

La numérisation des manuscrits médiévaux en France : état des lieux

Digitizing Manuscripts in France (abstract)

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October 13, 2000, the Ecole nationale des Chartes, the CESCUM and the IRHT organized in Paris a symposium called "Digitizing Medieval Manuscripts". Fourteen years later, it seems useful to analyse the current situation.

In France, 30 000 Medieval manuscripts are kept in various types of libraries (National Library, Public libraries, Academic libraries) which depend on the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education . Budgets are tight everywhere and most libraries lack money and staff. As a consequence, librarians often have to make difficult choices regarding their digitization programs. Moreover, the selection of manuscripts is not always based on scientific criteria. A lot of illuminated manuscripts have been digitised because of their attractiveness: librarians and elected representatives hope that it will reflect positively on their city or region.

Manuscripts are promoted online in many different ways: some websites show only the collections of a particular library, some try to recreate a medieval library from various collections, and sometimes only the illuminations are available online. Neither *Gallica* nor *Patrimoine numérique* give an access to all French projects devoted to written heritage.

On websites it is often difficult to find information about the ongoing projects (which manuscript will be digitized soon?) and to search for a manuscript (the quality of indexation is rarely sufficient for researchers, especially in iconography and literature). Furthermore descriptions of manuscripts are often minimal and do not take into account recent scientific findings.