Kathryn Starkey & Elaine Trehanne

Medieval and Early Modern Studies at Stanford continue to thrive thanks to our stellar faculty, excellent students, and support from the community. We launched CMEMS with three great sessions at the International Medieval Congress at Kalamazoo, and we joined the Medieval Academy’s association for regional Medieval Centers. On campus, this year’s highlights included the first annual Primary Source Symposium, the Medieval Matters lecture series, our rich and lively community of visiting scholars, and our CMEMS Wednesday events, which we plan to continue next year. This year we also inaugurated our Medieval Studies Minor and offered our first round of core courses (“Performing the Middle Ages” and “Medieval Journeys”). Next year we will add “The Digital Middle Ages” and we look forward to posting students’ final projects to our website. Our first Stanford student to graduate with a Minor in Medieval Studies will be Ms. Rukma Sen (English, ’15). We have also rebuilt our website (cmems.stanford.edu), so please visit it for upcoming events and information about CMEMS.

Primary Source Symposium 2014- What is a Primary Source?

Kathryn Starkey

With the increasing availability of editions, images, simulacra, facsimiles, and immersive experiences what, in today’s academy, constitutes a primary source? This fall, CMEMS welcomed leading international scholars to the Stanford Humanities Center for the first annual Primary Source Symposium, an interdisciplinary event that posed this question to researchers from across the arts and humanities. It was generously supported by the Senior Associate Dean for the Humanities & Arts, Debra Satz; the Stanford Humanities Center; the Departments of Religious Studies, Classics, East Asian Studies, History, English; and the Division of Literatures, Cultures, and Languages. The second Stanford Primary Source Symposium (Nov. 12-14, 2015) will consider “The Phenomenology of the Source.” It asks: How can we get at the impact of cultural artifacts across space and time from their first moment of reception and at specific historical points? How do we understand the experiential narratives in which they were embedded? How do we define 'aura'? Keynote speakers will include Bissera Pentcheva (Art History, Stanford), Niklaus Largier (German and Comparative Literature, UC Berkeley), JoAnn Taricani (Music History, U Washington, Seattle).

Medieval Matters Lecture Series

Jessica Beckman

The Medieval Matters lecture series presents talks by internationally acclaimed speakers on medieval ideas and the modern world. In 2014-15, Dr. Victoria Sweet (Clinical Medicine, UCSF), spoke on “Hildegard of Bingen: Medieval Lessons for Modern Medicine.” As director of Laguna Honda Hospital and Rehabilitation Center in San Francisco, Sweet translated the medieval abbess’s holistic perspectives into slow and effective medical care for vulnerable members of the community. Professors David Carpenter (King’s College London) and Jack Rakove (Stanford) celebrated the 800th anniversary of Magna Carta. Dr. Carpenter has recently released a landmark study of the document; Dr. Rakove is the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of Original Meanings: Politics and Ideas in the Making of the Constitution. Most recently, Professor Tanya Luhrmann (Stanford) asked, “Visions and Voices: What do we make of them?” Luhrmann has conducted three decades of ethnographic and experimental research on visionary and voice-hearing experiences. The Medieval Matters Lecture series is co-sponsored by CMEMS, the Stanford Office of Continuing Studies, the Office of Religious Life, and the longstanding community group, the Sarum Seminar.

Honors & Awards


Morten Steen Hansen received the Samuel H. Kress Senior Fellowship at the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts at the National Gallery, Washington DC.

Michelle Karnes was promoted to Associate Professor of English.

Ivan Lupić will be a short-term fellow at the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, DC, in the academic year 2015/16.

Jesse Rodin was promoted to Associate Professor last May, and received the Prix Banneux from the Université Libre de Bruxelles for scholarship on the history, culture, and geography of Wallonia.
The Burke Collection
Beatrice Kitzinger

On Saturday, Feb. 7, the students of ARTHIST 109/309, "The Art of the Book in the Medieval World" visited the home of Stanford alumnus Bob Burke to study his splendid collection of Italian manuscript painting. The students examined the original paintings, mostly leaves and cuttings from choir books dating from the late thirteenth through the fifteenth century with close attention to the variations in painting technique, page design, and image composition embodied by the wide range of works in Mr. Burke's collection. The course is designed around Stanford's fine collection of manuscript facsimiles and the holdings of Green Library's Special Collections. The visit added an important opportunity for students to engage with medieval pieces and consider the questions raised by these fine paintings in light of the work accomplished in class. The trip was kindly supported by the Department of Art and Art History.

