

Books and Libraries within Monasteries

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“One praises medieval libraries more than one knows them.” (Paul Lehmann)

Books within the Monastery: A Tour

To Jerome of Mondsee (d. 1475), master of the University of Vienna and proponent of the Melk reform, the omnipresence of books within monasteries was self-evident. He expressed this sentiment in the title of his short work “Remarks that religious should have table readings, not only in the refectory, but also in other places (within the monastery).”¹ Reading aloud was thought to make the contents of a text more accessible, individual reading to promote introspection, and above all, to encourage compliance with the rule of silence, since reading aloud to one’s self was not the same as talking. Humbert of Romans (1200–77), Dominican master general, wrote in his instructions for the various offices of the order that the librarian was to open the library regularly, but also to ensure that the books that most of the brothers did not personally possess were located in “appropriate places of silence,” usually chained to desks.² Although the most extensive book collections were usually kept within the confines of the library, books could be found in many other places throughout the community.

The early eighth-century Codex Amiatinus provides one of our earliest visualizations of a medieval book collection from a monastic setting. This manuscript was produced at the monastery of Wearmouth–Jarrow in Northumbria, but was based upon a sixth-century manuscript from Italy, the

¹ *Mittelalterliche Bibliothekskataloge Deutschlands und der Schweiz* (hereafter MBK), 4 vols. (Munich, 1918–2009), 4/2:796.

² Humbert of Romans, *Instructiones de officiis ordinis*, in *Opera de vita regulari* 2, ed. Joachim J. Berthier (Rome, 1889), 263–6 (chapter XIII: *De officio librarii*).

Codex Grandior of Cassiodorus (d. c. 583) (now lost). The portrait of Ezra on folio 5r of the Codex Amiatinus, likely based on a depiction of Cassiodorus in the exemplar, includes a five-tiered book cabinet with nine volumes laid on the shelves. If we assume that this cabinet is emblematic of medieval *armaria*, we have at least one basic unit of collection organization: small groups of books shelved horizontally in individual cabinets. The books themselves frequently reveal such shelving practices with the title or shelfmark written along the edge or cover of the book (not the spine). *Armaria*, book chests or cabinets, organized and protected monastic book collections, not only in independent library rooms but for the entire book collection dispersed around the monastery. Thus, the monk responsible for caring for the books was frequently called the *armarius*.³ By the end of the fifteenth century, some monastic book collections numbered several thousand volumes. As book collections grew, so too did the space of the library, and dispersed *armaria* coalesced into more centralized libraries.

The content of the literature, but especially the physical form that it took (e.g. format, binding, layout, and material, whether paper or parchment), whether or not it was chained, and its location within the monastic enclosure depended on its respective function and the context of its use in the everyday life of the religious community. We will begin this tour of the various places in which books were located with a view into the choir, and we will end in the library.

Books in the Choir, Church, and Sacristy: Liturgical Books

A monastic community's most precious and essential books were used for service in the choir and for other liturgical purposes.⁴ Such books were often beautifully and richly decorated large-format volumes, whose canon depended on the community's order affiliation. They were usually considered part of the church treasury (*ornamenta ecclesie*), and were therefore inventoried with the chalices and liturgical clothing, and stored in wall cabinets or chests within the sacristy, on stands in the choir, or in chapels.⁵ A characteristic example of the size and composition of a collection of choir books from the high Middle Ages is that inventoried at the end of the eleventh century at the

³ Margot Fassler, "The Office of the Cantor in Early Western Monastic Rules and Customaries: A Preliminary Investigation," *Early Music History* 5 (1985): 37–40.

⁴ On monastic liturgy, see the articles by Jeffery, Blennemann, Billett, Griffiths, Muschiol, and Boynton in this volume.

⁵ See the article by Gajewski and Seeberg in this volume.

monastery of Weihestephán, which comprised approximately twenty-three volumes.⁶ A missal, gradual, and book of sequences were kept in the chapel of the abbot (*ad capellam abbatis*). Two additional missals with graduals and sequences were kept in the main choir, together with four lectionaries, an epistolary, and a Gospel book. Two volumes of nocturns without musical notation (*duo nocturnales absque cantu*), divided into winter and summer parts, two antiphonals with a hymnal, and two psalters with graduals, sequences, and a hymnal likewise belonged in the main choir. A gradual belonged to the *schola* (*unum gradale ad scholas*).⁷

In 1429, after Hussites attacked the house of Augustinian hermits in Schöntal, the community wrote an assessment of the damage with an inventory of all of the community's movable goods.⁸ Three rubricated titles within this inventory differentiated between the three large collections—housed in the choir, the sacristy, and the library (*libri chorales*, *libri sacristie*, *libri liberarie*). Together with the graduals, psalters, passionals, and antiphonals kept in the choir were a legendary, a martyrology, the *Dialogues* of Gregory the Great (r. 590–604), a rule, a Life of St. Augustine, and a *liber ordinarius*.⁹

Libri ordinarii provided the directions for the performance of liturgy. They often included additional texts that served as *memoria* for the interaction of the different groups within a monastic community, including clerics, nuns, and lay sisters or brothers.¹⁰ One well-worn exemplar survives from the old double monastery of Nivelles (“Harvard University, Houghton Library,” MS Lat. 422), a book that preserves resolutions of the chapter relevant to both the women's and the men's communities.¹¹ Books such as the “Notel der Küsterin,” which survives from the Dominican women's monastery in Nuremberg, also belonged to the stock of service books used to coordinate and organize the liturgical duties of the different groups within a religious institution.¹² This was used as a reference book for the ins and outs of the daily liturgical routine, including, for example, details about which bells were to be

⁶ MBK 4/2:649–50. See also Bernhard Bischoff, ed., *Mittelalterliche Schatzverzeichnisse*, Vol. 1: *Von der Zeit Karls des Großen bis zur Mitte des 13. Jahrhunderts* (Munich, 1967).

⁷ MBK 4/2:650.

⁸ MBK 4/1:498–503.

⁹ MBK 4/1:499.

¹⁰ Charles Caspers and Louis van Tongeren, eds., *Unitas in pluralitate: Libri Ordinarii as a Source for Cultural History* (Münster, 2015).

¹¹ Jeffrey Hamburger and Eva Schlotheuber, eds., *The Liber Ordinarius of Nivelles* (Tübingen, forthcoming).

