BOUND FAST WITH LETTERS
JOHN, ROBERT, and LEONARD

Good memories
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© 2013 University of Notre Dame
In a review many years ago of Richard and Mary Rouse’s well-known monograph, *Studies on the “Manipulus florum” of Thomas of Ireland*, an eminent medievalist wrote that the Rouses “have shown how an accurate knowledge of groups of manuscripts casts light on the history of medieval ideas, as well as providing information about the history of influential works.” That summary tribute, published in 1981, and encapsulating much that was important about “Manipulus florum,” could echo through all of the scholarship of Richard and Mary Rouse. In 1991 the University of Notre Dame Press published a volume of their collected articles, which was titled *Authentic Wit-nesses*. The work’s subtitle was *Approaches to Medieval Texts and Manuscripts*. The present collection, *Bound Fast with Letters*, also carries a subtitle, *Medieval Writers, Readers, and Texts*. Medieval texts and manuscripts, medieval writers and readers—perhaps an appropriate, epigrammatic subtitle for both of these volumes would be “Presenting Historical Evidence,” or perhaps simply “Historical Evidence.” At the beginning of the first essay in *Bound Fast with Letters*, the Rouses make an obvious but often overlooked methodological point. They express regret over the fact that scholars who treat medieval subjects often fall into two mutually exclusive categories, namely, those who visit and work in the manuscript rooms of libraries, and those who work in archives. Such a divide, of course, often does not make a great deal of sense, and anyone who examines the printed inventories of archives will see that these depositories also contain manuscript books and not only documents.

A historian specifically of the premodern church, such as this writer, who looks in a cursory manner into *Bound Fast with Letters*, might be somewhat surprised. The words “religion” or “belief” do not occur in any of the titles of the articles, although terms such as “Bible,” “sermon,” and “saint” do occur. In a more careful investigation, however, the reader interested in medieval religion will discover much to consider. The book’s first section is especially rich in discussions of religious writers and religious themes. The first article, for example, “The Vocabulary of Wax Tablets,” conveys information about the literary habits of both church fathers and of medieval monastic
authors, and concludes with a fascinating series of vignettes that treats wax tablets and the Bible in medieval culture. The North African Donatists, serious pains in the neck for the great St. Augustine of Hippo, make an appearance in the second article. So does Augustine's fellow African theologian, St. Cyprian, bishop of Carthage in the middle of the third century, who was one of the earliest of the patristic thinkers to write in Latin. Carolingian liturgy, a twelfth-century monastic sermon from Durham, and the late-twelfth-century Waldensians are featured in the remaining articles in the first section of *Bound Fast with Letters*.

Moving deeper into the book, our historian of medieval religion might easily gravitate to a title such as “Context and Reception: A Crusading Collection for Charles IV of France” (article 9), or one that deals with Christine de Pizan and virtue (article 12), or with St. Antoninus of Florence and manuscript production (article 17). An investigator of the medieval institutional church, and especially of canon law, would notice an article that is concerned with Gratian’s *Decretum*. But if he is relying only on titles, a potential reader would overlook the fact that article 5, “The Schools and the Waldensians: A New Work by Durand of Huesca,” deals, of course, with the Waldensians but also among other things treats the important late-twelfth-century scholar of canon law, Bernard of Pavia. Everyone knows not to judge a book by its cover, nor to judge an article only by its title, and anyone doing so in this case would risk missing the richness and the diversity to be discovered in the corpus of studies that the Rouses have assembled. Yet reading the table of contents of *Bound Fast with Letters* can entice not only investigators of religion but also literary scholars, social historians, classicists, and even historians of travel (see article 13, “Wandering Scribes and Traveling Artists”).

And throughout, over and above everything, are medieval manuscripts, the foundation and the hallmark of the Rouses’ scholarship. When these remarks were composed, the book’s index of manuscripts cited was not available. That list will include dozens and dozens of shelf marks, and will offer a treasure trove for investigators working in many areas of medieval studies. But by no means is the reward for reading these articles only the wealth of shelf marks. There also are stunning examples of wonderful prose. Take one example, at the end of the second paragraph of the aforementioned “Context and Reception”: “Indeed, a text is one of the more protean of human creations, capable of being pushed, pulled, squeezed, stretched, colored any number of different hues, of changing its appearance considerably, all without ceasing to be recognizable as itself.”

