

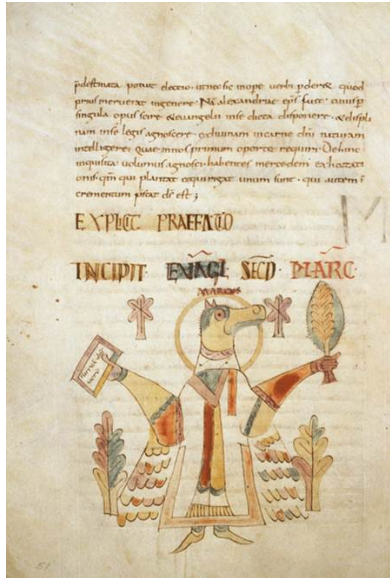


New York Public Library, MA 1: fol. 3v

***Digital Splendor:
The New York Public Library Manuscripts Project at the Index of Christian Art***
Beatrice Radden Keefe

I am to introduce a new project, already underway at the Index of Christian Art, to digitize images of and catalogue the New York Public Library's medieval and Renaissance illuminated manuscripts. As with other initiatives at the Index, including the Morgan Library and Walters Art Museum projects, the Index will fully catalogue every illuminated manuscript held by the New York Public Library, allowing users of the Index database unprecedented access to another whole collection. This project has been undertaken in collaboration with the New York Public Library, who has received access to the database, and has also agreed to further photography of their manuscripts. The images themselves were a generous gift from James Marrow, Professor Emeritus of Art History at Princeton University; Marrow photographed the New York Public Library manuscripts in advance of the *Splendor of the Word* manuscript exhibition held at the Library in 2005/6. We now have roughly 13,000 digital images of these manuscripts, a number which provides some idea of the scale of the project and the work ahead.

The rich and diverse collection at the New York Public Library comprises some 300 Western European manuscripts, given to or purchased by the Library over the past 117 years. I have chosen a few examples to show.



New York Public Library, MA 115: fol. 51v

This is a folio from a comparatively better known New York Public Library manuscript, the Landévennec or Harkness Gospels, made at Landévennec Abbey in Brittany in the late ninth or early tenth century, and decorated with canon tables and evangelist symbols.



New York Public Library, MA 10: fol. 7r

Further manuscripts I have recently worked on include this thirteenth-century Psalter, possibly from Metz, which begins with an illustrated calendar (the page for November is shown above), followed by full-page prefatory miniatures (one, of the Nativity, is below).



New York Public Library, MA 10: fol. 7r

I have also catalogued several Italian Bibles, such as this one from Bologna, made around the year 1265 (a folio with a Crucifixion miniature and Genesis initial is below).



New York Public Library, MA 19: fol. 5r

Most of the miniatures from these manuscripts have never before been reproduced or published, and many of these manuscripts have only ever received brief mention in

Seymour De Ricci's *Census of Manuscripts in the United States and Canada*. A good number, but by no means all, were more fully described in the *Splendor of the Word* exhibition catalogue.



New York Public Library, MA 44: fol. 98r

An example of a manuscript previously given short notice in two catalogues, one of them De Ricci's, is this French Book of Hours, from c. 1500 (see image with Crucifixion miniature above).

A new feature we have added for these works is the option to see all our images of a particular New York Public Library manuscript in a gallery view. Jon Niola, our database manager, developed this tool especially for the Index, and at a conference in 2009 demonstrated the potential of the gallery view feature, which you now see fully incorporated into the database. You can access a gallery either from the main manuscript record or from the individual folio records. This new tool will allow the user to more easily maneuver around the images and metadata within the database. Also, the gallery views provide an extremely useful picture of the structure and decoration of these

manuscripts, enabling us to observe, for instance, that this Book of Hours has both column and full-page miniatures, and for those looking closely and more familiar with such books, that it includes miniatures for the Gospel readings and for two prayers.

As I work through these manuscripts, I am often struck by the many discoveries still to be made and the scholarly research yet to be done on this splendid but lesser known collection. The digitizing and cataloguing now being done at the Index will allow the New York Public Library manuscripts to become more widely available to a diverse group of library-goers, students, and scholars.