

The Cluster of Excellence
Understanding Written Artefacts
cordially invites you to the workshop

**Meaning of Proportion:
Extravagant Formats and Sizes of Manuscripts
in the Tradition of Book Religions**

Friday, 24 November 2023, 2:30 pm – 6:45 pm CET
Saturday, 25 November 2023, 9:30 am – 1:00 pm CET

Warburgstraße 26, 20354 Hamburg

Hybrid Event

Organisers: Felix Heinzer (Universität Freiburg / Universität
Hamburg) and Bruno Reudenbach (Universität Hamburg)

Registration:

<https://www.csmc.uni-hamburg.de/register/workshop46>

Proportion and format can be considered as fundamental features of books, especially of manuscripts. Presently, though, this evidence seems to attract less attention: a trend seemingly due to the advancement of digitization. In fact, the increased presence of visually available material online, so beneficial and stimulating to manuscript studies, tends to diminish scholarly awareness of varieties of dimension, as digitized codices are generally assimilated, hence uniformed, to the size of the screen.

Yet, size and format of handwritten books are seminal for their visual organization, being often related to the status of such documents while indicating the socio-economic conditions of their formation as well as their symbolical standing and functional purpose, pointing thus also to customers and users and their practices of reading.

The workshop focuses on manuscripts of Christian, Jewish and Islamic traditions, being typically based on previous revelations in form of scriptures. This emphasis seems to stand to reason, as these “religions of the book”, as they are often called, offer particularly insightful evidence of extravagant sizes and proportions in the field of scriptural and ritual books. We know small-format formats of biblical manuscripts and likewise of the Koran, but also giant Bibles, oblong books of Christian liturgy or square Korans, not forgetting the Jewish tradition of recording scriptural tradition on scrolls.

The workshop will thus aim at discussing factors that determined the choice of outstanding dimensions or proportions used for books, while also taking into consideration aspects such as coincidences, esthetical biases and semantical messages equally having a share within such formation processes.

Programme

Friday, 24 November, 2:30 pm – 6:45 pm

Session 1

- 2:30 pm – 3:15 pm Felix Heinzer and Bruno Reudenbach
Welcome and Introduction
- 3:15 pm – 4:00 pm Patrick Andrist (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München)
*The Greek biblical Pandects of the 4th and 5th century: How
Much Oversized?*
- 4:00 pm – 4:30 pm Coffee Break

Session 2

- 4:30 pm – 5:15 pm Chiara Ruzzier (Université de Namur)
*Giant or Portable? The Size of the Latin Bibles Between
Function and Materiality*
- 5:15 pm – 6:00 pm Tina Bawden (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor)
*Visual Implications of Narrow Manuscript Formats in Early
Medieval England*
- 6:00 pm – 6:45 pm Marco Heiles (Universität Hamburg)
*A Secular Book with Extravagant Format: The Middle High
German 'Zurich Love Letters' (ca. 1300)*

Saturday, 25 November, 9:30 am – 1:00 pm

Session 3

- 9:30 am – 10:15 am Annett Martini (Freie Universität Berlin)
*The Adherence to the Scroll in the Jewish Liturgical Tradition
from Historical ritual, and Theological Perspectives*

10:15 am – 11:00 am

Alain Fouad George (University of Oxford)
Geometry, Proportion, and their Meaning in early Qur'ans

11:00 am – 11 :30 am

Coffee Break

Session 4

11:30 am – 12:15 pm

Andrew Irving (University of Groningen)
*Proportional Representation: Considering the Proportions of
Early Medieval Mass Books*

12:15 pm– 1:00 pm

Andreas Haug (Universität Würzburg)
*Taller than Wide: The Book of the Carolingian Cantor and its
Late Antique Background*

Abstracts & Contributors

Chiara Ruzzier (Université de Namur)

Giant or Portable? The Size of the Latin Bibles Between Function and Materiality

Saturday, 24 November, 4:30 pm – 5:15 pm

The medieval production of Latin Bibles is characterised by a large number of pandects, i.e. manuscripts containing the complete Old and New Testaments in one volume, conceived as a single, materially homogeneous object. From the beginning of their production in the 7th century to the 15th century, they were produced in a wide variety of formats, from giant to pocket, and were used for different purposes. Their manufacture has always been a material challenge, because of the length of the sacred text to be compressed into a single object. This talk will provide an overview of the chronological evolution of the size of Latin pandects, based on a census of around 2,700 preserved manuscripts. The size will be correlated with their function and material structure, while presenting some cases of extreme dimensions.