A well-traveled medievalist colleague of Richard Rouse once observed that he saw him more often in Europe than in North America. The reason, of course, is that Europe is where the bulk of medieval Western manuscripts have been preserved (with all due respect for some fine American collections, for instance, the Plimpton Collection at my own university). It has been said that scholars who work with medieval books, if they do it well, must know many things. For starters, paleography and codicology, especially the former, are essential fields of knowledge that can seem almost magical to
a nonspecialist. I have had the privilege to know some great paleographers, and once, years ago, in conversation on this subject with Richard, I bemoaned the fact that I never had formal instruction in dating manuscript hands and was in awe of those (like him) who could do this. He immediately attempted to demystify the matter, telling me that in the absence of other evidence “don’t believe anyone” who offers a date for a manuscript hand more precisely than within fifty years. The point has not been lost on a church historian who uses manuscripts yet knows less than he would like about when and where they were transcribed. Indeed, it certainly is necessary to be properly cautious in assigning dates to medieval books—one should not make this stuff up—yet I confess that I would be hard pressed to disbelieve Richard and Mary Rouse were they ever to tell me that a codex which I was studying was written, say, between 1140 and 1145.

Their collection’s title, Bound Fast with Letters, was borrowed from the sixth-century bishop and universal genius Isidore of Seville, specifically from Isidore’s Etymologies (1.3)—the passage is reproduced at the beginning of the Rouses’ own introduction. Isidore essentially is saying that things get written down, that is to say “bound fast with letters,” so that they will not be forgotten. At the end of their introduction the Rouses note that the individuals who inhabit the articles to follow—“authors and patrons, scribes and illuminators, individuals and groups, men and women, Frenchmen, Englishmen, Italians”—people of various chronological periods, different circumstances, and multiple motives—owe their survival to the fact that each of them, in some way or other, took part in ensuring that “their small piece of the world was bound fast with letters.” To put that in another way, they created histories.

At another point in his Etymologies Isidore wrote that “history is a narration of what has happened, through which those things that occurred in the past are put in order” (1.41). This, then, can bring us back to the beginning of this foreword and back to the survival of historical evidence. Among the main elements that allow historians to define “the Middle Ages” are structures, images, and especially texts—texts copied by hand and often preserved in codices. The distinctive accomplishments of the Rouses over many years in providing others with a deeper understanding of manuscripts are well known. In 2011 a special issue of the journal Viator was published in their honor. This handsome volume, titled Medieval Manuscripts, Their Makers and Users, contains seventeen articles by specialists from both the United States and Europe, and also includes in a “Tabula Gratulatoria” the names of nearly one hundred scholars and institutions wishing to fête them. The collection in Viator, the aforementioned Authentic Witnesses from 1991, and now Bound Fast with Letters form a lasting tribute to their scholarship and its impact.

Not too long ago Isidore of Seville was declared the patron saint of the Internet and also of computers. Richard’s and Mary’s many friends and colleagues can hope that Isidore’s patronage will assist their use of modern technology in producing many more works that will be “bound fast with letters” both on the page and in cyberspace.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In the writing of these eighteen articles over the course of some four decades we have of necessity relied on the generous help of numerous scholars, librarians, and archivists on both sides of the Atlantic, whom we have thanked, never adequately, in appropriate places throughout the collection. We wish here, in setting forth, simply to affirm that we remain deeply grateful, and mindful, across the many years.

We are indebted to Charles McNelis, collaborator on article 2, and Barbara Shailor, who contributed the manuscript description to article 5, for allowing us to reprint these works in which they shared. We are indebted to Brett Landenberger and Octavio Olvera for their usual prompt and competent help with the technicalities of many images.