¹² Nuremberg, Stadtbibliothek, Cent.VII, 16 (das Notel der Küsterin, St. Katharina Nürnberg, 1436). See also Lena Vosding, ed., “Edition und Kommentierung von HS Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg, Cent. VII, 16 (das Notel der Küsterin, St Katharina Nürnberg, 1436)” (forthcoming).

rung at which times and for how long; how long the matutinal was to be read; the readings for and precedence of certain feast days; and how the altars were to be decorated for individual feast days; as well as strictly practical matters such as how the paraments (ecclesiastical hangings or vestments) were to be cleaned and maintained.

The regular canons in Schöntal also had a stock of books in the sacristy that were used for intricate masses on high feast days: five missals, another *plenarium*, an *anniversarium*, and a “new and complete” breviary. Additional special *liturgica* were needed in individual places of liturgical remembrance within the monastery church. At the end of the fifteenth century, for example, Leonhard Wagner (known as “Wirstlin,” d. 1522), a monk of Augsburg who was widely recognized—even by the emperor himself, who used his services—as a maker of representative liturgical codices, included in his *Legend and History of the Holy Sintbert with Notes Regarding his Body in the Grave* (*Legenda et historia in notis de sancto Simperto ad corpus eius in sepulcro*) an annotated set of instructions for the yearly festivities that were to take place at the grave of the former Augsburg bishop, Sintbert (d. 807).¹³ The stone Roman sarcophagus is still intact today in the Church of St. Ulrich and St. Afra.

Over time, books found in the choir and the sacristy accumulated to form impressive collections. At the end of the fifteenth century, the Dominicans in Altenhofenau owned seventy-one liturgical manuscripts and printed books.¹⁴ In 1466, the Benedictine monks of Münsterschwarzach recorded the possession of sixty-six books for daily use in their choir, in addition to seventeen liturgical books in the narrower sense. At this time, the collection was already considered relatively heterogeneous, with books both “bound and unbound, in good and bad condition, small and large” (*ein teil eingepunden, ein teil ungepunden, gut und böss, klein und gross*).¹⁵ In the Franciscan monastery of Göttingen, some of the forty-seven choir books listed in the library inventory were chained and locked to stands within the church.¹⁶

Precious choir manuscripts are relatively abundant among surviving medieval books, although their origins and exact classification are often unclear,

¹³ MBK 3/1:43–56. See also Rolf Schmidt, *Reichenau und St. Gallen. Ihre literarische Überlieferung zur Zeit des Klosterhumanismus in St. Ulrich und Afra zu Augsburg um 1500* (Sigmaringen, 1985), 152–77.

¹⁴ Bayerische Landesbibliothek, “Bücher für die Liturgie,” www.bayerische-landesbibliothek-online.de/altenhofenau (date of last access: 31 August 2018).

¹⁵ MBK 4/2:923–4.

¹⁶ Eva Schlotheuber, *Die Franziskaner in Göttingen. Die Geschichte des Klosters und seiner Bibliothek* (Werl, 1996), 44.

and it is rare that much is known about how and where they were created. An exception to this are the richly illuminated choir books made by the Cologne Poor Clare Loppa of Spiegel (d. after 1370). She wrote and illuminated the famous missal for Konrad of Rennenberg (d. 1357), the dean of Cologne Cathedral, in 1350 (Diözesan- und Dombibliothek Köln, Cod. 149). Another “Loppa” codex, now located in Stockholm, contains the following inscription:

Sister Jutta of Alfter bought this book with her own means and alms (*cum suis expensis et elemosinis*). Pray for her. And sister Loppa of Spiegel completed it, wrote it, drew the staves, added the musical notation, and illustrated it (*scribendo, liniando, notando, illuminando*); she does not want to be excluded from your hearts ... in the year 1350, while the great pestilence raged.¹⁷

Jutta of Alfter, who had entered St. Clare at a young age in 1313 and died a few years later, financed the production of the codex using her own *Eintrittsgelder* (money given by her family at the time of her entrance into the community). The Dominican nuns of Paradies bei Soest similarly wrote beautiful and unusual choir books for their own communities and for the brothers in Dortmund.¹⁸

Books for the Community: The Chapter House

In the sacral hierarchy of spaces, the chapter house, generally located in the eastern wing of the monastery, comes just below the choir. The community gathered here daily to plan the day's events and discuss discipline.¹⁹ It was also an established place for communal reading, and thus for special books of the community. During the eleventh century, the monks of Weihestephane apparently did not have a library in the literal sense. Their “other books”—that is, the books that were not used in the choir—were kept in separate collections in the chapter house according to their use, whether for reading in the refectory or for the *collatio* ([a]lii libri a fratribus in capitolio et ad mensam et ad collationes legendi).²⁰

¹⁷ Stockholm, Kongl. Bibl., Cod. holm. A 172, fol. 106v; see also Renate Mattick, “Drei Chorbücher aus dem Kölner Klarissenkloster im Besitz von Sulpiz Boisserée,” *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch* 58 (1998): 59–101.

¹⁸ Jeffrey Hamburger, Eva Schlottheuber, Susan Marti, and Margot Fassler, eds., *Liturgical Life and Latin Learning at Paradies bei Soest, 1300–1425: Inscription and Illumination in the Choir Books of a North German Dominican Convent*, 2 vols. (Münster, 2017).

¹⁹ On the material objects and artistic features of the medieval chapter house, see Heidrun Stein-Kecks, *Der Kapitelsaal in der mittelalterlichen Klosterbaukunst. Studien zu den Bildprogrammen* (Munich and Berlin, 2004). On this room, see also the article by Cochelin in this volume.

²⁰ MBK 4/2:650.

Books stored in the chapter house were typically heavily used, which is often demonstrated by the worn state of those that still exist today. One famous example of a chapter office book survives from St. Gall (Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 915, mid-ninth century), which contains, in addition to lists of confraternities and a list of the abbots of the monastery, the *Rule of St. Benedict* (RB), the *Rule of St. Augustine*, and many other rules, as well as *computus* texts, a martyrology, and a necrology, since this book was used daily in the chapter to remember not only the community's own dead brothers but also others from outside who were part of the confraternity.²¹

A lectern for reading is frequently the only piece of furniture mentioned in references to the chapter house. Our knowledge of the books used in this building (besides the chapter book) is somewhat limited, as texts such as visitation protocols, which were to be read regularly during the chapter meeting, belonged primarily to the administrative records and were thus generally not included in inventories of monastic book collections.

