

# MAC Newsletter



*Preserving the Documents of the Past and Making Them Accessible to the Future!*

Volume 46, Number 2 (181)

[www.midwestarchives.org](http://www.midwestarchives.org)

October 2018

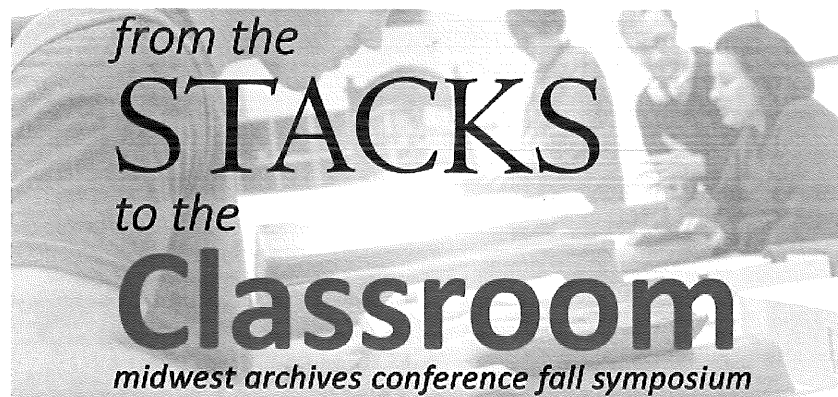
## In This Issue...

President's Page .....	2
MAC News .....	3
News from the Midwest .....	10
Archival Resources on the Web.....	16
Electronic Currents .....	19
Preservation Essentials .....	24
Up-and-Comers.....	26
Other News .....	30
People and Posts .....	35
MAC Contacts.....	37

## MAC Fall 2018 Symposium: "From the Stacks to the Classroom"

*October 12–13, 2018*

Interested in developing instruction services for your archives or special collections, but not sure how to get started? This fall, visit Iowa City, a UNESCO City of Literature and home of the Iowa Hawkeyes, where the Midwest Archives Conference and the University of Iowa Libraries will partner to bring you the 2018 Fall Symposium: "From the Stacks to the Classroom."



Want to develop instruction services for an archive or special collections? Bring your collections from the stacks to the classroom! Join presenters Anna Trammell, Rachel Seale, and Cara B. Stone at this year's MAC Fall Symposium. These sessions will provide you with interactive, hands-on experiences that will prepare you for a successful instruction environment. All levels of teaching experience welcome. We will learn from each other!

WHEN October 12- 13, 2018

WHERE Iowa City, IA

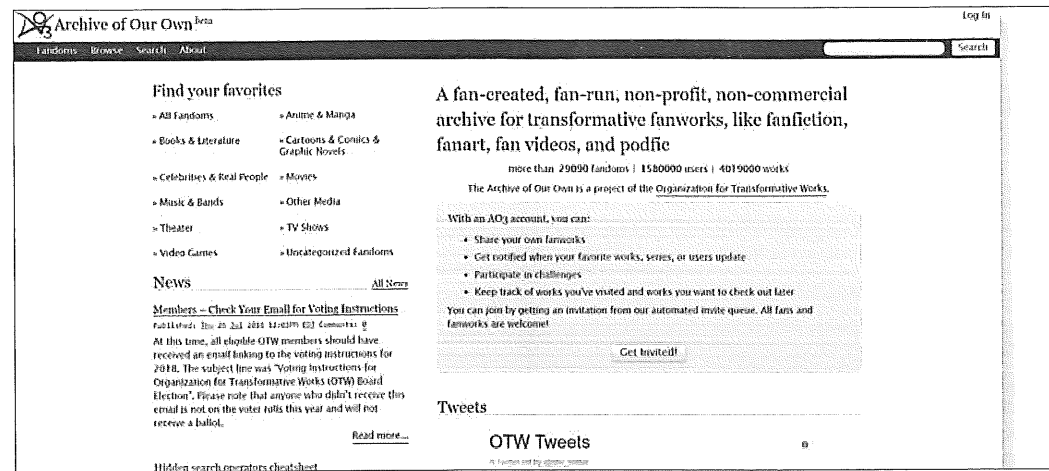
To learn more and register, visit [midwestarchives.org/2018-fall-symposium](http://midwestarchives.org/2018-fall-symposium)