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This book is dedicated to three sorely missed friends, John F. Benton, Robert L. Benson, and Leonard E. Boyle.
ABBREVIATIONS

AASS: Acta sanctorum, ed. the Bollandists, 67 vols. (Antwerp and Brussels 1643–1940, with multiple reprints and editions)

AN: Archives nationales de France, Paris


BAV: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana

BEC: Bibliothèque de l'École des chartes

BL: London, British Library

BM: Bibliothèque municipale

BnF: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France

BR: Brussels, Bibliothèque royale

CC: Corpus Christianorum series latina, vols. 1– (Turnhout 1953– )


CSEL: Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum, ed. Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, vols. 1– (Vienna 1866– )

CUL: Cambridge University Library


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Abbreviations

Mansi: J. D. Mansi, Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio, 31 vols. (Florence and Venice 1758–)

MGH: Monumenta Germaniae Historica

MGH AA: Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctores antiquissimi


UCLA: University of California, Los Angeles

Dates: Approximate dating of manuscripts and the like is abbreviated by century [saeculum] and, if possible, by part of the century: s. X = tenth century; s. XIV½ = first half of the fourteenth century; s. XII ¼ = last quarter of the twelfth century; and so on, with the Latin abbreviation “in.,” “med.,” or “ex.” for the century’s beginning, middle, or end (e.g., s. XVin.). Note also that the French, starting with the reign of Philip Augustus (1180–1223), began their year with the movable feast of Easter; and it is scholarly practice to convert the dates (from the early months of each year) to their equivalent in Common Era dating. The converted dates are marked “NS,” which means “New Style”; if the date of a document is not sufficiently precise, the date is marked “OS,” “Old Style,” meaning the date as it appears in the original document.

French coinage: The standard abbreviations for the two systems of French royal coinage of the Middle Ages are “l.p.,” “s.p.,” and “d.p.,” meaning livres, sous, and deniers parisis; and “l.t.,” “s.t.,” and “d.t.,” meaning livres, sous, and deniers tournois. In both systems the internal relations were identical: 12 deniers = 1 sous, 20 sous = 1 livre; but the two coinages were not equivalent in value, the tournois being worth only four-fifths of the parisis, e.g., 1 l.t. equaled only 16 s.p. For much of the late Middle Ages the parisis were used principally as money of account while the tournois were the coins in circulation.
Introduction

The use of letters was devised to remember things: things are bound fast

with letters lest they escape into oblivion.

—Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies* 1.3

The Middle Ages, obsessed with the frailty of man and the transitory nature of all his
works, relied confidently on the power of writing to preserve and perpetuate forever
those things that were of importance. The eighteen articles presented here deal with
aspects of this medieval passion for binding ideas permanently with the written word:
as a way of ordering one’s thoughts and of preserving the past; as a means of instruct-
ing the learned and the simple; as a vehicle for persuading one’s contemporaries and as
a monument to one’s own importance; and, in the most mundane terms, as a means of
earning a living.

Until well into the fifteenth century, every medieval manuscript was made to
order. Each one, thus, represents a deliberate decision to fix words in writing. Discov-
eries are made by asking of each manuscript the most basic of questions: how was it
made? why was it made? by whom? for whom? — simple queries with complex an-
swers. Like many of the articles in this collection, these questions focus especially on
people: those who conceived the ideas and formulated their expression, those who
paid for their commitment to writing, and those artisans, humble or brash, who pro-
duced the final results. Manuscripts must also be asked when and where they were
made; and—because writing, especially on parchment, although it does not last for-
ever, does indeed preserve words for a very long time—one must ask of a manuscript
where it went on its later and sometimes distant and unexpected travels.