The chapter house was a place for special exhortations and announcements to the community. The former took place in the distinctive form of the chapter address, as for example preserved in the text of Charitas Pirchheimer's Christmas address to her own convent (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cgm 4439 fols. 57v–60r). Monastic rules and customs typically prescribe a distribution of books at Lent in the chapter house.²² The late twelfth-century list from Mondsee Abbey in Austria perhaps represents one such distribution, with individual titles followed by a monk's name: *Augustinus super XV gradus*, *Willelmus. Passionarum magnum*, *Adalbertus*, and so on.²³ It was the duty of the librarian, who was frequently also the *vestiarius* or cantor, to oversee this distribution and maintain records on the condition of the collection. Among the Cistercians, the distribution traditionally took place on the first Sunday in Lent and the books laid down were handed out following the abbot's cue.²⁴

²¹ Johanne Autenrieth, "Der Codex Sangallensis 915: ein Beitrag zur Erforschung der Geschichte der Kapitelloffiziumsbücher," in *Landesgeschichte und Geistesgeschichte. Festschrift für Otto Herding zum 65. Geburtstag* (Stuttgart, 1977), 42–55. On chapter books, see Jean-Loup Lemaître, "Liber capituli: le livre du chapitre, des origines aux XVIe siècle. L'exemple français," in "Memoria." *Der geschichtliche Zeugniswert des liturgischen Gedenkens im Mittelalter*, ed. Karl Schmid and Joachim Wollasch (Munich, 1984), 625–48.

²² Benjamin Victor, "Aux origines de la bibliothèque monastique: la distribution du Carême," *Scriptorium* 50 (1996): 247–53.

²³ Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 1314, fol. 100v. See also Herbert Paulhart, ed., *Mittelalterliche Bibliothekskataloge Österreichs*, vol. 5 (Vienna, Cologne, and Graz, 1971), no. 16, 71.

²⁴ Danièle Choisselet and Placide Vernet, eds., *Les Ecclesiastica officia cisterciens du XIIème siècle. Texte latin selon les manuscrits édités de Trente 1711, Ljubljana 31 et Dijon 114* (Reiningue, 1989), 324.

It is also possible that the *liber ordinarius* was occasionally on hand in the chapter house.

Books in the Cloister

The traditional place for private reading was the northern range of the cloister, directly bordering the nave of the church.²⁵ In the high Middle Ages, this area was often laid out, as was the case at the monastery of Königsutter, with two aisles with a row of columns and seats on either side. There was often a book chest (*armarium*) kept in the cloister. In a Cistercian monastery, according to the *Ecclesiastica officia* (c. 1120/1130), the *armarium* was situated in the northern range of the cloister, under the dormitory stairs, a space used for private reading and meditation. Lamps were usually lit in front of the *armarium* and in the chapter house to accommodate monks or nuns who might come together there after vigils for individual reading, a longstanding tradition that stemmed from the beloved and universally well-known *Collationes patrum* of John Cassian (d. 435) (*Ecclesiastica officia* 74.3). If someone had to leave during the reading period, they were to put their book away in the *armarium* or tell their neighbor to look after it for them (*Ecclesiastica officia* 11.9). After the evening *collatio*, the *armarium* was to be locked. In 1188, the Statutes of the General Chapter stipulated that works on canon law, and Gratian's (d. 1144/5) *Decretum* in particular, were not to be kept in the communal book cabinet (*in communi armario*) because confusion about legal and theological issues could ensue and potentially lead to heresy.²⁶

The significant deterioration of the climate toward the end of the thirteenth century led to a change in the use of the north range of the cloister. In many monasteries, cloisters were glassed in during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and there are descriptions of the late medieval library room at Tegernsee that mention a *stuba collationis*, a heated chamber for evening reading. The reading conditions of the *stuba collationis* were nevertheless maintained at Tegernsee in accordance with the mandates of

²⁵ Peter Klein, ed., *Der mittelalterliche Kreuzgang. Architektur, Funktion und Programm / The medieval cloister / Le cloître au Moyen Âge* (Regensburg, 2004).

²⁶ Joseph Canivez, ed., *Statuta capitulorum generalium ordinis Cisterciensis ab anno 1116 ad annum 1786*, vol. 1 (Louvain, 1933), 108 (ad annum 1188). On the study of canon law in monasteries, see the article by Rolker in this volume.

the reform, with duplicate copies of the *Liber de spiritualibus ascensionibus* by Gerhard Zerbold of Zutphen for the entire community.²⁷

The Refectory: Books for Reading during Meals

Books that were meant for table reading were kept in the refectory. The texts chosen for refectory reading were usually related to the content and meaning of the spiritual life of the community: exegetical writings of the Church fathers, sermons or moral tales, and the Lives of saints who exemplified monastic virtues. The significance of table reading is made clear, for example, by the importance that the statutes of the Melk reform placed on the office of *emendator lectoris mensae*, who was charged with monitoring the accuracy of the person reading aloud and carrying out the duties of the librarian.²⁸ The offices of table reader and *correctrix mense* were also known in female Dominican communities, where those who held such positions were to provide good and carefully corrected reading material that was both useful and consoling.²⁹

The catalog of refectory readings from the Dominican monastery of St. Katharina in Nuremberg, compiled by Sister Kunigunde Niklasin (d. 1457) in the middle of the fifteenth century, provides a good overview of the type of literature that was available for this purpose.³⁰ The catalog begins, like the Church year, with the first Sunday in Advent, and specifies which texts were to be read on every subsequent Sunday (and often also for the individual weekdays), complete with a short description of the text's themes, the page number on which the reading should begin, and a precise shelfmark indicating its former place on the pulpit in the library (in the formal sense of the term). The catalog lists fifty-three manuscripts that encompass a variety of subjects: multiple sermons by a single author arranged according to the cycle of the year, and sermons by individual authors on specific topics, such as the purpose and meaning of rules for fasting, the correct preparation and method of confession, and so on. Guillaume Durand's *Rationale divinorum*

²⁷ MBK 4/2:784.

