

Introduction

The Middle Ages first left its traces in South Carolina in 1864, when the widow of Georgetown County planter Plowden Weston donated a late-fifteenth-century copy of Horace's works, bound in red velvet, to the Charleston Library Society. Since the time of that bequest, the state's institutional libraries have added 117 more manuscripts and manuscript fragments to their holdings. This *Census of Medieval Manuscripts in South Carolina Collections* documents that medieval legacy. In fact, the printed census launches an initiative called *Pages from the Past: A Legacy of Medieval Books in South Carolina Collections*, which includes an exhibition at the Thomas Cooper Library, University of South Carolina, from January through March 2008 and an interactive website with digital images of all the medieval manuscripts in public collections statewide. The University of South Carolina and the Humanities Council of South Carolina funded *Pages from the Past*, but the project has been a joint effort by eight institutional partners. The individual collaborators are recognized in the Acknowledgments that follow this introduction.

The manuscripts described in this census have a significant historical value for the citizens of the state, in addition to their very considerable commercial worth. Together they exemplify the cultural and historical contexts of literacy in the medieval period. Represented are bibles, Books of Hours, and sermons, as well as historical, scientific, philosophical, theological, legal, notarial, and musical books. The South Carolina manuscripts are both luxurious and utilitarian. They date from 1150 to 1600 and come from eight European countries: Austria, Belgium, England, France, Germany, Italy,

the Netherlands, and Spain (to give them their modern English names). A few are precisely datable: a calendar in the Breslauer Cistercian miscellany (RBSC 85) dates it to 1269; a colophon in a Book of Hours (RBSC 72) gives the year 1467; a land conveyance (RBSC 83) was drawn up on 10 May 1321, in the fourteenth year of the reign of King Edward II. Sometimes the manuscripts can be traced to specific regions, cities, or even monasteries: the Charleston Library Society Horace was doubtless written near Ferrara (where its paper was manufactured); the Bob Jones copy of Martin of Troppau's *Chronicle of the Popes and Emperors* hails from Champagne-Lorraine; an anonymous brother at the monastery of St. Stephan, Würzburg, transcribed a Psalter there in 1499 (RBSC 42). Scribes and illuminators can be identified as well, and some are especially notable: the "Master of the Dominican Effigies" painted a miniature of the Presentation in the Temple (RBSC 65); Bishop Pietro Ursuelo of Satriano, scribe to popes and the designated Archbishop of Santa Severina, wrote and illuminated a Passion Sequence (RBSC 68); and Giuliano d'Antonio da Prato, whose commissions can be found in major Italian libraries, copied Terence's comedy *Adelphoe* in RBSC 91.

As an archive, the South Carolina manuscripts obviously have range and depth, but little was known of them until recently. Cataloguing them for the first time has yielded significant findings for researchers worldwide. The Bob Jones *Chronicle of the Popes and Emperors* has been unknown to scholars since it was auctioned by the heirs of Sir Thomas Phillipps in 1910. It is the prodigal son of South Carolina manuscripts. Equally neglected but worthy of

attention (if not admiration) is a magnificent mid-fifteenth-century English copy of Ranulf Higden's *Polychronicon*, one of only six manuscripts to preserve the final form of Ranulf's best-selling "universal world history" (RBSC 61). Completely new to the world's notice is a miniature panel by the Florentine Trecento artist called the "Master of the Dominican Effigies" (RBSC 65); a precious fragment of medieval "Ars Nova" polyphonic music (Columbia College 5), the only medieval polyphony in the South except for a scrap at Duke University; a page from a Book of Hours from Lyons ca. 1485–90, in the style of the Rosenberg Master (RBSC 67); a page from Pietro Ursuleo's Passion Sequence (RBSC 68), other components of which exist in New Zealand and Australian libraries; the Breslauer Cistercian manuscript, an important Italian compilation of sermons and biblical materials for composing sermons, including a Bestiary, ca. 1269 (RBSC 85); the Charleston Library Society's Horace manuscript, which may yet turn out to have one of the oldest texts of the poet's works; an unidentified and probably unique Spanish treatise on knighthood (RBSC 55); and a Book of Hours in the style of the "Masters of the Gold Scrolls," from Bruges, ca. 1430 (RBSC 62). I should take the opportunity to mention here the generous loan from Dr. Randy Mack of hitherto uncatalogued pages from a Missal illuminated by the Sienese artist Niccolò di Ser Sozzo, ca. 1350.