Digging Deeper
Elaine Treharne

As well as providing in-depth paleographical teaching on campus this year (including an ‘Advanced Paleography’ class), Elaine Treharne led the launch of an innovative and highly successful free online Medieval Manuscripts course, called ‘Digging Deeper: Making Manuscripts.’ The team of scholars and instructors from Stanford and the University of Cambridge included Dr. Benjamin Albritton (Stanford DLSS), Dr. Orietta Da Rold (St John’s, Cambridge), Dr. Suzanne Paul (Cambridge University Library), Dr. Kenneth Ligda, Colin Reeves-Fortney, and Jonathan Quick (Stanford). The course attracted 4500 participants from all over the world. The team followed students’ progress through the online forums, Twitter, and Facebook. It resulted in high levels of student satisfaction and positive feedback from colleagues at other institutions. A second, five-week course, ‘Digging Deeper: The Form and Function of Medieval Manuscripts’, features Stanford professors Ronald Egan and Alexander Key, Library conservators, and Stanford’s own digital photography team. We’re hoping for the same level of success with this course, and plan new materials on paleography and Old English next year. On-campus, students have identified, transcribed, and edited fragments and documents from among our Special Collections’ corpus of medieval materials, which are under revision for publication in a new series launched by Elaine Treharne and Benjamin Albritton.

Performing the Middle Ages: A CMEMS Core Course
Marisa Galvez

In this introductory course, we investigate three modes of performance in medieval culture through a study of lyric, manuscripts, and theatre. The final project, whether as research paper or creative project, reflects upon medieval performance as the reconstruction of a literary artifact as well as an act of creative, historically informed re-interpretation. So that the students can be immersed in all aspects of medieval performance, the course consults manuscripts in Special Collections and includes a class visit from musicians of medieval song. In this year’s class, one student made a creative ‘mash-up’ of Taylor Swift music videos to demonstrate how she uses troubadour performativity in the different roles she constructs for herself. In these creative projects, the students were encouraged to deploy strategies used by medieval authors or scribes to creatively interpret medieval texts, critically engaging with issues of performance covered in the course.

CMEMS New Faces

This year CMEMS gained various new participants, we caught up with three of them to ask some burning questions:

Fiona Griffiths, Visiting Professor of History
Luke Sunderland, External Faculty Fellow, Stanford Humanities Center
Frederic Clark, Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow, History
Fiona: I came fairly late to Medieval Studies (and even to history). As an undergraduate, I thought I would study physics and math, which I did for my first year. An interest in Celtic Studies took me to Glasgow for my third year, and there I “discovered” medieval history through an amazing course.

Luke: As an undergraduate, I had studied ancient and modern languages, history, literature and political theory. So working on medieval culture offered a way of bringing those things together; the interdisciplinarity of the field was very attractive.

Frederic: I actually came to the early modern period by way of Classics and Medieval Studies. Having studied these earlier periods, I was fascinated by the multiple legacies of diverse strands of the past that shaped the centuries between the Renaissance and the Enlightenment.

Fiona: It is an enormously vibrant discipline that has been at the forefront of new developments in humanistic enquiry over the past thirty years. New sources and subjects (among them material objects, non-human actors, landscapes and geographies, both natural and imagined) are poised to reshape how we think about the “medieval”, and so to redefine the discipline.

Luke: I think that medieval studies has a lot to contribute to the ongoing great debates of the humanities: in animal studies, ecocriticism, new materialism, object ontology, the future of the book, and other areas, medievalists can take a leading role.

Frederic: This is a very exciting time to be an early modernist. In geographic terms, much important work is now being done to uncover a truly global early modern, especially in the history of science and intellectual history. New methods have created new fields; book history and the study of marginalia have helped transform approaches.

How did you become interested in Medieval/Early Modern Studies?

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Where do you see the discipline going?