²⁸ Joachim Angerer, *Die Bräuche der Abtei Tegernsee unter Abt Kaspar Ayndorffer (1426–1461) verbunden mit einer textkritischen Edition der Consuetudines Tegernseenses* (Ottobeuren, 1968), 236.

²⁹ Sara Glenn DeMaris, Johannes Meyer, *Das Amptbuch* (Rome, 2015), chapter 19 ("Der tisch leserin ampt"), 329–31, and chapter 20 ("Der correctrix mense ampt"), 332–4.

³⁰ Antje Willing, *Die Bibliothek des Klosters St. Katharina zu Nürnberg. Synoptische Darstellung der Bücherverzeichnisse*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 2012); Burkhard Hasebrink, "Tischlesung und Bildungskultur im Nürnberger Katharinenkloster: ein Beitrag zu ihrer Rekonstruktion," in *Schule und Schüler im Mittelalter*, ed. Martin Kintzinger, Sönke Lorenz, and Michael Walter (Cologne, 1996), 187–216.

officiorum was typically read at least every Sunday in order to impart to the sisters a foundational knowledge of liturgy and its spiritual meaning.³¹ The inventory compiled in 1533, at the time of the dissolution of the Franciscan brothers of Göttingen, lists about fifty volumes that belonged to the refectory collection³²—a number that is quite close to the one reflected in the Nuremberg refectory book catalog.

Books in the Dormitory or in Individual Cells

In men's communities, dormitories or cells were generally located on the top floor of the east range, while women's monasteries with western galleries usually had their sleeping quarters on the top floor of the western range. Community members of both sexes who owned books would usually give them over to the monastery library after their death. This was the case, for example, of Abbot Hartmut of St. Gall (d. after 889), who in 883 earmarked his entire personal collection for incorporation into the community library.³³ Among his collection was a copy of the RB, as well as the *Naturalia bona moralisata* and *computus* of Bede, the *Etymologies* of Isidore of Seville, *The Marriage of Mercury and Philology* by Martianus Capella, Orosius, a medical text, Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, and an artistically rendered map of the world (*mappa mundi opus subtile*). In some communities, abbots and abbesses lived separately from the rest of the community, and they usually had their own reference and study library close by. At the end of the fifteenth century, the abbot of St. Godehard in Hildesheim wanted his copy of the acts of the chapter of the Bursfeld congregation on hand in his *camera*, a manuscript (today Dombibliothek Hildesheim, Hs. 313b) that carried the signature No 115 within the abbot's library. An astronomical manuscript within this private collection bears the signature No 189, suggesting that the library may have numbered around 200 volumes.³⁴

³¹ Willing, *Bibliothek des Klosters St. Katharina*, 1:lix–lx.

³² Schlotheuber, *Die Franziskaner in Göttingen*, 68–9.

³³ MBK 1:86–7; Benedikt Kraft, "Der Bücherrücklass der Minderbrüder Hermann und Johann Sack (1438–1440)," *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 28 (1935): 37–57.

³⁴ See also Eva Schlotheuber and Wolfgang Beckermann, "Die Bibliothek des Godehardiklosters in Hildesheim," in *Wandmalerei in Niedersachsen, Bremen und im Groningerland. Fenster in die Vergangenheit*, 2 vols. (Munich, 2001), 1:108–16; Robert Suckale, *Klosterreform und Buchkunst. Die Handschriften des Mettener Abtes Peter I.* (Petersberg, 2012).

The abbot of Tegernsee wanted to have the *Summa* of Angelus de Clavasio on hand, but this text was also available in a larger format in a more legible text size in the communal dormitory (*Summa Angelica multum egregia, quere in curia et etiam in dormitorio in maiori quantitate et litera*).³⁵ After the reform of the fifteenth century, the Benedictines of Tegernsee again shared a single communal sleeping area. Instead of private book collections in individual cells, this dormitory had a small library of its own with a rather impressive collection of titles. According to the 1483 library catalog, arranged by author, the dormitory contained two biblical concordances and two copies of Hugh of Saint-Cher's (d. 1263) *Postilla on the Four Gospels*; a four-volume *Summa* of Antoninus of Florence;³⁶ an eight-volume *Summa* of the Franciscan Astesanus of Asti, the last volume of which contains definitions of terms from secular and canon law; a *Vocabularius bonus*; the *Catholicon*, a dictionary by the Dominican Johannes Balbus (d. c. 1298) (from Genoa); and the *Summa* for Preachers by his fellow Dominican John Bromyard (d. c. 1352).³⁷ The monks also wanted the glossary *Mater verborum* by Salomon of Constance on hand in the dormitory, and the *Elucidarium* of Honorius Augustodunensis (d. 1150s), a late eleventh-century theological *summa* written as a dialogue between a teacher and his student.³⁸ Unlike the other books listed in the Tegernsee library catalog, these dormitory volumes had no recorded shelfmarks; they comprised their own collection with the character of a small study library.

The core of the book collections in dormitories or in cells usually comprised books that people brought with them when they entered the monastery, generally books that they had inherited or copied themselves. In 1498, a Franciscan provincial chapter in Kempten ruled that the brothers should not allow their private book collections to grow so large that it would cost an exorbitant amount of money to transport them.³⁹ An example of this kind of extensive private collection is reflected in the bequest of books of the Friars Minor Hermann and Johannes Sack.⁴⁰ When Johannes died in 1438, his biological brother Hermann (d. 1440) inherited his books, and the resulting combined collection numbered forty-three volumes, all of which were subsequently given to their home monastery in Munich. The collection of the two brothers reflects a wide range of interests. While the *lector* Johannes was

³⁵ MBK 4/2:765.

³⁶ MBK 4/2:788 and 763.

³⁷ MBK 4/2:807, 834, and 810.

³⁸ MBK 4/2:839 and 793.

³⁹ Schlotheuber, *Die Franziskaner in Göttingen*, 102–4.

⁴⁰ MBK 4/2:691–5.

primarily interested in natural science and philosophy, Hermann's occupation as confessor and guardian strongly influenced his own part of the collection, which mostly comprised theological texts.