Many of the manuscripts just mentioned are illuminated. In fact, most of the South Carolina manuscripts have decoration of some kind. Gold leaf was commonly applied over gesso to give the appearance of thick liquid gold. When burnished, the gold radiated an impressive brilliance, and it still shines as bright in Higden's *Polychronicon* (RBSC 61) as the day it was applied. It was expensive work, not really because the gold was costly (gold leaf is very thin), but because it took skill and patience to apply. From about 1400 onwards Books of Hours became status objects for the laity, and many were finely illuminated. Examples survive in College of Charleston MS O34–14 and RBSC 45–48, 50. RBSC 62, a Book of Hours from Bruges, ca. 1430, has ten full-page miniatures, including delicate tableaux of the Passion and of certain saints. Other manuscripts have charming penwork swags and scrolls (Furman 3; Columbia Museum of Art 1), small grotesques (Bob Jones University Library 1; RBSC 14 and 17), and natu-

ralistic vines (RBSC 30, 45), alongside handsome painted borders (RBSC 61), profusely colored initials (RBSC 15, 16, 77; Bob Jones Art Museum 2), and rich miniatures (Bob Jones Art Museum 1; RBSC 62, 65–68). Italian choir books such as Bob Jones Art Museum 1, as well as Missals like the "Beauvais Missal" (RBSC 15), were commonly decorated. The expertise of illuminators reflected in the South Carolina examples presupposes professional workshops rather than monastic scriptoria—they are proof of a widespread book trade. Just as notable for scribal artistry are manuscripts like RBSC 70 and 74, glossed bibles requiring ingenuity to execute. They were expensive as well: a complete glossed bible from thirteenth-century Paris is known to have cost much more than a rich man's house.

Undecorated manuscripts are implicitly utilitarian rather than deluxe specimens, but while they may not qualify as art, they can preserve rare or even unique texts. The Breslauer Cistercian miscellany (RBSC 85), acquired in 2007 by gift of the B.H. Breslauer Foundation, preserves unpublished sermons, Latin dictionaries, bible commentaries, and florilegia, all unstudied. RBSC 52 (Canon Law), 82 (Mathematics), 84 (Treatise on Virtues), and 86 (Treatise on the Trinity) come from scholars' books intended for study rather than ritual or display. They are products for the library or classroom. Comparable in decorative simplicity are estate documents such as Columbia College 9 and RBSC 83, as well as laymen's manuals like RBSC 55, which was probably consulted for practical advice on managing a castle, and RBSC 89, which lists the fees paid by the treasurer of a religious confraternity for various services. A Formulary from Bohemia (RBSC 87) was helpful in drafting letters to dignitaries like "Bishop Sanderus," asking for preferment, or to one's brother, negotiating a disputed inheritance. Modern universities and colleges value such items as texts, of course, and even the plainest manuscripts serve as samples of handwriting for students learning how to date and localize medieval scripts. The beginner can learn a primary distinction rather quickly: southern European scripts are rounded (RBSC 3), the northern ones angular (RBSC 76).

The Church had its functional books, too. Service books used by priests in their churches and monks in their cloisters are abundant today largely because they were produced in massive quantities. In northern

