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Broken Books

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Abstract
Broken Books is a digital humanities project built collaboratively between Pius XII Memorial Library and the Center for Digital Humanities of Saint Louis University. The goal of the Broken Books is to offer a digital solution to the problem of studying detached leaves from premodern manuscripts. Using online images, descriptive metadata, and nimble digital tools for relating these, Broken Books provides allows any researcher to manage a reconstruction project that also permits outside users to add images and information to it. Although still under development, Broken Books will encourage new contributions to manuscripts studies by facilitating the reconstruction of manuscripts that some time in their history were broken apart and scattered among various locations.

Keywords
medieval manuscripts, provenance, digital humanities, Latin, French, Codicology, Heraldic arms, Library history, Interoperability, manuscript studies, databases, Bibale, Institut de recherche et d’histoire des textes (IRHT)
Cashion: Broken Books
The goal of the Broken Books project, presently under development at Saint Louis University’s Center for Digital Humanities, has been to build a web-based application that provides a digital solution to the problem of studying a dismembered and dispersed premodern manuscript. Using online images, descriptive metadata, and nimble digital tools for relating these, Broken Books provides an online environment that allows a scholar/administrator to manage their own reconstruction project and permits outside users to add images and information to it. Each project begins with one manuscript or “anchor object” that supplies the first images and metadata from which the project is built. Once the project is begun, additional users can contribute to the online reconstruction, with the approval and oversight of the person who started the project.

Recently published data demonstrates the need for a method to reconstruct dismembered manuscripts. The Conway-Davis “Directory of Collec-

1 See our website at “Digital Humanities at Saint Louis University,” Saint Louis University, University Libraries, http://lib.slu.edu/digital-humanities, accessed 21 March 2016. I also wish to acknowledge the rest of the CDH team: Thomas J. Finan (Director), Bryan Haberberger (Developer), John McEwan (Associate Director), Donal Hegarty (Program Coordinator), Patrick Cuba (Lead Developer), Y. Han (former Developer), and Jacob Kopfensteiner (former Student Assistant). SLU’s Center for Digital Humanities was founded by James Ginther, now Dean of St. Michael’s College at the University of Toronto, and is jointly supported by the University Libraries and the College of Arts and Sciences.
tions in the United States and Canada” reports that the total number of pre-1600 manuscripts in North America is close to sixty-three thousand items, of which almost half are individual leaves or documents.\(^2\) As specialists in the field are fully aware, many of these single leaves are detached folios that once belonged to illuminated manuscripts deliberately broken for profitable sale as individual leaves. The practice of collecting leaves and cuttings has a long and varied history but became especially popular in America among bibliophiles of the early twentieth century.\(^3\) Today a preservationist’s respect for manuscripts as historical artifacts discourages most owners and booksellers from deliberate vandalism. A recent case of book-breaking, however, received attention from an article in *The New Yorker* about a fragmented fifteenth-century French book of hours that was alarmingly cut apart sometime after it sold as a whole bound book at Christie’s on 23 November 2010.\(^4\)

The practice of dismembering illuminated manuscripts motivates many book historians to try to reverse the process and physically reunite a fragmented original work. This was the strategy pursued by Professor Elaine Treharne, the owner of the above-mentioned French book of hours, until she realized that the same bookseller would continue to release leaves one at a time until she went broke trying to buy the whole manuscript. Savvy curators such as David Gura of Notre Dame and Eric Johnson of Ohio State have each followed a similar plan of preservation through acquisition, but since they are supported by institutional budgets for collection development


they have had more success. This approach only works, however, if the dispersed leaves are still available on the antiquarian market for purchase. Most of the single leaves counted in the Conway-Davis “Directory” belong to institutional repositories that rarely sell items from their collections.