This collection falls naturally into three parts. The first, setting the stage with a
variety of experiments with written forms, is also the earliest chronologically, while
the second and third, dealing with patrons and with hired artisans, not surprisingly are roughly contemporaneous. Two themes cut vertically through this threefold horizontal division: that manuscripts were written in specific places at specific times, by real people who have left their marks on the record; and that manuscripts, like people, are not anonymous and free-floating in time. They too leave traces, most obviously in their texts, their script and decoration and illumination, ex libris marks, and binding stamps, but also in other types of evidence, in accounts, in inventories, in last wills, in narrative records, and elsewhere. These attributes, pertinent to manuscripts of any place, time, and subject, make of them important witnesses to the wheres and wherefores of human change over time and space. We demonstrate this fact in papers chosen from different epochs in the Middle Ages extending from late antiquity to early Renaissance, and from different regions ranging from North Africa to northern England to France and Italy.

Part I presents the background that precedes the smoothly functioning late medieval manuscript culture of parts II and III. Part II, on patronage, and part III, on manuscript producers, answer the questions, For whom were manuscripts made? And by whom? Part I considers the practical groundwork, asking the underlying question, How? Medieval people asked, “How shall we cope with the growth in liturgical texts? How shall basic biblical information be presented to unschooled preachers, or orthodox ideas transmitted to quasi heretics? How can the familiar words of the Old Testament be presented in a metaphor both meaningful and novel to a monastic chapter?” The articles in part I treat of writers from the patristic era through the twelfth century who experimented with, and mastered, various physical forms of presenting ideas in writing.

The vocabulary of the wax tablet, like the tablets themselves, is a fitting introduction to this section and indeed to the whole book; for the wax tablet is the quintessential “proto-manuscript.” Use of wax tablets reaches back to antiquity and extends through the Middle Ages and beyond. They were the ubiquitous medium on which little children learned to write their letters and in which adult authors incised their first drafts of everything from weighty treatises to humorous poetry; writers in Latin and in the vernacular languages confirm the fact. From the fourth-century church father Jerome and before to the fourteenth-century French poet Deschamps and after, authors talk about their wax tablets, give directions for their use by the young, or praise their convenience. The words written on their surfaces were ephemeral, in practice and intent; thus, for the Middle Ages, wax tablets are the forever-missing link in the process of composition.

As did the tablets, so also manuscripts from the earliest times moved with their owners, fleeing from pestilence or invasion, or converting the distant pagans, or simply contracting a marriage in a neighboring seigneury. Works composed at one time or
place have vanished or barely survived the transfer. As a result of our asking how and by what routes manuscripts written in North African Christendom reached continental Europe, fleeing the expansion of early Islam and the even earlier Berber unrest across North Africa, we found not one but two hitherto unknown collections of patristic works on biblical study, greatly simplified and presented as little more than lists of names and places, for the use of unsophisticated Christian preachers with only a rudimentary education. Each was composed in North Africa, the one surviving only as a wholesale import into the other. They make a significant contribution to our knowledge of the state of Christian learning in ostensibly Roman North Africa in the centuries after Augustine, a contribution that would have been lost had the combined collection not made its way safely to southern Europe. There it eventually reached the abbey of St. Gall in Switzerland, to be copied there in the early ninth century, and also reached Nonantola in Italy, to be copied there in the early eleventh century. Did these books move with religious exiles to Sicily, or to Naples, or did they travel the longer route taken by Donatus Afer and his followers, who fled with their books to the coast of Spain? One cannot say at present.

The chance survival of two bifolia from a late ninth- or early tenth-century manuscript of Haimo of Auxerre's homilies, containing parts of three homilies for successive Sundays after Easter, bears witness to an otherwise unknown experiment in the presentation of liturgical texts. The growing complexity of the liturgy and its codification in new books under the Carolingians created practical problems in book usage for the celebration of the Office, especially Matins with its multiple lessons. The Haimo bifolia represent an innovative attempt to obviate the need for two liturgical texts on the same lectern, by copying the pertinent parts of the antiphonal into the margins abutting the text of the corresponding homily. This presentation, antiphonal text juxtaposed with the lesson, is unique among surviving manuscripts. The liturgical text here does not consist of a few mnemonic annotations; rather it is complete, with the antiphons, responses, and verses. An experiment of this caliber serves to remind us of the flexibility of the manuscript in its presentation of texts, unequaled in the era of the printing press until the age of desktop publishing at the dawn of the twenty-first century. Here is evidence as well that Haimo's homilies, unexpectedly, were read as lessons at Matins within some fifty years or less after his death (ca. 875). The source manuscript had its own fate, and its leaves led perilous lives after the manuscript's dismemberment for reuse as book covers.