When the Regensburg canon and jurist Konrad Ohnesorg (d. after 1483) entered the house of regular canons at Indersdorf in 1478, he brought with him 104 volumes on law and theology that were subsequently cataloged according to their physical material (parchment manuscript, paper manuscript, or print).⁴¹ Nor did Duchess Kunigunde of Bavaria (d. 1520), who joined the community of tertiaries at Püttrichhaus in Munich in 1508, arrive empty-handed. In addition to a number of early printed books, she brought a copy of Dietrich of Plienigen's German translation of Seneca and a translation of the works of John Chrysostom (d. 407)—writings that would not have been easy to come by.⁴² The Söflingen Poor Clares, who at the end of the fifteenth century left their buildings in protest against the impending reform of their monastery, kept psalters in their cells, but also a sizeable number of letters that they had both sent and received, together with the famous *Söflinger Lieder*, songs that they had written down, apparently for their own use.⁴³

Books in the Infirmary

Unfortunately, the books that were kept in the hospital or infirmary are only mentioned rarely. The home for the sick and weak was usually equipped with a chapel in which the basic books for performing the mass were needed. The Cistercian monastery of Wettingen in Aargau lists a psalter and a small missal as the books to be kept in the infirmary chapel.⁴⁴ It has also been speculated that many medicinal and botanical works were kept on hand in the infirmary. However, although the majority of surviving French medieval medicinal manuscripts originated in monasteries, there is almost no evidence in library catalogues or surviving books indicating that they belonged *ad infirmariam*.⁴⁵ The reason for this may be more systematic than coincidental. At the noble Benedictine women's community

⁴¹ MBK 4/2:667–71.

⁴² See also "München, Franziskanertertiarinnen Püttrich-Regelhaus" on the project website *Schriflichkeit in süddeutschen Frauenklöstern*, www.bayerische-landesbibliothek-online.de/sueddeutsche-frauenkloester (date of last access: 31 August 2018).

⁴³ Max Miller, *Die Söflinger Briefe und das Klarissenkloster Söflingen bei Ulm im Spätmittelalter* (Würzburg, 1940).

⁴⁴ MBK 1:415.

⁴⁵ Ernest Wickersheimer, *Les manuscrits latins de médecine du haut Moyen Âge dans les bibliothèques de France* (Paris, 1966). On the practice of medicine within monasteries, see the article by Brenner in this volume.

of Nonnberg (Salzburg) in 1600, for example, no fewer than twenty books were kept in the infirmary and in the room dedicated for the dying; but these books were exclusively intended as aids for spiritual preparation for illness and death. By the fifteenth century, the herbals and the pharmacological and medical texts used in the hospital run by the monks at the foot of the Mönchsberg were to be found in the pharmacy. We can thus assume that medical books were generally used in connection with the infirmary and office of the *infirmarius* / *infirmaria*, and thus they were kept within the facilities from which the pharmacy would develop, while literature of meditation and edification and the *Ars moriendi* were available to the sick and dying within the infirmary itself.

From the *Armarium* to the Desk/Formal Library

Our tour of books in the medieval monastery concludes within a more formal space: the library proper. As discussed above, the monastic library is a dispersed collection. A somewhat fluid institution, it could encompass *armaria* and collections spread throughout the community, as well as an independent room strictly for the storage of books. These definitions changed, of course, throughout the Middle Ages and with the size of the community.

The library at St. Gall provides an example *par excellence* for the Carolingian period, since we have comparatively rich sources describing the contents and conception of the collection, not to mention just over a hundred codices extant from before the tenth century.⁴⁶ One of the most important documents for early medieval library history is the Plan of St. Gall (Codex Sangallensis 1092), produced about 820 at the island monastery of Reichenau.⁴⁷ It provides an image of the perfect monastery equipped with all of the necessary facilities for cloistered life. At the northeast corner of the church is a two-story room with the inscription *Infra sedes scribentium, supra bibliotheca* ("Below the seats for writing, above the library"). The plan includes desks for scribes interspersed with windows, and we can only assume that the ideal library above would have been organized in a similar fashion, with *armaria* in place of the scribal desks.

⁴⁶ See Anton von Euw, *Die St. Galler Buchkunst vom 8. bis zum Ende des 11. Jahrhunderts*, 2 vols. (St. Gall, 2008).

⁴⁷ On the Plan of St. Gall and an image of the Plan, see the article by Lauwers in this volume.

The Plan of St. Gall provides a theoretical framework for the location of the library in monastic life, and we must be careful about ascribing too much architectural reality to this drawing. The mid-ninth century catalog from St. Gall (see below) does not record shelfmarks or locations for any of the titles, so it is unclear whether or not the collection was contained within a single room as prescribed in the plan.⁴⁸ Existing architectural evidence for early library rooms is scant, while documentary evidence more frequently refers to multiple places for books around a monastery, rather than a single “library” room.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, this pattern began to change in the thirteenth century as institutions centralized and reorganized their growing book collections.

The Stages of Development of a Monastic Library: The Example of St. Godehard in Hildesheim

The monastery of St. Godehard in Hildesheim offers one of the earliest and most interesting surviving examples of a medieval monastic library, strictly speaking. Most of the east range of the cloister has survived from the period of the foundation (c. 1160–1170). On the ground floor, the choir is connected to the sacristy in the classic layout, and separated from the chapter room by a narrow space of unknown function. Above the sacristy, and following the same floor plan, is the former library, a roughly square room (3 meters by 3 meters), even though it was not identified as such at the foundation. Its cross-arched vaults rest on variously contoured columns or wall projections. An iron-covered door (twelfth century) in the south wall provided access, and three windows in the east wall let in the necessary light.

Although Edgar Lehmann, one of the best authorities on medieval library rooms, was not aware of this particular example, he identified the space above the sacristy as the classic place for the monastery library.⁵⁰ While there is no written evidence for the use of this space at St. Godehard during its founding period, the assumed function of this room as a library is supported by the

⁴⁸ MBK 1:66–82.

⁴⁹ For example, at Saint-Wandrille near Rouen a new space for books was built c. 830 but it was not defined as a “library,” and its proximity to the refectory might explain the collection housed there; see Wolfgang Braunfels, *Abenländische Klosterbaukunst* (Cologne, 1985), 41.

⁵⁰ Edgar Lehmann, *Die Bibliotheksräume der deutschen Klöster im Mittelalter* (Berlin, 1957), 2–7.

fact that it is followed by another small windowless room with a barrel vault that can only be entered through the “library.” This other space could well have served as the monastery archive, as it was a particularly secure place for keeping the monastery’s privileges and other precious documents. Archive and library would thus have been located side by side.