Join presenters Anna Trammell, Rachel Seale, and Cara B. Stone in this one-and-a-half-day workshop that will focus on archival and special collection instruction, lesson planning, and assessment. No matter what your teaching level is, these sessions will help you prepare your archives or special collections for developing and managing a successful instruction environment for faculty

*(Continued on page 4)*

(Continued from page 17)



Homepage of Archive of Our Own (AO3), a site focused on preserving fanworks and fan culture

and fan communication, with emphasis on upholding metadata quality standards. In fact, AO3 stands as one of the first—if not the only—fanwork archives to employ a controlled tag vocabulary. In 2013, AO3 was recognized as “. . . the most carefully curated, sanely organized, easily browsable and searchable nonprofit collection of fan fiction on the Web” by *Time*.<sup>8</sup> This attention to quality has drawn fans from around the globe, creating an extremely popular and active platform for them to create, share, and collaborate. AO3 has done what no other fanwork platform has: created a living archives with preservation policies in place to ensure content longevity in a rapidly changing digital environment.

### The Future of Fanworks

Some might wonder why fanworks are important. Why do the endless adventures of Kirk and Spock matter? Why do we need to save someone’s novel-length interpretation about how the Doctor really feels about the Master? What value is there in a work where James Bond gives up his License to Kill to retire and open a coffee shop?

At first glance, these creations may seem odd or esoteric, but fanworks are evidence of something incredibly human. Fanworks use the well-defined lines of a particular narrative to open doors to themes and topics not represented in mainstream media. Furthermore, many creators of fanworks are women, people of color, people who identify as LGBTQIA+, disabled persons, indigenous people, and other groups whose voices are not well represented in the creative and publishing industries.

Preserving these works is a monumental but essential task. The OTW is critical in this regard, preserving old

fanworks in danger of being lost to platform obsolescence or deletion, while simultaneously maintaining stable, solid platforms that actively archive new content as it is created. The OTW has started to change the way we think about fanworks and their importance and is constantly evolving as technologies, laws, and the needs of fans evolve. It could be said it is an organization with a mission similar to

that of the iconic USS *Enterprise*: to boldly go where no one has gone before!

### Notes

1. Francesca Coppa, “Brief History of Media Fandom,” in *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet: New Essays*, ed. Karen Hellekson and Kristine Busse (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2006), 45.
2. “What We Believe,” Organization for Transformative Works, [http://www.transformativeworks.org/what\\_we\\_believe](http://www.transformativeworks.org/what_we_believe).
3. “Open Doors,” Organization for Transformative Works, <http://opendoors.transformativeworks.org>.
4. “Fanlore:About,” June 11, 2012, <https://fanlore.org/wiki/Fanlore:About>.
5. “May 2015 Newsletter, Volume 91,” Organization for Transformative Works, <http://www.transformativeworks.org/may-2015-newsletter-volume-91>.
6. Karen Kaplan and Charles Piller, “Yahoo to Buy GeoCities for \$3.9 Billion in Stock,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 29, 1999, <http://articles.latimes.com/1999/jan/29/business/fi-2730>.
7. Geoff Fox, “Yahoo Sets the Date of GeoCities’ Death,” *PC Magazine*, July 10, 2009, <https://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2350024,00.asp>.
8. Lev Grossman, “Check out Archive of Our Own on TIME’s 50 Best Websites List,” May 1, 2013, <https://web.archive.org/web/20160313145205/http://techland.time.com/2013/05/06/50-best-websites-2013/slide/archive-of-our-own>.

## Electronic Currents

Assistant Editor: Sarah Dorpinghaus, University of Kentucky. Contact Sarah at [sarah.dorpinghaus@uky.edu](mailto:sarah.dorpinghaus@uky.edu) if you would like to guest author a column or have a good idea to share.

