be sent to Dr. Michael J. Kelly at networksandneighbours@gmail.com.