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Title: **The "Mapping Manuscript Migrations" Project**

Abstract

Tens of thousands of European medieval manuscripts have survived until the present day. As the result of changes of ownership over the centuries, they are now spread all over the world, in collections across Europe, North America, Asia and Australasia. They often feature among the treasures of libraries, museums, galleries, and archives, and they are frequently the focus of exhibitions and events in these institutions. They provide crucial evidence for research in many disciplines, including textual and literary studies, history, cultural heritage, and the fine arts. They are also objects of research in their own right, with disciplines such as paleography and codicology examining the production, distribution, and history of manuscripts, together with the people and institutions who created, used, owned, and collected them.

Over the last twenty years there has been a proliferation of digital data relating to manuscripts, not just in the form of catalogues, databases, and vocabularies, but also in digital editions and transcriptions and – especially – in digital images of manuscripts. Overall, however, there is a lack of coherent, interoperable infrastructure for the digital data relating to manuscripts, and the evidence base remains fragmented and scattered across hundreds, if not thousands, of data sources.

The complexity of navigating multiple printed sources to carry out manuscript research has, if anything, been increased by this proliferation of digital sources of data. Large-scale analysis, for both quantitative and qualitative research questions, still requires very time-consuming exploration of numerous disparate sources and resources, including manuscript catalogues and databases of digitized manuscripts, as well as many forms of secondary literature. As a result, most large-scale research questions about medieval manuscripts remain very difficult, if not impossible, to answer.

This presentation will report on the "Mapping Manuscript Migrations" project, funded by the Trans-Atlantic Platform under its Digging into Data Challenge and led by the University of Oxford in partnership with Aalto University, the University of Pennnsylvania, and the Institut de recherche et d'histoire des textes in Paris. With partner institutions in four countries, this project is building a coherent framework to link data from different sources and to enable searchable and browsable semantic access to combined evidence about the history of medieval manuscripts. It aims to use this framework as the basis for a large-scale analysis of the history and movement of these manuscripts over the centuries, including such questions as: how many manuscripts have survived; where they are now; and which people and institutions have been involved in their history.

This presentation will provide an introduction to the project, which runs from July 2017 to June 2019. It will cover the sources of data which are being combined, data modeling and the use of Linked Data, the research questions which this assemblage of big data is being used to address, and the ways in which this evidence can be presented and visualized.