CALL FOR PAPERS: Writing and Reading in the Middle Ages

IRCVM, the Research Institute for Medieval Cultures of the University of Barcelona, organises its first congress entitled Writing and Reading in the Middle Ages. This congress will be held at the faculties of Philology and Geography & History of the University of Barcelona from the 25th to the 27th April 2018.

The congress will be structured in six sessions. Each session will consist of three invited presentations (30 minutes) and the corresponding papers (15 minutes). The sessions will deal with different aspects around the subject of the congress.

- SESSION 1: Spaces for writing, spaces for reading
- SESSION 2: Learning, uses and dissemination of writing
- SESSION 3: Letters, sounds and images
- SESSION 4: From singing to reading: the written reception of the troubadours
- SESSION 5: Writing and keeping memory: the role of notaries in the Middle Ages
- SESSION 6: Inscriptions on the edges of the Middle Ages

Researchers wishing to contribute with a paper can send their proposal (maximum 1,000 characters) to congres ircvm@ub.edu until October 15th 2017 indicating the SESSION concerned. The proposals will be evaluated by the Scientific Committee and
its acceptance or refusal will be communicated to the author by the end of November. A selection of communications will be published by SVMMA, Revista de Cultures Medievals.

Further information, particularly on the description of each SESSION, can be found on the site:


All correspondence concerning the congress should be addressed to: congres ircvm ub edu

**WRITING AND READING IN THE MIDDLE AGES**

Writing and reading are nowadays tightly tied, but they were quite different activities in the Middle Ages, both conceptually and as a skill; they were certainly more widespread than the illiterate Middle Ages cliché seems to suggest. We want to look at the Middle Ages from an interdisciplinary point of view, asking ourselves about the psychological, social and cultural scopes of the writing and reading conceptions and practices. The production, typology and management of written sources, the relationship of writing with the exertion of power and other dynamics which deeply transformed the political, social and cultural life of this historical period, will be another point of interest. We will also analyse the different types of reading and putting writing into practice; this will lead us to the study of the spaces where these activities were carried out. We will also focus on the relationship between writing and its material basis, from medieval epigraphy to the book as a luxury item, showing the prestige and power of its owner. The very same notions of “reading” and “writing” will be discussed at a time when the boundaries between the letter, the voice and the images were as blurred as those that delimited the border, always hazy and unstable, between the litterati and the illitterati.

An interdisciplinary approach is the base of our congress, as it is that of the IRCVM, which brings together medieval scholars from history, art history, philosophy and philology disciplines. This approach will be at the base of the scientific discussion about the subjects of the different SESSIONS.

**SESSION 1: Spaces for writing, spaces for reading**

The Middle Ages was a period in which writing and reading were activities reserved for a few, essentially members of the ecclesiastical stratum and a small group of privileged laymen: men, but also women. In this session, we want to deal with the contexts of reading aloud, as well as the ever-difficult relationships between the oral and visual messages, that is, how images and words were intertwined and complemented each other. For this reason, we focus on analyzing the spaces where this fusion between letters and images took place. One of the privileged frames of our analysis will be the sacred spaces, where words and images are inserted into the liturgical rites. Those
sacred spaces determined the various forms of control of lay people by the ecclesiastical stratum. They were preferably addressed the monks, with different intentions, echoes and contents.

**SESSION 2: Learning, uses and dissemination of writing**

From the 13th century, reading and writing spread as never before in the urban areas of Christian Europe. Lay people were progressively accessing to all kinds of texts. The society of the Early Middle Age was a literate society, which based its values on a textual background. That background was increasingly accessible to all social groups, although this does not preclude the oral exposition from starring in many cultural fields, such as the lyric poetry, the sermons of preachers or monarchs, the shows of minstrels or the master class taught at the schools. The panorama is complex and changing and must be analyzed by sectors: the three presentations of this session will explore the learning, the uses and the dissemination of writing in this chronological and sociocultural context of Christian Europe.

**SESSION 3: Letters, sounds and images**

*Quod visum placet.* In the Middle Ages, like today, the images played an essential role. Paul Zanker appealed to the power of images in the imperial era, but at the same time he recognized the importance of inscriptions so that the renewal plotted by the legendary August became a success.

According to Gombrich, the analysis of an image depends on three variables: code, text and context. His interpretation demands a broad look, because images are a living memory of sacred and profane stories.

In this session, there will be analyzed some works in which letters, images and musical notations occupy a common place and establish a dialogue in which it is impossible to understand the whole without regarding to one and the other. Crowns decorated with initials, neumes and pictorial and / or sculpted cycles of stories accompanied by literary texts, are just a taste of what will be considered.