Marco Heiles (Universität Hamburg)

A Secular Book with Extravagant Format: The Middle High German 'Zurich Love Letters' (ca. 1300)

Saturday, 24 November, 6:00 pm – 6:45 pm

The so-called 'Zurich Love Letters' ('Zürcher Liebesbriefe') have survived in the smallest surviving German-language manuscript of the Middle Ages. The booklet with the six literary stylised love letters and a Leich (a metrically complex song) in Middle High German was found in Zurich in the middle of the 19th century during renovation work. The booklet, which was written around 1300, consists of eight parchment leaves measuring 6.9 x 4.8 cm. The partially damaged text has since been edited several times and was recently made largely visible by multi-spectral imaging. Due to its extravagant format, the manuscript is an absolute exception within the German-language manuscript tradition. The paper tries to get closer to this phenomenon by means of statistical codicology.

Annett Martini (Freie Universität Berlin)

The Adherence to the Scroll in the Jewish Liturgical Tradition from Historical, Ritual, and Theological Perspectives

Saturday, 25 November, 9:30 am – 10:15 am

It is an extraordinary phenomenon of Jewish scriptural culture that to this day only handwritten scrolls are permitted for ritual use. This is remarkable because the codex as a book form brought great advantages. It is easier to handle and less fragile than a scroll. Furthermore, a section of text can be found much more easily by leafing through the pages than by laboriously unrolling a scroll of several metres' length, which, moreover, can only be inscribed on one side. The individual pages of a codex, on the other hand, can be inscribed on both sides which represents an important economic advantage.

The lecture examines the question of what were the reasons for adhering to the scroll form in the Jewish liturgical tradition. From what time on was the scroll reserved exclusively for liturgical writings? What memories and ideals are associated with the Torah scroll in liturgy? Did the sacred writings of surrounding cultures play a role in the choice of the unusual format?

Alain Fouad George (University of Oxford)

Geometry, Proportion, and their Meaning in early Qur'ans

Saturday, 25 November, 10:15 am – 11:00 am

In the late 7th century, a new tradition of manuscript calligraphy emerged in the Islamic empire, primarily between the eastern Mediterranean and Iraq. While the production of Qur'an manuscripts had started a few decades earlier, with the rise of Islam, it was radically transformed at that date by basing letter forms and the layout on principles of geometry and proportion. These principles would remain the cornerstones of Arabic calligraphy for centuries to come. In this paper, I will give an overview of this process and questions that surround its rationale and meaning.

Andrew J. M. Irving (University of Groningen)

Proportional Representation: Considering the Proportions of Early Medieval Mass Books

Saturday, 25 November, 11:30 am – 12:15 pm

The first time one sees the Sacramentary of Hildoard (Cambrai, Médiathèque municipale, Ms. 164; 811-812), a highly important and much cited witness of the so-called Hadrianum variant of the textual collection of Gregorian sacramentary, it is difficult not to be surprised. The deluxe manuscript, apparently an “authentic” copy of the manuscript that Pope Hadrian sent to Charlemagne, is of modest dimensions, but is strikingly narrow in proportion (folio proportion: 0.349). The exception proportion prompts a number of questions: what range proportions are present in early medieval mass books; what relationship do they bear to dimensions; are regional or chronological patterns in evidence, and what can be said about proportion and function? This paper will take a quantitative and comparative approach to addressing these questions.

Andreas Haug (Universität Würzburg)

Taller than Wide: The Book of the Carolingian Cantor and its Late Antique Background

Saturday, 25 November, 15:15 pm – 1:00 pm

Among the books containing the chant repertory of the Carolingian church, two categories can be distinguished: There were those books that were not taken into the church and thus remained invisible to the worshippers; and there were books that the cantor carried in his hands, exposed to the gaze of the audience, when he ascended the ambo to sound his chant from this elevated place. These books, visible to the public, were recognizable from the outside by their format and the material of their cover: They were taller than wide and bound in ivory tablets, often of late antique provenance. Building on recent research by Andreas Pfisterer and Susan Rankin, the late antique background of this genuinely Carolingian book type is re-examined in order to fathom the meaning of its peculiar format.