The objective of Broken Books has been to create a web-based application that offers an alternative to the analog restoration of a dismembered manuscript. Bryan Haberberger, the principal software developer of Broken Books, has created an interface that allows the project administrator to contribute JPEG images from any online host, organize the manuscript according to contents, arrange and rearrange leaves, and add metadata to each leaf using IIIF technology and the Mirador open-source image viewer. Other users can contribute images and add metadata to an existing project. The metadata template is a tripartite design that I have developed specifically for premodern manuscripts. This faceted template organizes descriptive metadata according to: (1) context, or the history of the manuscript, including patronage, provenance, marks of ownership, binding, and shelf-marks; (2) carrier, or the physical description of the manuscript, includ-


7 For IIIF and Mirador, see the Mirador website: http://projectmirador.org. For Bryan’s posts about his work, see: https://github.com/thehabes/mirador.

ing material support, format, scribes, artists, date, and place of origin; and (3) **content**, or the identification, transcription, structure, and analysis of the text. My Omeka website about Broken Books is online at: http://brokenbooks.omeka.net. This site includes a link to the Broken Books “Digital Resource,” still under development, but presented there as a functional demo: http://165.134.241.141/brokenBooks/home.html?demo=1.

As the Omeka site fully illustrates, the test-case manuscript that inspired Broken Books from the outset is the Llangattock Breviary, a lavishly decorated manuscript made in the fifteenth century for Leonello d’Este and his court chapel at Ferrara, Italy (fig. 1). Deriving its nickname from a later owner, John Allan Rolls, the First Baron Llangattock and father of the co-founder of Rolls Royce, the Llangattock Breviary was sold as a bound volume of 512 leaves at Christie’s, London in 1958. After the sale, the breviary was broken apart and resold as separate leaves on the American market by Goodspeed’s, a rare book and manuscript dealer from Boston. Saint Louis University is the owner of seven leaves, accessible online at Digital Scriptorium. Guided especially by the research of Federica Toniolo

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9 I wish to thank Will Noel, Dot Porter, and the Rare Book School team at the University of Pennsylvania for introducing me to the Omeka online resource, originally developed at the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media at George Mason University. For more information, see “Omeka,” George Mason University, Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media, http://chnm.gmu.edu/omeka, accessed 21 March 2016.


11 *Valuable Printed Books; Fine Illuminated Manuscripts* (London: Christie’s, 8 December 1958), 32, lot 190, [misidentified as a] missal (use of Rome), Italian manuscript on vellum, 512 leaves. The same sale included lot 191, a Flemish book of hours of the 1450s, now known as the Llangattock Hours, J. Paul Getty Museum, MS Ludwig IX 7 (83.ML.103).


Figure 1. Leaf from the Llangattock Breviary. St. Louis, MO, Saint Louis University, Pius XII Memorial Library Special Collections, VFL MS 002, fol. a verso; Temporale, fourth Sunday after Easter, Matins, Lessons 5–7.
at the University of Padua, I worked from images of these seven leaves to compile a collection of digital surrogates from all over the world, for a total of eighty-two leaves thus far.\textsuperscript{14} Institutional repositories with leaves from this manuscript include Harvard, Dartmouth, UC Berkeley, the American Academy in Rome, University of South Carolina, Michigan State, Wellesley College, the Hill Monastic Manuscript Library, the University of Washington in Seattle, the University of Western Ontario, the Louvre, the Royal Library in Copenhagen, the Röhsska Museum in Göteborg, Sweden, and the Museo Schifanoia in Ferrara. But many leaves in my virtual collection belong to private collectors, while other leaves are still passing through the book trade.\textsuperscript{15}

Although some missing Llangattock leaves have emerged through researching printed catalogs, online digital resources have enabled the study of this dispersed manuscript in ways unfathomable to previous generations of scholars. I have discovered leaves of the Llangattock Breviary on the websites of institutions, auction houses, and booksellers, in aggregate databases such as Digital Scriptorium and Manuscriptlink, and posted on popular sites like Pinterest and Flickr. The Broken Books resource differs from digital databases and social media sites, however, because it does not intend to serve as an online catalog or bulletin board, but rather as a research tool for studying scattered manuscript evidence in one online space. Working from digital images has allowed me to identify each leaf according to its textual contents, group and arrange the leaves according to the liturgical calendar, and recognize consecutive leaves according to the incipits on the rectos and explicits on the versos. Although only a little over 15 percent of this manuscript has been found so far, this sampling of leaves has already led me to hypothesize the original manuscript’s collation, suggested by the

\textsuperscript{14} Federica Toniolo, “Il lungo viaggio del Breviario di Lionello d’Este tra le due sponde dell’Atlantico,” in Medioevo: Arte e storia, Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi, Parma, 18–22 settembre 2007, ed. A. C. Quintavalle (I convegni di Parma 10; Parma: Università di Parma, 2008), 564–77. I also thank Susan L’Engle for sharing her files about leaves passing through the contemporary book trade.