**SESSION 4. From singing to reading: the written reception of the troubadours**

The poetry by troubadours that today we are essentially fed through private reading was born for singing before a select audience of experts. The convergence of words, music and body gestures in troubadour lyricism would later be altered with the configuration of reception modes often mediated by the passage from singing to reading, from saying to writing. This reception is often associated with the expansion of the troubadour movement outside of Occitania. Bearing in mind these perspectives, we want to study the oral and performing dimension of the poetry of the troubadours and the various phenomena connected to their written reception, taking into account the transformations that led to the passage from listening to reading, as well as the forms of appropriation of this lyrical tradition by different European literatures.
SESSION 5: Writing and keeping memory: the role of notaries in the Middle Ages

The Notary Collective was a primary institution in the midst of the medieval society. Notaries gave legal guarantees to many aspects of daily life, aspects of economics and aspects of the family life by writing a large number of legal contracts. As a result of this activity, the archives retain thousands of records that contain all these documents, with some differences between one kingdom and another, between cities and towns. These differences, which may even appear within the same notary, make the notarised documents even richer. Therefore, a comparative study between each one of the realities is necessary.

In this session, we want to study how notaries built the memory from their activity in society; a society that was expanding and growing and in which the notarised documents were increasingly required. This memory is preserved in notarised protocols which are an essential source of documents for studying the history of the notary collective and also the history of the medieval society.

SESSION 6: Inscriptions on the edges of the Middle Ages

What causes an inscription dated from the year 700 to be more ‘medieval’ than one from the year 600? An inscription from the year 1450 is different from a text from the year 1550? In this session, we want to deal with the problem of dating, the management of an epigraphy of the limits, and the impact of both elements in the representativeness of the epigraphic documentation between antiquity and modern ages. The time of the epigraphic culture, which is longer than the time of other cultural manifestations, is simultaneously a motor and testimony of transformations in both the conception and the use of writing. The boundaries between antiquity and the middle ages and between the middle ages and the modern era can be understood as the link between two practices: within spaces in transformation at multiple levels. In addition, within the limits there are not only the extremes: what happens in the epigraphic traditions in front of the phenomena of ‘Renaissance’?

Scientific Committee

Stefano Asperti (Università degli Studi di Roma. La Sapienza)
Licia Buttà (Universitat Rovira i Virgili)
Vincent Debiais (Université de Poitiers)
Alberto Paulo Farmhouse (Universidade de Lisboa)
Blanca Garí (IRCVM – Universitat de Barcelona)
Nikolas Jasper (Universität Heidelberg)
Imma Lorèes (Universitat de Lleida)
Daniel Piñol (IRCVM – Universitat de Barcelona)
Mercè Puig (IRCVM – Universitat de Barcelona)
Antoni Riera (IRCVM – Universitat de Barcelona)
Isabel de Riquer (IRCVM – Universitat de Barcelona)
Flocel Sabaté (Universitat de Lleida)
María Dolores Teijeira (IEM – Universidad de León)
Coordination

Meritxell Simó (IRCVM – Universitat de Barcelona)
Antoni Conejo (IRCVM – Universitat de Barcelona)
Marta Sancho (IRCVM – Universitat de Barcelona)
Maria-Reina Bastardas (IRCVM – Universitat de Barcelona)
Meritxell Blasco (IRCVM – Universitat de Barcelona)
Maria Soler (IRCVM – Universitat de Barcelona)
Joan Dalmases (IRCVM – Universitat de Barcelona)

Organizing Committee

Anna Alberni (IRCVM – Universitat de Barcelona)
Gemma Avenoza (IRCVM – Universitat de Barcelona)
Lola Badia (IRCVM – Universitat de Barcelona)
Maria-Reina Bastardas (IRCVM – Universitat de Barcelona)
Francesc Bernat (IRCVM – Universitat de Barcelona)
Meritxell Blasco (IRCVM – Universitat de Barcelona)
Pau Castell (IRCVM – Universitat de Barcelona)
Lluís Cifuentes (IRCVM – Universitat de Barcelona)
Mireia Comas (IRCVM – Universitat de Barcelona)
Antoni Conejo (IRCVM – Universitat de Barcelona)
Joan Dalmases (IRCVM – Universitat de Barcelona)
Milagros Guàrdia (IRCVM – Universitat de Barcelona)
Carles Mancho (IRCVM – Universitat de Barcelona)
Anna M. Mussons (IRCVM – Universitat de Barcelona)
Marta Sancho (IRCVM – Universitat de Barcelona)
Meritxell Simó (IRCVM – Universitat de Barcelona)
Maria Soler (IRCVM – Universitat de Barcelona)
Daniel Piñol (IRCVM – Universitat de Barcelona)
Rosa Lluch (IRCVM – Universitat de Barcelona)
Rebecca Swanson (IRCVM – Universitat de Barcelona)
Josep Vilella (IRCVM – Universitat de Barcelona)

Fees

Registration: 90 Euros
Students, unwaged and senior citizens: 45 Euros
IRCVM and Ardit members: 20 Euros