It is only the late medieval wall paintings, however, that clearly demonstrate that the room above the sacristy functioned as a library;⁵¹ a series of painted uppercase letters extends clockwise from A to G, comprising a locational catalog designed to direct the user of the library to the desired volume (see Figure 53.1). These letters, painted in a gothic majuscule, appear within slanting coats of arms at the apex of the arches. The G is also crowned with a miter, honoring the name of the monastery’s patron, Godehard. Decorative vines and foliage fill the remaining areas. No comparable example of wall decoration doubling as a library catalog appears to have survived in Germany, although the painting of library rooms was certainly not unusual at the beginning of the fifteenth century. What is truly extraordinary about the library in Hildesheim, however, is that the majuscule letters used for the painted wall catalog can be matched to the signatures of surviving books. Together, the wall decoration and the surviving books constitute a kind of unified ensemble (see Figure 53.2).

The library at the monastery of St. Godehard has a long history. Bishop Godehard himself probably brought the earliest manuscripts with him from Tegernsee, and among them a group of classical works. But, as was the case in many other monasteries, the adoption of monastic reform in 1466 introduced a new approach to the library and a general revival of study. Even though the books in Romanesque libraries were kept in *armaria*, as was probably the case early on at St. Godehard, they were already arranged in order of knowledge, a practice that was carried forward into pulpits of the thirteenth century (see Figure 53.3).

Cataloguing Monastic Collections

If the Plan of St. Gall shows an idealized view of the library, the inventory of the library from the mid-ninth century (Codex Sangallensis 728) provides a clear picture of its textual contents.⁵² We can distinguish this as an

⁵¹ Schlotheuber and Beckermann, “Die Bibliothek des Godehardiklosters in Hildesheim,” 108–16.

⁵² MBK 1:66–82.

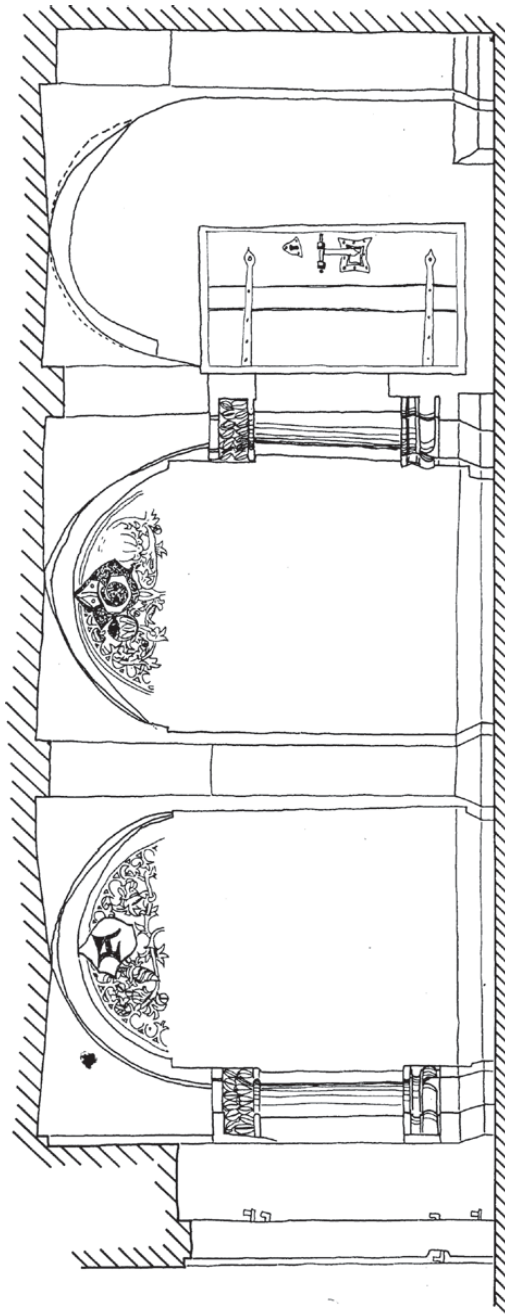


Figure 53.1 Western wall of the library room above the twelfth-century sacristy of the Benedictine Abbey of St. Godehard, Hildesheim, with fifteenth-century library signatures (F and G). Diözesanmuseum Hildesheim, Datenerfassungsbogen 4a.

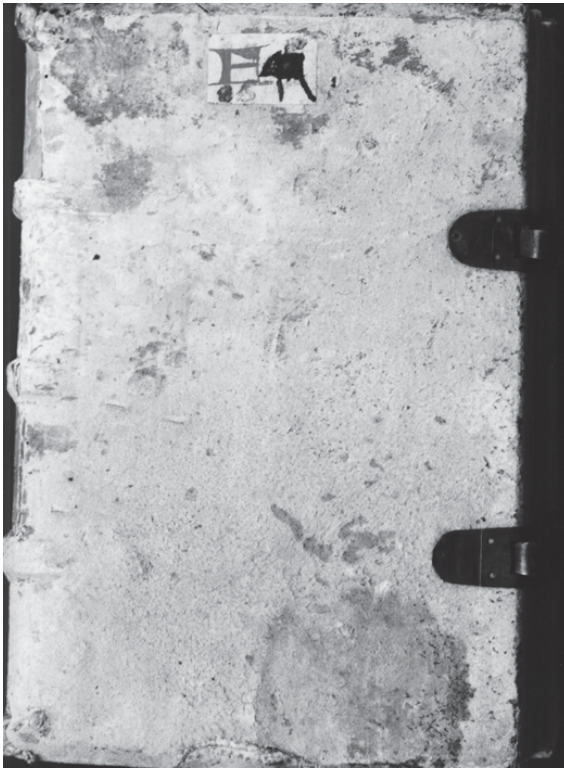


Figure 53.2 Manuscript containing sermons of the Franciscan friar Bernardinus of Siena (fourteenth/early fifteenth century, Dombibliothek Hildesheim, St God. 34), with signature of St. Godehard Library F 44. The signature was changed to F 85 in the course of the fifteenth century, when the body of spiritual literature expanded dramatically.