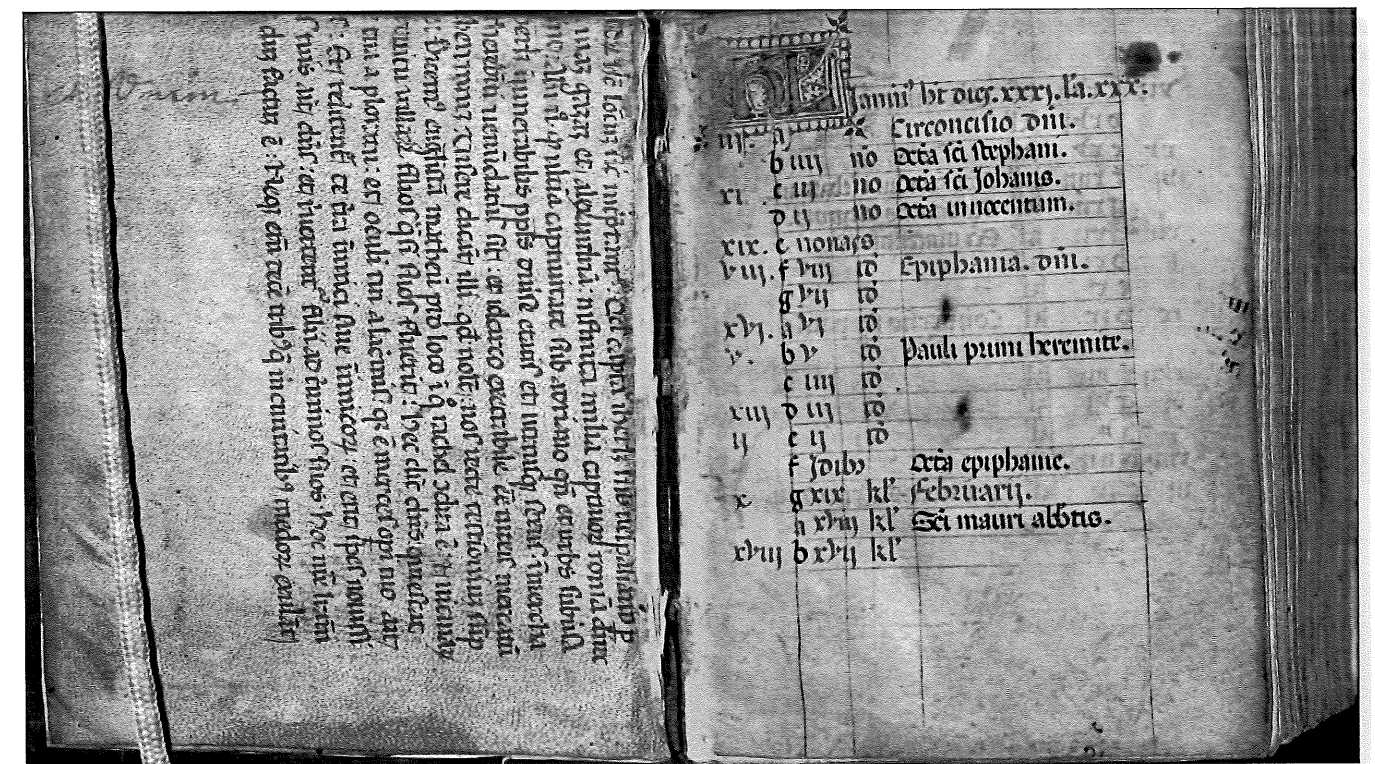
### Digital Detective Work: Unlocking the Secrets of a Medieval Manuscript

By Alyssa Mertka, University of Kentucky

At first glance, MS Latin Kentuckiensis III (MS. Lat. KY III) seems to be far removed from the sleek, fast-paced digital world of 2018. The pages of this fifteenth-century Italian book of hours, located in the collections of the University of Kentucky Special Collections Research Center (SCRC), are wrinkled with age and delicate as a butterfly’s wing. The book’s reddish-brown cover crumbles at the slightest touch and therefore requires the utmost care when handling it. Its beautiful illuminations, prayers for the Divine Office, and invocations against plague belong to a bygone era. I first came across this remarkable book during my time as an intern in the SCRC’s Learning Lab. My research in this lab would ultimately teach me that the key to unlocking the secrets of this rare book could be found in the digital tools I use every day.

The SCRC Learning Lab was designed to give undergraduate students like myself an opportunity to learn

about the archival profession and receive hands-on experience working with archival materials. During the 2017–2018 academic year, Carol Street, undergraduate research archivist at the University of Kentucky, supervised a team of six undergraduates from a variety of academic disciplines ranging from art history to English to chemical engineering. Street led us in weekly discussions of relevant archival topics such as arrangement and description, privacy, ethics, and security. Each student also selected an archival collection to process and designed an original research project around the item(s) in that collection. We kept track of our progress via weekly entries on the online journaling platform JRNL (<https://jrnل.com/app/#/journals>), which were later published as physical volumes. These journals allowed us to share our discoveries with each other and create an accessible record of our resources and achievements.