The last two works examined in this section were composed at roughly the same time, but they are otherwise widely divergent: in purpose, in subject matter, in locale, in outlook, and in the physical presentation of their material. Traditionally monastic and reflective, the Durham sermon from the mid-twelfth century presents in detail each of the stages in the making of a manuscript as an allegory of a stage in preparing the soul for God; because the context is monastic, the scribe and the preparer of the
parchment are regarded as one and the same. This was a fairly common metaphor in the time of the handmade book, but the Durham sermon is one of the best examples. The English monk-author skillfully tied the metaphor to the only appearance in the Vulgate of the word *scriptor*, or “scribe” (Ezek. 9:2–3), and he elaborated on the implications of the scribe's white apparel for his monastic audience to ponder.

The collection assembled by Durand of Huesca represents an entirely different spirit. Durand was a one-time Waldensian heretic who led his branch of the movement back to orthodoxy, whereupon they were known as the Poor Catholics. His leadership in this matter gave him good standing with Rome. Durand’s presence in that city allowed him direct access to works designed for pastoral care and the composition of sermons, which, having been created at the Paris schools, were newly arrived in Rome; among them was the alphabetical collection of biblical distinctions brought south from the schools by its author, Peter of Capua, when Peter became a cardinal. “Distinctions” served to aid preachers in writing sermons based on the distinct meanings of a single word in its several appearances in the Bible. The earliest evidence of the existence of Peter’s collection is its use by Durand, who drew on it for a collection of his own designed for the use of his Poor Catholic followers; and Durand added at the end a lengthy laudatory verse, set out in quatrains and presented on the page in a diagrammatic form, praising the distinction as a literary device and giving biographical details of Durand’s life and of the people he knew. The only known manuscript of this work was discovered in the process of cataloging the Beinecke manuscripts at Yale, an example of the treasures waiting to be found in the manuscripts of uncataloged collections.

The articles in part II deal with patrons, the paying clients for whom and at whose instigation handwritten books came into being: texts were written, translations were made, manuscripts were copied, miniatures were painted, bindings were affixed. An early patron from the first half of the thirteenth century was Richard de Fournival, chancellor of the cathedral of Amiens, a medical doctor and son of a former royal physician at the French court. Author of the *Bestiaire d’amour* and a body of vernacular poetry, as a patron he was interested strictly in Latin. During his lifetime Richard commissioned or purchased, book by book, a library of close to 160 manuscripts, more than 45 of them still known today. The number of his commissioned copies of rare Latin classical authors such as Propertius and Tibullus was remarkable, but equally so was his catalog of these, with the manuscripts classified and arranged in plots as if in a garden, which he called his *Biblionomia*. The library was to be open to his friends in Amiens as a civic library. Did it happen? Evidently not. After his death the books passed instead, via Gérard d’Abbeville, to Robert de Sorbon’s newly founded college in Paris, and the largest group of Fournival’s manuscripts survive among the Sorbonne books in the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Jean de Brienne, a nobleman with close connections of blood and marriage to the rulers of France, was the patron not just of a manuscript but of the creation of a text:
in 1284 he commissioned the author and poet Jean de Meun to translate into French the Latin military manual written by the Roman author Vegetius, a handbook of chivalry that had become, quite illogically, the emblematic book of the late medieval warrior class. Jean de Brienne commissioned it as a gift to the heir to the throne on the occasion of the latter’s knighting. The text of the French Vegetius quickly spread in a tightly circumscribed circle to the courtiers surrounding the young prince, who, by the following year, had become King Philip IV of France.