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Stanford Libraries

David Jordan

Curators Kathleen Smith, John Mustain, and David Jordan seek primary source materials, and books made by or for women and vernacular texts, for CMEMS. A key acquisition this year was a manuscript on paper ca. 1455 and now the only complete copy in the U.S. of the melded local and world chronicle of Jakob Twinger von Königshofen. Written for a sophisticated lay audience and widely popular for its fusion of genres, it was the first prose chronicle written in the German vernacular and the forerunner of the Nuremberg and other city chronicles. Purchased at auction were a 1551 edition of Alciati’s Emblemata interleaved and used as an Album Amicorum by a student of Ingolstadt University who hand colored both emblems and coats-of-arms, and a substantial 13th-century fragment comprising 49 nearly consecutive folia of Pseudo-Albertus Magnus’s encyclopedic De Laudibus Beatae Mariae Virginis. Binding fragments acquired as paleographical specimens included a nearly contemporaneous leaf of Guido de Colonna’s famous work on the siege of Troy. A number of fine facsimiles including an illustrated Parzival and several early printed books were also newly acquired.

Stanford’s Digital Manuscript Programs

Ben Albritton

The Stanford University Libraries continue to digitize and make available our medieval holdings. Our main goal in the year ahead is to make all of our digitized medieval material easily discoverable and usable in a variety of ways. To date, all of our major teaching collections have been digitized and will be made available in Searchworks, the library’s online catalog. We have also embarked on a program of digitizing our bound manuscripts. The long-term plan is to have all of our codices fully digitized and accessible for teaching and research. We are offering a number of different methods of accessing our manuscripts online. Some works-in-progress include:

- Spotlight: a tool for providing slightly more specialized access to our manuscript collections. In it, you can search across Stanford’s manuscript holdings. We have also made available a number of browsable collections and curated groupings.
- Mirador: A viewing environment, developed at Stanford in collaboration with a number of other institutions, that supports deep-zooming, comparison, and annotation of our holdings. In addition, we continue to offer a growing number of resources held at institutions outside of Stanford.
- Walters Manuscripts: We currently serve and preserve about 300 objects from the Walters Art Museum, and are continually adding more.
- Parker on the Web: Stanford is the technical partner for a collaboration with Corpus Christi College Cambridge and the Cambridge University Library to deliver high resolution images of about 560 manuscripts spanning over a thousand years.

cmems.stanford.edu
This three-week Bing Overseas Program Summer Seminar will be investigating the context of Magna Carta, sealed by King John in June 1215. We’ll be examining Magna Carta first hand, and exploring its history, together with the implications it might have had for the close relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom. In particular, the seminar seeks to capitalize on and celebrate the 800th anniversary of Magna Carta with this seminar held in Salisbury, where the finest surviving copy of the four extant originals survives on display in the Cathedral, which was itself founded in 1220. We’ll tour the cathedral and city; visit Old Sarum and Stonehenge; and spend time visiting Windsor, Hereford, Worcester, and Winchester.

A unique opportunity will be a five-day visit to West Wales where an alternative view of ‘liberty’ will be presented as we tour castles belonging to the English and the Welsh, and learn about the struggle against the English monarchy by those subjected to conquest in the twelfth century onward. The seminar, with fifteen undergraduate participants, will finish with a three-day tour of Medieval London.

Going Medieval
Kathryn Starkey
The upper Rhine region that borders on France, Germany, and Switzerland has been the site of conflict and exchange since the early Middle Ages. Today this area is characterized by its blended culture, multi-lingualism, and its medieval heritage that forms an important part of the region’s identity. Since the Middle Ages it has been an economic and political center of Europe. In this seminar Stanford undergraduates will have the opportunity to explore this region, observing the ways in which past and present intersect. Topics of discussion will include the roles of Christianity, Judaism, mysticism, and secularism in the rise of the city; the development of institutions such as universities and monasteries; the expansion of trade; innovations in urban design and architecture; and literary culture and artistic production. We will also visit Constance, the French towns of Strasbourg, Colmar, and Kaysersberg, and the Swiss city of Basel. Students will participate in collaborative work with German students at the University of Freiburg to produce an app on Going Medieval along the Upper Rhine.