The verso side of the flyleaf next to Folio 1 of MS. Lat. KY III displays the fragment (left) next to the first page of the book of hours (right).

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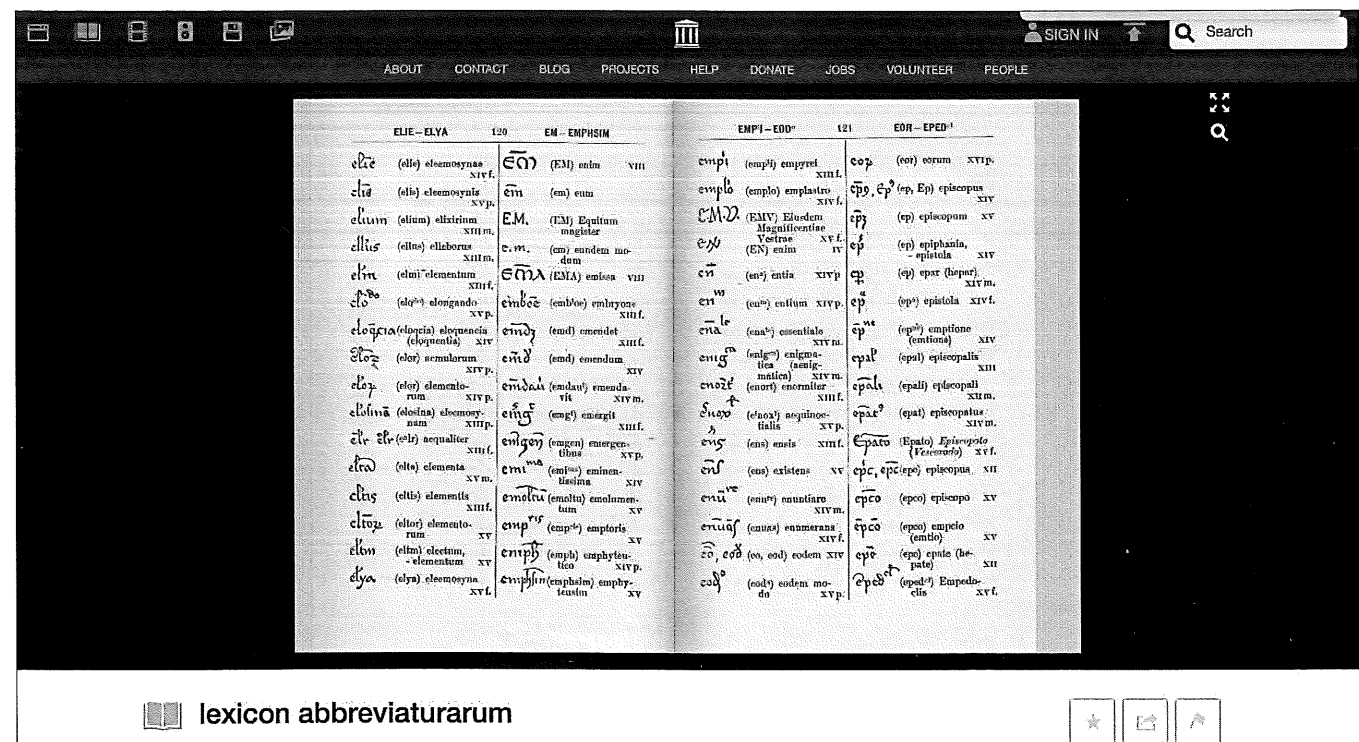
The item I selected for my research, MS. Lat. KY III, had been in the SCRC's collection for decades after being donated to the university by Danish American book collector Jens Christian Bay (1871–1962). It had been featured in a descriptive catalog of all the medieval manuscripts in the SCRC and in an exhibition on manuscript illuminations at the University of Kentucky Art Museum. However, when I examined the manuscript for the first time, I noticed a discrepancy not mentioned in any of the previous scholarship. The book's front flyleaf and pastedown differed in handwriting, vellum quality, and orientation from the rest of the book. They obviously belonged to a different text, but no one had focused on, or even described, these unique pages. Determined to identify this fragmented text, I turned to the Internet, setting off a months-long mystery that would culminate in a positive identification.