Europe they were discarded after the Reformation, ending up as binding reinforcements or flyleaves in many cases (Bob Jones Library 4, RBSC 78). Priests use Missals for the Mass (RBSC 2, 15, 26, 33, 38, 49, 79). They could be elaborately painted and gilded (RBSC 15). Lectionaries rather than bibles or Gospel books were consulted for the Old and New Testament readings appropriate to a given Mass (Columbia College 1; RBSC 3, 37, 58). Monks use Breviaries for the office (although priests and laymen also used them), and Breviaries were typically plain (Columbia College 6). Examples of Breviaries include Columbia College 4, 6; Columbia Museum of Art 1; and RBSC 16, 18, 23, 32, 56, 75, 78. Ubiquitous in monasteries and convents was the Book of Psalms or Psalter (Columbia College 6, RBSC 10, 12, 16, 17, 20, 34, 42, 63, 68). Psalters can often be beautifully decorated, such as that painted and gilded by bishop Pietro Ursuleo, ca. 1460 (RBSC MS 68). When organized around the ritual of the Divine Office in a Breviary, the Psalter is known as a Ferial Psalter (Columbia College 6; RBSC 16). RBSC 4 comes from a curious book called a Psalter Catena, a compilation of Psalm verses strung together by theme: death, punishment, pain; joy, feasting. The Latin term *catena* means “chain.” Similar is the short “Psalter of St. Jerome” in RBSC 62, the “Fairbrother Hours.” Books of Hours for laymen were modeled after the monastic Psalter.

Music for the Mass could be found in Missals (which are then designated “Noted Missals”: Bob Jones Library 4; RBSC 22), but the choir would have sung from a Gradual, a colossal book necessarily visible from the choir stalls (College of Charleston O34-06; RBSC 27, 65, 80, 90). Music for the Office was found in an Antiphonal, again huge enough to be legible by candlelight from a distance (Columbia College 8, 10-11; RBSC 8, 60, 81; Bob Jones Art Museum 1; Wofford College 1). Some choir books were beautifully illuminated with miniatures or painted capital letters: the Florentine miniature by the Dominican Effigist (RBSC 65) was cut from a Gradual, for example; the miniature of the Coronation of the Virgin in RBSC 66 was removed from an Antiphonal. Different kinds of church music could be gathered into separate volumes: Hymnals (RBSC 59), Sequentiaries (RBSC 21), Noted Collectars (RBSC 77). Very rarely does one encounter music for multiple voices singing harmony, but a fragment of medieval polyphony survives in Columbia College 5.

Central to the intellectual discourse of the Middle Ages, not to mention its spiritual life, were the Scriptures, and the medieval bible is relatively well-represented in South Carolina libraries. One could practically write the history of the late medieval bible from individual leaves listed in this census, beginning with a fragment from John’s Gospel, ca. 1150 (RBSC 1). The text is accompanied by the so-called *Glossa Ordinaria*, a continuous bible commentary or “gloss” which became standard or “ordinary.” This was a study bible, not meant for reading aloud in a church or monastic refectory. The intricate layout persists in RBSC 70 and 74, both of which were written in Paris workshops for university students, not monks in their cloister. RBSC 70 from Luke’s Gospel is accompanied by the *Glossa Ordinaria*, whereas RBSC 74 (excerpts from Romans, 1-2 Corinthians, and Hebrews) has Peter Lombard’s Great Gloss on the Pauline Epistles. About a century after this manuscript was produced, Peter Lombard’s gloss on Romans was replaced with a commentary by Peter of Tarantaise—probably a local or personal bias. The substitution further tells us that bibles were still being read long after they were made.

Thanks to demand by the mendicant orders of preachers, mainly the Dominican and Franciscan friars, diminutive or “pocket” bibles were produced in vast numbers beginning in early-thirteenth-century Paris (RBSC 6, 9, 11, 13, 14, 57, 73; Bob Jones Art Museum 2; Bob Jones Library 2-3; Furman University 1-3). A distinctly Parisian innovation that spread quickly to Italy and England, these portable books were octavo in size, made of the thinnest parchment (quite like tissue paper), and laid out in two columns in the tiniest writing. Ordered in a specific sequence, the biblical books were headed by prologues, divided into chapters, and generally decorated in ways useful for finding one’s place—handy for an itinerant preacher, in other words. Such bibles were provided with an “Interpretation of Hebrew Names” at the end (RBSC 64: not a pocket bible, however). Elaborate illumination can be found in many pocket bibles (Bob Jones Art Museum 2). Because Paris dominated illumination in the thirteenth century, imported bibles were frequently decorated there, such as RBSC 19, produced in Italy. With the exception of the apocryphal Ezra III-V (RBSC 73) and little else, the medieval pocket bible resembles the modern Scriptures. Coexisting with