\textsuperscript{15} I wish to acknowledge with appreciation all of the institutions, private collectors, and booksellers who have sent me images and supported this project, as well as colleagues who have sent me information and leads.
presence of a catchword on the back of a leaf found in a 1979 catalog of Rendell’s, a former bookseller of Newton, Massachusetts.\(^\text{16}\) The discovery of this evidence motivated me to re-examine the verso of the last leaf of a quire of ten at Harvard, which I had thought was lacking a catchword. After my examination of the Rendell’s leaf, however, I realized that the illuminators of the manuscript, Giorgio d’Alemania and assistants, nestled the catchwords within the delicate foliate forms of the border decoration in the lower margin. On the Harvard leaf, the catchword is barely noticeable because it is represented by only one letter, “ē,” an abbreviation for “est.”\(^\text{17}\) This exciting revelation confirms that the Harvard leaves comprise a complete quire, and suggests that most of the original manuscript was likely constructed in quires of ten. The construction of five bifolios per gathering was a preferred practice in fifteenth-century Italy and one followed by a manuscript artistically and physically related to the Llangattock Breviary, the so-called Missal of Borso d’Este (Leonello’s brother), sewn in quires of ten except for the calendar, which comprises an expected quire of six.\(^\text{18}\) Of course, the hypothesized collation of the Llangattock Breviary will be tested as more leaves are found, such as a group of thirteen leaves at Dartmouth College, only recently recognized because they had been cataloged as a missal.\(^\text{19}\)

The need to digitally accommodate the physical collation of a manuscript became especially apparent when we added to Broken Books a second test case, the Beauvais Missal, the focus of research and reconstruction by


\(^{17}\) Cambridge, MA, Harvard University, MS Typ 0301, fol. j; Cashion, “Broken Books,” https://brokenbooks.omeka.net/admin/items/show/35.


\(^{19}\) I wish to acknowledge Peter Kidd’s exciting discovery of MS Codex 002074 and thank him for bringing these leaves to my attention. See “Missal,” Dartmouth College, Rauner Special Collections Library, https://www.dartmouth.edu/~library/rauner/westmss/002074.html, accessed 21 March 2016.
FIGURE 2. Leaf from the Beauvais Missal. Bloomington, IN, Lilly Library at Indiana University, MS Ege 15, recto; Sanctorale, Feast of St. John before the Latin Gate (6 May), followed by the translation of Saint Nicholas (9 May), Courtesy of The Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington.
Lisa Fagin Davis (fig. 2). Lisa has so far discovered ninety-nine leaves of this thirteenth-century French manuscript that once belonged to William Randolph Hearst. Like the Llangattock Breviary, the Beauvais Missal met an unfortunate fate, dismembered in 1942 by the American bookseller Philip Duschnes, and further dispersed in portfolios of single leaves sold by the biblioclast Otto Ege. Unlike most of the Llangattock Breviary leaves found so far, however, several leaves preserved from the Beauvais Missal include catchwords. Dot Porter of the Schoenberg Institute for Manuscript Studies at the University of Pennsylvania Libraries has developed a manuscript collation tool, which Lisa has used to recreate the collation of the Beauvais Missal. A goal of Broken Books is not to replicate the excellent collation resource developed by Dot Porter, but rather to expand the present arrangement tool to allow the project administrator to arrange leaves in groups according to physical construction by carrier, organization of text by content, or repository of ownership by context, mirroring the structure of the existing metadata template. User interface tools are also planned for development in order to facilitate different levels of access for project administrators and outside contributors. These tools will include refining the Mirador viewer to accommodate flexible arrangement and reordering of images, which is presently not an end-user facilitated option. They will also allow the project administrator to begin a project online and set parameters to share it with others, including students, scholars, collectors, booksellers, and collection managers—anyone interested in the same manuscript. The

21 See also Scott Gwara, Otto Ege’s Manuscripts: A Study of Ege’s Manuscript Collections, Portfolios, and Retail Trade (Cayce, SC: de Brailes, 2013).
Broken Books resource then will encourage use as an online medium of scholarly communication and pedagogy as well as a research tool. Begun with support from a grant by the Presidential Research Fund at Saint Louis University, Broken Books is positioned for further development and is in the process of seeking further funding.