When materials were scarce, medieval bookbinders often used pieces of old manuscripts to bind new books. As a result, bits of older works were integrated and preserved with later bindings. The study of fragments such as these, known as "fragmentology," can reveal the history of a book, shed light on its construction, or, in extreme cases, even uncover a lost text. This area of manuscript research has become increasingly popular in recent years, especially

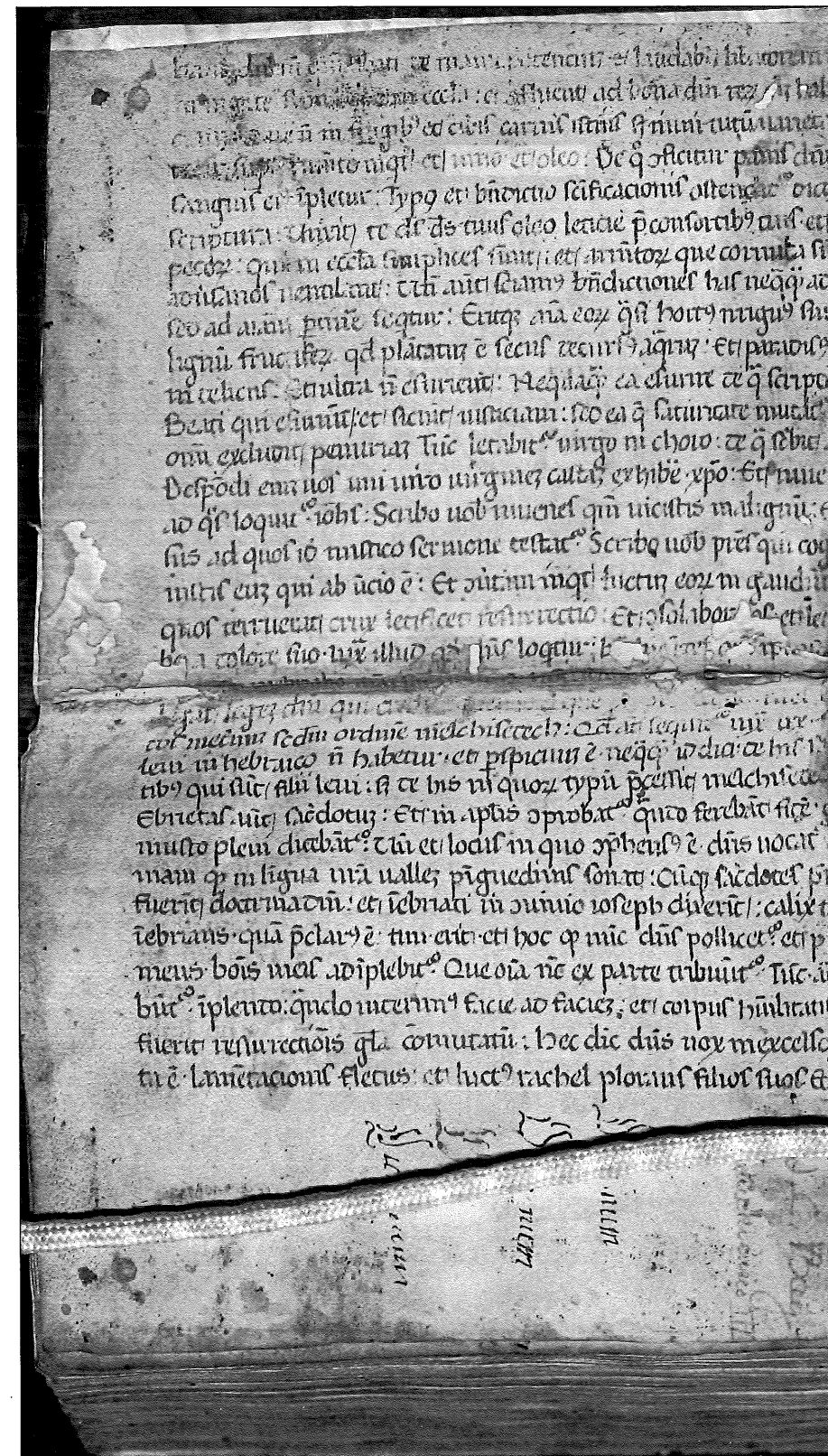
with the advance of crowdsourced fragment identification. Scholars can view images of manuscript fragments (along with descriptions and other data) in online databases such as Fragmentarium (<https://fragmentarium.ms>). These databases provide scholars with platforms on which to contribute their expertise to the fragment identification process.