the friar's bible were the more lavish and much bigger lectern bibles, used for reading aloud, though probably not in church. Sometimes these bibles were marked for proper articulation (RBSC 11). One exceptional example (RBSC 14) was brilliantly illuminated in colored tempera and gold leaf. It was recited to monks during their meals. More homely but still grand is RBSC 44. For obvious reasons, bibles were scrupulously proofread for accuracy, and even the corrections can have corrections (RBSC 14).

The endlessly fascinating manuscripts in South Carolina collections can be grouped by national style, decoration, genre, etc., but other categories can be imagined, too. While primarily written in Latin, some are in French (RBSC 53, 62), Dutch (RBSC 71), Old Spanish (RBSC 55), or even Old Catalan (RBSC 89). Some manuscripts were written by women (RBSC 71), some for women (predominantly Books of Hours). Some, like administrative records, are secular, others (the bible and liturgical books) sacred. Some qualify as "literature," including poetry (RBSC 7) and drama (RBSC 91). Some were written for or by Cistercians, Carthusians, Benedictines, and possibly even an order of reformed prostitutes called Magdalenes (RBSC 77). Still more shed light on medieval astronomy (RBSC 57) or mathematics (RBSC 82). Some books preserve engaging notes and scribbles: one prescribes medicinal herbs to improve poor vision, probably caused by straining to read the tiny letters in the book. Finally, a clutch of Renaissance manuscripts evokes the Italian Humanists' quest for the fugitive writings of Ancient Greece and Rome (Charleston Library Society 359; RBSC 39, 91). The innovative script they popularized, nowadays called "Humanistic," became the model for the "Roman" typefaces we still use. The cursive grade of Humanistic script became known as "Italic," and the Charleston manuscript was written in this less formal alphabet.

In general, the medieval manuscripts in South Carolina collections were acquired in the 1960s and later, but all of them obviously had prior histories. On occasion we can follow their migration to the New World. The Englishman Sir Thomas Phillipps (d. 1872) was

among the greatest manuscript collectors of all time, and South Carolina libraries have some of his books (Bob Jones Library 1; RBSC 22, 74, 86). The Bob Jones *Chronicle of the Popes and Emperors* mentioned above belonged to Sir Thomas. It had previously been owned by the French antiquarian Claude-Robert Jardel and later by the English bibliophile Richard Heber. In fact, we can trace this book back to its original home at Braine, northeast of Paris, where it was recorded in a booklist from ca. 1720. Jardel was a canon there. The German scholar Leander van Ess sold his manuscripts *en bloc* to Sir Thomas Phillipps, and RBSC 22 comes from a Missal van Ess once owned. Aristocratic ownership is documented by a page from a lavish Book of Hours, layered in gold leaf, which comes from the collection of François-César Le Tellier, Marquis de Courtanvaux (RBSC 67). It was presumably auctioned with his library in 1783. These are modern owners, relatively speaking. Others were medieval. Around 1300 Robert de Hangest donated to Beauvais Cathedral the "Beauvais Missal" from which RBSC 15 was taken. In exchange Canon Robert sought perpetual remembrance, and justifiably so, given his extravagant generosity. Such historical contexts make us realize that medieval books are not just artifacts: they were used by people, treasured by collectors, left to others—and ultimately to us.

A diverse collection of medieval manuscripts such as that in South Carolina comprises a cultural treasury in more than one sense. To the state's citizens it is a historical archive of endless fascination, to university faculty, a teaching tool, to scholars and students, a source of information on social institutions. Digital access now made possible through the *Pages from the Past* research project enables everyone with a computer to contemplate these remains of medieval intellectual culture. But while the Internet can bring this incomparable medieval legacy directly to one's home, no electronic image ever compares to the original. In every instance a visit to the local library remains the best way to encounter the medieval book.