The courtier-patrons of Watriquet de Couvin were several, beginning with the constable of France, Gaucher de Châtillon, but soon broadening to include others who (like Gaucher) were high in the Valois coterie at the French court. Watriquet was part entertainer, part public voice, for this elite group during the time of Charles de Valois, brother and then uncle of Capetian kings, and (after Charles’s death in 1325) in the circle of his son, the future Philip VI, first Valois king of France (1328–1350). Five collections of Watriquet’s works survive, each dedicated to a different patron but each containing a core of the same poems. He kept his compositions in loose quires and chose from among them the contents and sequence of the works appropriate to each patron, a practice followed by other vernacular poets of the fourteenth century, including, most famously, Guillaume Machaut. Watriquet was closely involved in several aspects of the production of manuscripts of his works.

Pope John XXII’s patronage of BnF lat. 7470, Latin works collected perhaps in Avignon but made into a manuscript in Paris, had a propagandist purpose, to move Charles IV (d. 1328), last of the Capetian kings of France, to fulfill his promise to go on crusade to the Holy Land. The collection comprises a dedicatory introduction, the text of the classical military manual of Vegetius, and several short texts on the best routes to the East and the state of the Muslim armies to be encountered there. BnF lat. 7470, the dedication copy given by the pope to the king and signed by its scribe, has small exquisite historiated initials introducing each book of Vegetius and each of the smaller crusading texts. King Charles, in the event, was not moved to go crusading, but he was prompted to commission at once another manuscript in response, a translation of the collection from Latin into French.

Charles’s conversion of his collection into French was a sign of the times. Although the church and the universities clung to Latin, the majority of the literate, especially in France, found it more reasonable to read and write in the language that they spoke, a language increasingly and effectively adapted to written texts. By the first quarter of the fourteenth century the growth of a literate laity created a steadily mounting demand for literature in the vernacular. The commissioning of vernacular manuscripts by the wealthy artisan Simon de Lille was an act of celebration and of self-congratulation. Simon, already well respected in his craft, became the royal goldsmith on retainer to Charles IV of France, and in 1323 made, at the king’s command, a bejeweled gold head-reliquary to rehouse in splendor the head of the famous early missionary to the Gauls, St. Martin of Tours. This made Simon’s reputation, and made
him rich in the process. In the reign of Philip VI (1328–1350), Simon was evidently commissioned to make a salt cellar in the form of a golden peacock, perhaps for a royal banquet; and Simon himself commissioned a chapel in the church of St-Germain-l’Auxerrois. Simon then imported an in-house poet, Jean de le Mote, to compose poems to mark these two occasions: one poem, in celebration of the commissioned gold peacock, was an extension of the Peacock Cycle called *Li parfait du paon*, a story of knights at a banquet swearing oaths on the main course, the peacock, to perform prodigious feats of bravery; and the other poem was a pious verse, the *Voie d’enfer et de paradis*, composed in honor of Simon’s chapel. In addition to his pay, Simon provided Jean de le Mote with room and board, a secretary to take his dictation, a fairly detailed plan of the poems’ contents, and of course instructions, carefully followed, that Jean mention with lavish praise in both poems the worthy patron Simon de Lille, who had generously caused all this to come about.

The last two examples of patronage feature women from contrasting points of view: women as patrons versus a woman whose livelihood relied on patronage. Impressive and largely overlooked examples are the women of the family of Châtillon Saint-Pol, in the two centuries from 1178 to 1377. A study of the history of this comital family and the role of its counts, and especially of its countesses, as patrons of literature has required both a detailed examination of the genealogy of the family and a careful investigation of the evidence regarding their role in patronage, concerning which earlier opinions tend to have been repeated rather than investigated. The family originated in the Artois on the Flemish border, where their literary patronage began late in the twelfth century with a commissioned translation of the *Chronicle of Pseudo-Turpin*; but by the 1290s they were important servants of the French crown, living in Paris in the elite southern suburb on the Bièvre, not far from the residence of the dowager queen Marguerite de Provence, widow of Louis IX. The move to Paris opened wide their access to current French devotional literature and to commercial artisans. The countess Marie de Saint-Pol, mother of seven surviving children, was responsible in the fourteenth century for the creation of a devotional collection of some nineteen works. Most of the nineteen are unknown outside this anthology, suggesting that she commissioned the composition of many of the pieces. The collection survives in three virtually identical copies illustrated by the same Parisian artist, Mahiet, a protégé of Jean Pucelle. These three, and perhaps others now lost, were made for her children. One of her daughters, Marie de Saint-Pol, countess of Pembroke and foundress of Pembroke College Cambridge, commissioned in Paris books for this and her other English foundations.