inventory rather than a catalog, *per se*, since there is no actual indication of locations, and we cannot assume that the genre and author groupings that organize the inventory reflect the physical organization of the books into *armaria*. Marginal notations in the original inventory indicate when volumes are not currently in their correct place, with notes such as *ad scolam* (“at the school”) and *ad Rorbach* (“at Rorbach Abbey,” a daughter house of St. Gall). Four Gospel volumes are annotated *ex his duo non inveni* (“I did not find two of these”), and in one case there is a provenance note stating that a volume of Gregory the Great’s homilies was given by

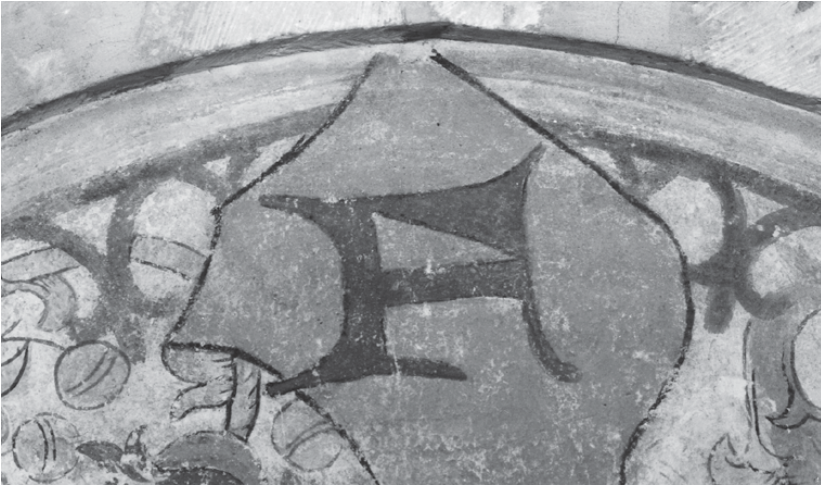


Figure 53.3 Lunette with library signature F, St. Godehard library room.

Charlemagne (r. 768–814). Aside from a few liturgical books *Scottice scripti* (“written in Irish script”), there is no section in this inventory devoted to liturgical books. The contemporary catalog from Lorsch Abbey records 60 volumes in the choir and sacristy, even describing the precious covers on several books, and a further 300 volumes in the *armarium*. Clearly these were not all housed in a single cabinet, but rather the *armarium* from the Codex Amiatinus has synecdochally come to represent the entire collection, the library.

Contemporary inventories from other imperial monasteries such as Reichenau or Saint-Riquier reflect a certain similarity with the organization and contents of the St. Gall inventory. The production of manuscripts was an inter-monastic endeavor, and book production and collection management were important sites of monastic exchange. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that inventories reflect connections between fraternal institutions or those with similar imperial support. However, the needs and wants of a bookish abbot or successful school would greatly alter a monastery’s book collections. In spite of a certain uniformity in the contents of known collections, we cannot therefore assume, in the absence of other evidence, that one monastery’s catalog/inventory can stand in for another’s.

As evidenced by the St. Gall inventory, extant catalogs follow a common hierarchy of genres. Within the general book collection, Scripture and associated commentaries are listed first, followed by patristic authors and other important theologians, saints' Lives, and monastic rules. Books on the liberal arts, grammar, history, and medicine form their own subsets, sometimes with books for the monastic school listed separately. Any vernacular works are typically listed last. This basic intellectual organization is remarkably consistent across monastic institutions and can even be found in use well into the early modern period.

Unlike the libraries of the mendicant orders, the libraries of the communities that followed the *RB* were not semi-public, and the volumes, which were probably accessible only to the community, did not need to be chained. The signatures used at St. Godehard generally comprise a red letter and a black number. The fortunate state of preservation of many of St. Godehard's late medieval manuscripts and incunabula (books printed before 1501), and the preservation within them of characteristic provenance marks, allow a glimpse of their former order.

Barely a century after the reform and this elaborate reorganization came still another transformation, presumably to accommodate the many new releases and acquisitions that the availability of less expensive printed books now made possible. During the Reformation, St. Godehard remained true to the old faith. Abbot Hermann Dannhausen (d. 1566) added many new works to the old library, and he was probably the person responsible for replacing the old stands with space-saving wall-mounted cabinets and shelves. Even today, the traces of this reorganization are visible in the wall paneling, which had to be modified for the installation of vertical wall-mounted cupboards.

Three temporal stages can thus be distinguished today, all of which reflect modifications to the organization of the library. In the Romanesque period, the space above the sacristy, together with the presumed archival vault, served to preserve the monastery's precious stock of books. After 1466, the reorganization of the library brought the catalog painted on the wall, which offered a clearly visible division of the volumes that lay on the various stands. Finally, it was probably the sixteenth century that saw the installation of bookshelves to replace the space-consuming stands. It was in this last phase that the signatures were placed on the spines of the volumes, and the old signatures with the iron fittings on the front covers removed. With the books now standing side by side, it was necessary to remove this

metal to prevent the iron on the cover of one book from damaging the neighboring one.

From Manuscripts to Printed Books: *Renovatio bibliothecae* under Reform at Scheyern Abbey

Medieval monastic libraries underwent two revolutions in the fifteenth century: monastic reform movements and the advent of the printing press.⁵³ The late medieval library must be understood as the product of both of these events, since both affected the literary and physical character of libraries. This is well illustrated by the history of the library of the Benedictine monastery of Scheyern in Bavaria.

While there is no complete library catalog for Scheyern until 1588, an examination of volumes with Scheyern provenance allows for the reconstruction of the contents of the late medieval library.⁵⁴ Scheyern's library, it seems, was not large by contemporary standards, with some 600 to 700 books in its collection at the end of the fifteenth century.⁵⁵ The only information we have regarding the monastery's earlier book collection is a thirteenth-century list of books written or acquired just prior to 1241 (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 17403, fol. 7r). Of the approximately thirty manuscripts listed, six are extant and identified today, along with a few liturgical leaves preserved as pastedowns in bindings.

The fourteenth century was something of a laconic period for Scheyern as few documents exist to describe the monastery at this time. The vehemently negative descriptions of abbots pawning monastic property in the *Chronicon Schirense*, however, do not portray a flourishing community. It was this type of community—not unique in the Holy Roman Empire—that was considered to be in serious need of renewal. Several monastic reform movements were active in the fifteenth century, given impetus by the Councils of Constance (1414–18) and Basel (1431–45), and they addressed what were considered by the

⁵³ James G. Clark, "Print and Pre-Reformation Religion: The Benedictines and the Press, c.1470–c.1550," in *The Uses of Script and Print, 1300–1700*, ed. Julia Crick and Alexandra Walsham (Cambridge, 2004), 71–92.