Before I could consult any databases myself, I needed to create a preliminary transcript of the text of the fragment inside MS. Lat. KY III. To aid in this process, I consulted on online edition of Adriano Capelli's *Lexicon Abbreviatarum* (<https://archive.org/details/LexiconAbbreviatarum>), a dictionary of common scribal abbreviations. The digital edition was preferable to the physical copy due to its "searchability." If I had an idea of what a word might be, I could simply enter it into the search bar and jump directly to the relevant page, rather than flipping through hundreds of pages by hand. This feature helped to shorten an already-lengthy transcription process, which was sometimes hindered by damage to the fragment as well as the right-hand edge being cut in the middle of the line.

Drawing from the numerous scripture references and biblical terminology in the text (such as mentions of *vino et oleo*, "wine and oil"), I hypothesized that this text was most likely a biblical commentary. This hypothesis



The online edition of the *Lexicon Abbreviatarum*



The first two pages of the fragment (front flyleaf and pastedown) show two transcribed phrases: "vino et oleo" (top) and "crux l[a]etificet resurrectione" (bottom).

led me to consult the *Patrologia Latina* online database (<http://pld.chadwyck.co.uk/>), a digital, searchable version of Jacques-Paul Migne's *Patrologia Latina* (published 1844–1855). The *Patrologia* is a compendium of texts by the early church fathers, so it seemed likely that it might contain the biblical commentary I was looking for. I began entering transcribed phrases from the fragment into the database. For weeks, I had no results. Finally, a search of the transcribed phrase "crux l[a]etificet resurrectione" yielded a match.

After a meticulous cross-reference between the document in the database and the fragment text, I conclusively identified the fragment found in MS. Lat. KY III as an excerpt from *S. Eusebii Hieronymi Stridonensis Presbyteri Commentariorum in Jeremiam Prophetam Libri Sex*, or *The Sixth Book of the Commentary on the Prophet Jeremiah* by the priest Saint Eusebius Hieronymus of Strido, better known as St. Jerome. Specifically, the fragment text comes from chapter 17 of book 6, which focuses on Jeremiah 31:10–14. The commentary itself was written between 317 and 319 AD, with the sixth book being the last, as St. Jerome died before completing the work. Initially, identification had been my ultimate goal. However, I found myself longing to know more about MS. Lat. KY III.

Now that I knew what the fragment text said, a whole new set of questions presented itself. Where did this fragment come from? How old was it? How did it end up as

(Continued on page 22)

(Continued from page 21)

The screenshot shows the Patrologia Latina website interface. On the left is a navigation menu with options like 'Search All', 'Table of Contents', and 'Help'. The main content area displays the title 'S. EUSEBII HIERONYMI STRIDONENSIS PRESBYTERI COMMENTARIORUM IN JEREMIAM PROPHETAM LIBRI SEX' and the beginning of the 'Prologus' section. The text is presented in a clean, digital font with some interactive elements like expandable notes.

The online Patrologia Latina displays the digital text of the Jerome commentary.

part of this book of hours? To answer these questions, I needed the help of experts. No one at my university could answer the questions I had. However, a string of Internet searches and e-mails led me to subject expert Dr. Eric Johnson, associate professor and curator of rare books and manuscripts at The Ohio State University. Without ever meeting with me face-to-face or viewing the manuscript in person, he was able to tell me that the fragment was most likely produced in a monastic scriptorium (either Benedictine or Cistercian, with the former more likely) between 1175 and 1200 AD. He conjectured that the fragment was northern Italian in origin.