The Saint-Pol women were rich and powerful. Christine de Pizan was not. Having spent her childhood as a pet at the French court of the learned Charles V, where her Italian father was the astrologer royal, Christine married and had a son, only to lose in a very short span of time her father, her husband, and her family’s royal patron. Chris-
tine, however, was both gifted and well educated, in part by her father. Certainly she knew Latin, and one can see her verifying the quotations in the *Chapelet des vertus*, one of the sources of her writings, against the original Latin in the *Manipulus florum* of the Sorbonnist Thomas of Ireland. Christine had known from childhood how the patronage system worked. As France’s first professional woman writer, she made a living, as the sole support for herself, her mother, her son, and a niece, by composing works commissioned from her by members of the court. Moreover, she was one of a handful of authors who designed and supervised the production in manuscript of their own compositions. In a quite literal sense, Christine de Pizan lived on the patronage of her manuscripts.

After authors have composed, after patrons have issued their commissions, there remains the question, who are the ones who shall put these plans into practical effect? Medieval patrons like Richard de Fournival and Pope John, or authors like Haimo of Auxerre and Christine de Pizan, have left their names in the records from earliest times. Much harder to find are the names, and something of the lives, of the artisans who got ink or paint on their fingers in the practicalities of binding ideas fast with letters. The four examples included in part III each reflect a different part of the process of book-making.

“Raulinus of Fremington, born a pauper’s son . . .” This scribe, a West Country Englishman, learned his trade in Paris and wrote these words in Bologna. He left an autobiographical verse, and a variety of other scattered notes (“Time for supper!”), in an elegant one-volume thirteenth-century Latin Bible, now BnF n.a.l. 3189, which he copied; on first glance at the script one would say that it had been written by a competent Italian scribe. He worked on this large Bible along with a group of Parisian illuminators temporarily working in Bologna. In that city, however, he met the wicked Meldina, whom he calls foul names for having stolen his cloak. (The incident seems rather to have been a quarrel over payment between the scribe and a prostitute.) Raulinus was probably more closely typical of the average commercial scribe than we might expect; scribes were usually the poorest paid and the most unstable element in the lay book trade. However, Raulinus shows us that it was not difficult for an itinerant medieval scribe to adopt a new script and write it almost as well as a native.

Thomas of Wymondswold was another of the many Englishmen who came to Paris to work in the commercial book trade in the first half of the fourteenth century. He worked there as a *libraire*, that is, a book contractor/bookseller, and as a scribe, a skill that often saved his having to pay for a copyist. Two manuscripts with his signature as scribe are known, including an attractive glossed and illuminated *Decretum,* and he appears in the records of the University of Paris as a *libraire*. It is always revealing, and reassuring, when medieval people known to us had heard of and taken note of an event that we consider important. (We may otherwise wonder whether an incident emphasized by present-day scholarship passed unnoticed by those living at the
time.) Thomas of Wymondswold was living and working in Paris when King Philip the Fair, in March 1314, destroyed the French Templars by sentencing their grand master, Jacques de Molay, and his subordinate, the Templar preceptor of Normandy, to be burned at the stake on an island in the Seine; less than a month later, King Philip incarcerated his daughters-in-law for adultery and had their lovers flayed alive, and in that same month of April Pope Clement V, ally and virtual puppet of the French king, died quite suddenly. These events moved Thomas to date his Decretum as having been completed on 6 August 1314, “in which year many extraordinary things happened”; living in the shadow of the royal palace, Thomas prudently did not to go into details.