⁵⁴ See John T. McQuillen, "In Manuscript and Print: The Fifteenth-Century Library of Scheyern Abbey" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2012).

⁵⁵ John T. McQuillen, "The Uses of Provenance Evidence: Reconstructing the Fifteenth-Century Library of Scheyern Abbey, Bavaria," *Journal of the Early Book Society* 16 (2013): 130.

reformers to be much-needed changes.⁵⁶ These concerned a wide variety of monastic practices, including liturgical, devotional, fiscal, and educational, all of which had a dramatic impact on the library.

There is a direct correlation between the spread of the reforming movements and the increase in manuscript production at individual monasteries. While the Melk reform was introduced at Scheyern in 1426, a new abbot was sent in 1449 to reinforce its implementation. This marked a turning point for the library; there are only four dated manuscripts from the first half of the century, but twenty-nine from the second half, with a further twenty-eight undated but mostly belonging to the later period. This push for a *renovatio bibliothecae* is often codified in reform customaries (*consuetudines*), which invariably recommend book production, regulated reading, and even university education for the monks,⁵⁷ as can be seen in the *Consuetudines Schyreneses* (Scheyern Abbey, Ms. 37, written in 1452). This customary also provides examples of appropriate refectory reading, including the Bible, sermons and homilies, and Gregory's *Moralia in Job*. This list, in turn, gives us clues to the expected contents of a library under the Melk reform.

Many monasteries employed commercial scribes and illuminators to help bring about the *renovatio*. Scheyern hired Heinrich Molitor of Augsburg, who wrote and/or illuminated nine large volumes for the monastery between 1452 and 1471. Molitor also produced manuscripts for Tegernsee Abbey, as well as for the archbishop of Augsburg, and possibly illuminated a copy of the Gutenberg Bible for Andechs Abbey—all institutions connected to the Melk reform. The ready use of commercial craftsmen to produce books prepared cloistered communities for the advent of print, which brought an economic model of book production completely foreign to manuscript tradition, but one that answered the growing demand for books.⁵⁸ When Johann Gutenberg (d. 1468) developed printing with movable type in the early 1450s, he might have been partially reacting to the need of local Bursfeld Union reform monasteries for multiple copies of standard texts. Of the approximately 180 copies of the Gutenberg Bible that were printed, 48 complete copies exist today, and most of these can be traced back to monastic communities, including several with marginal annotations for refectory reading. The first printers focused

⁵⁶ On the rhetoric of reform and its problems, see the article by Vanderputten in this volume.

⁵⁷ See the articles by Clark and Roest in this volume.

⁵⁸ John T. McQuillen, "Fifteenth-Century Book Networks: Scribes, Illuminators, Binders, and the Introduction of Print," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 107 (2013), 500–6.

on the monastic market and produced texts that they knew would sell to this pan-European group. While a bishop's intent upon uniformity within a diocese sponsored some early printers, a few monasteries, such as that of St. Ulrich and St. Afra in Augsburg, set up their own commercial presses and produced works largely determined by monastic reading needs.

Scheyern began acquiring incunabula around 1470, and within a decade they owned approximately sixty, a rate of acquisition unmatched by manuscripts. Library organization had to adapt to such unprecedented expansion, which is probably why both St. Ulrich and St. Afra in Augsburg and St. Emmeram at Regensburg constructed new library buildings at this time to hold their growing collections and even to accommodate the lay readers who used them. While there is no fifteenth-century catalog of Scheyern's collection, the books themselves reveal two distinct organizational systems which disregard the divisions between manuscript and print.⁵⁹ One, an alphanumeric inventory code, orders the books more or less chronologically, probably in order of accession. A second, a red numeral on the binding, organizes the books into subjects (for instance, the signature 3 groups Gospel commentaries). Both St. Emmeram and St. Gall used alphanumeric codes as inventory demarcators in the fifteenth century, while Tegernsee and St. Ägidien in Nuremberg organized their collections in numerical genre groupings.

Reconstructing Medieval Libraries in the Twenty-First Century

The library is not a stagnant institution, and no library has escaped the centuries unscathed. The reconstruction of medieval libraries is hampered both by the movements of books in the medieval period and by depredations of the collections over the last several centuries. Librarians got rid of books when they had outlasted their usefulness, which is especially true for liturgical manuscripts, which were reused in bookbinding; in some cases, manuscripts were replaced by printed editions. In the course of the dissolution of the German monasteries in the nineteenth century, libraries were culled and dispersed to regional repositories. For example, Scheyern was secularized on 4 November 1803, and all 126 manuscripts (there were 220 recorded in a catalog from 1595), 689 incunabula, and 707 other books were sent to the Munich Hofbibliothek (which ultimately sold off thousands of its duplicate printed books); approximately 2,200 additional volumes went to the University

⁵⁹ McQuillen, "Uses of Provenance Evidence," 130–1.

Library at Landshut and local schools; close to 6,000 other books were destroyed.

This same pattern is found at most Bavarian monasteries. Evidence of provenance such as binding and ownership inscriptions are unfortunately easy to remove, erasing a book's history in the process. Digital databases are providing new ways to reconstruct medieval libraries from collections that are now widely disbursed, such as Bibliotheca Laureshamensis, the digital repository for manuscripts formerly at Lorsch Abbey, or Fragmentarium, which digitally reunites leaves from dismembered and dispersed manuscripts.⁶⁰ There is still much work to be done examining, cataloging, and sharing the descriptions of manuscripts and incunabula in our collections, and these constituents of medieval libraries still have much to tell us regarding the production and organization of intellectual life in medieval monasteries.

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⁶⁰ *Bibliotheca Laurenhamensis* – digital: Virtual Monastic Library of Lorsch <http://www.bibliotheca-laureshamensis-digital.de/> (date of last access: 31 August 2018); *Fragmentarium*: Digital Research Laboratory for Medieval Manuscript Fragments, <https://fragmentarium.ms/> (date of last access: 31 August 2018).

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