

Le réseau Ménéstrel

The Ménéstrel Network (abstract)

Christine DUCOURTIEUX
Laboratoire de médiévistique occidentale de Paris

Ménéstrel held its first meeting on 5 June 1997. It was initiated by the Paris URFIST (Unité régionale de formation à l'information scientifique et technique) in order to develop a documentation network for medieval studies on the Internet. The workgroup was built around the editorial board of *Le Médiéviste et l'Ordinateur*, together with scholars and documentation specialists from various organisations. The initial purpose of Ménéstrel has developed over the years. Promoting the use of the Internet in the research activities of historians, assessing available resources and contributing to the recognition of medieval scholarship on the worldwide web have remained our principal goals, but in 2007 we started to realise the importance of combining "traditional" and new tools and approaches. In the field of heuristics, the methodological gap between generations is becoming a major challenge.

Ménéstrel has always thought of itself as a network in the original sense as defined by geographers: a space of communication and exchange between people and places, "cyberspace" being an extension rather than a substitution. The Warsaw meeting is a new step because it aims to put "objects" on the web (in this case: manuscripts). The Ménéstreles are aware that there is some urgency in the scholarly world to durably establish resources originating from short-term projects and therefore threatened to disappear in the long run. Only a solid international network can make them known, put them online and possibly guarantee their development and sustainability. Ménéstrel does not pretend to be that network, but prefigures it.