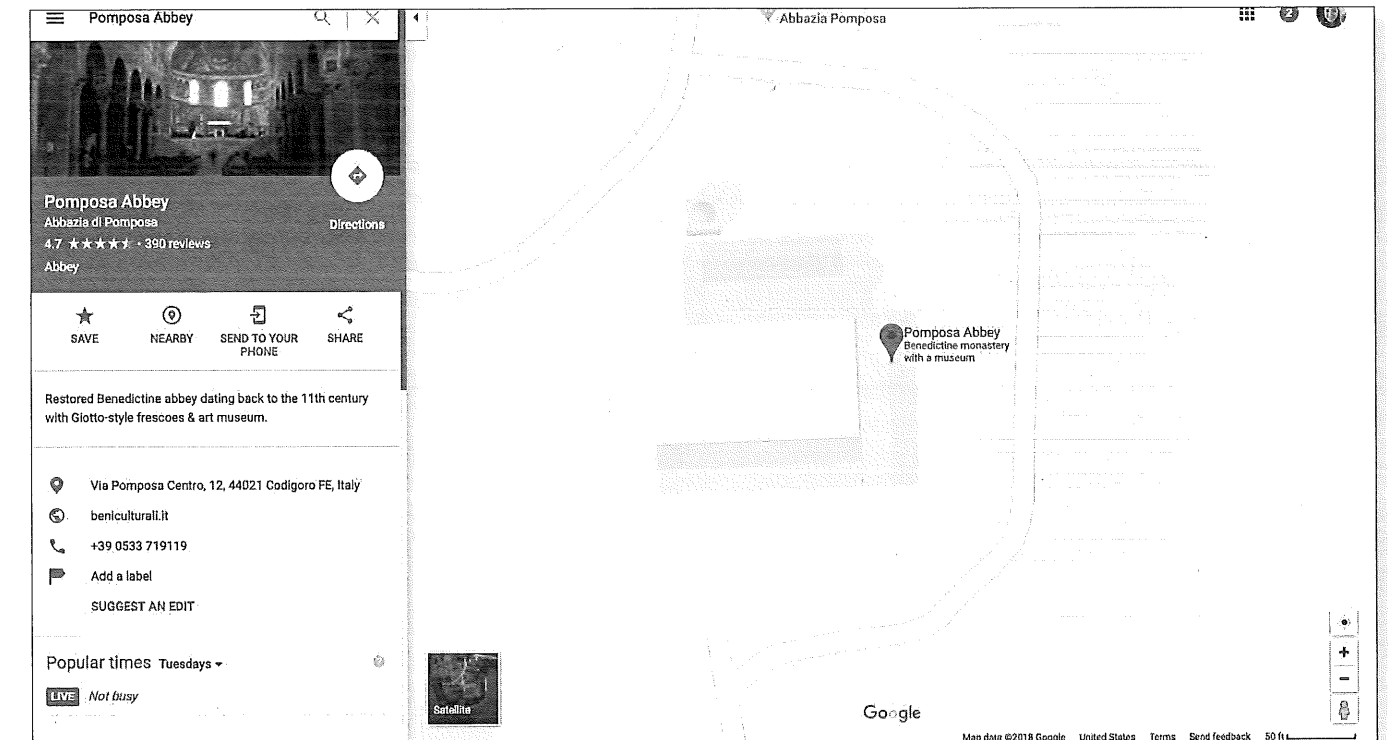
Using this information along with what was already known about the creation of MS. Lat. KY III, I used Google Maps (<https://www.google.com/maps/>) to pinpoint which monastery probably produced the fragment.

Pomposa Abbey, located near Ferrara, Italy, is the best candidate for the fragment's origin. Pomposa is a Benedictine community founded in the sixth century AD and was active during the period proposed by Dr. Johnson. Pomposa

Abbey was noted for its scriptorium and library, which produced and housed a great number of manuscripts. Additionally, it is the only significant Benedictine monastery near Ferrara, the region where MS. Lat. KY III was likely bound. No Cistercian communities were active in the area. Medieval bookbinders often received scrap vellum from scriptoria, and copies of Jerome commentaries were common enough in the fifteenth century to make their vellum more valuable than the text printed on it. The bookbinder who compiled the book of hours and the monastery that produced the document recycled into the binding were likely geographically close. Therefore, Pomposa Abbey can be said to be the possible creator of the edition of Jerome's commentary that later found its way into MS Lat. KY III. I sent a Facebook message to Pomposa's official page in attempt to confirm this hypothesis, but aside from a humorous exchange in Italian involving emoticons, the abbey was unable to provide me with the evidence I was seeking. Still, further research into historical catalogs of Pomposa's library could verify my hypothesis.

What began as an odd piece of vellum stuck inside a manuscript ended with one solved mystery and a dozen more questions waiting for answers. In my quest to uncover the secrets of MS. Latin KY III, I employed the resources and strategies I had grown up with and used every day in my academic and personal life. Online databases, e-books, e-mails, Internet searches, and Facebook messages together created a strong framework on which I could establish my

inquiries into the origins of the fragment. My research would not have been successful without the ease and accessibility provided by these tools. As the relationship between traditional materials and digital resources grows stronger, the potential for new discoveries in forgotten places will increase. What other secrets lie between delicate pages, simply awaiting discovery by the next generation of digital detectives?



Pomposa Abbey on Google Maps