The last will and testament must have been among the commonest of documents, among literate urban craftsmen like the members of the Paris book trade. Craftsmen’s wills that survive, however, are extremely rare before the end of the Middle Ages. This adds importance to the interest inherent in the wills of Jean Marlais, one of the university’s four governing libraires, and his wife, Bonne, who lived and worked on the Left Bank at the beginning of the fifteenth century. They had no children, and so the amounts, actual and comparative, of their respective bequests reflect directly their relations with the community in which they lived. In addition to amounts spent on funerals, including the sum to be dispensed by hand to “the poor,” tuppence at a time, and the important matter of the number, quality, and size of the candles to be lit for the funereal mass, the wills name as well the charities for which the testators felt a special affinity and the many religio-social confraternities to which they belonged, most of the latter not recorded elsewhere.

Accounts are particularly useful sources for understanding the details of commercial manuscript-making and the lives of manuscript makers. None is more detailed than the example described here, taken from the extensive accounts of the Hôpital de Saint Jacques, not a hospital in the modern sense but a religious confraternity and hospice. In 1399 the confraternity decided to indulge in the luxury of commissioning a grand antiphonal in two volumes, and it opened a running record of the sums spent on them. The accounts expended each year were neatly recorded, each on the special page of the ledger reserved for this seemingly endless undertaking. Before the last bits of work were done, over twelve years had passed, during which the names of two successive libraires (the project outlived the first, and his widow carried on) and at least a dozen other members of the Paris book trade appear in the records; they were engaged in a variety of tasks beyond the basics of copying and illuminating, including such unexpected jobs as gluing on the parchment patches which covered any holes, and then regluing them when they popped off. The illumination was the most costly part of the enterprise. All told, the antiphonals cost over four times the expense of painting the church ceiling.

Medieval attitudes to manuscripts and their production were seldom expressed. A notable and fascinating exception was the effort of Antoninus, archbishop of Florence,
to provide in his *Summa* (ca. 1444–1459) useful guidelines for the behavior of the craftsmen and craftswomen of his archdiocese, trade by trade, including the parchment sellers, scribes, and illuminators. The book trade was important to Florentine humanists and to the city’s commerce, and so standards were to be observed. All tradesmen of whatever sort were of course admonished by the archbishop to give honest value for money. More revealing are the potential sins against which each specific trade was cautioned: What did it mean to behave morally as a parchment seller? What pitfalls might lurk in the path of a good Christian illuminator? The parchment sellers were not to vend their wares in the dark, nor to include parchment with holes as the inner layers of a roll, where the holes would not be noticed by the unwary buyer. Scribes were not to mix watery ink that would fade, nor to write increasingly larger letters so as to be paid for more than they had in truth accomplished. Illuminators were not to paint enormities or unorthodoxies: the Trinity as a man with three heads, or the child Jesus setting out for school carrying his lunch and a wax tablet, as if the omniscient Christ had anything to learn from mankind. Nor was Christ to be depicted as an infant descending full-formed from heaven toward Mary at the Annunciation, which would be to deny the human part of his makeup. These and other sins so usefully compiled were surely common to manuscripts everywhere. Lives and practices of commercial book-makers bore a recognizable resemblance from one city and country to another.

The final actor, in our last article (part IV), appears on this stage only by fraud. Nicolas Flamel’s fame as a supposed alchemist and wizard has been celebrated by well-known authors from Montesquieu to Victor Hugo to J. K. Rowling, despite the unavailing protests of historians of science. His reputed prowess as a man who gained wealth and fame as a copyist of manuscripts, though not so widely broadcast, is nevertheless thoroughly entrenched in handbooks and tour books and even manuscript catalogs. If a nonspecialist knows the name of just one medieval book man, that name will be Nicolas Flamel. He was in fact merely a teacher of handwriting who married very, very well.

The articles collected here address several of the countless means and motives of those who were involved, authors and patrons, scribes and illuminators, individuals and groups, men and women, Frenchmen, Englishmen, Italians, in producing and using manuscripts. Our knowledge and understanding of these people and their surroundings would be irreparably impoverished, had they not each seen to it that their small piece of the world was bound fast with letters.