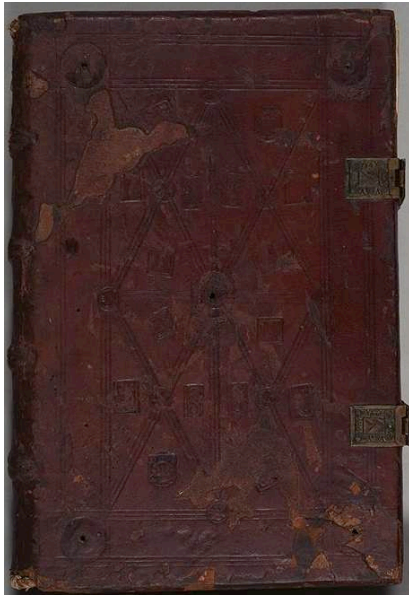


INTRODUCTION



(A) Front Leather Book Board Cover

With call number *UTS MS 024*, this manuscript forms part of the Leander Van Ess (1772-1847) collection in the Burke Library of Union Theological Seminary (UTS).¹ The manuscript acquired two years after the founding of UTS in 1836, is a 249 page *Latin to German Dictionary*, with its origin of writing dating back to 1463 in Germany. Although no reference is made about the original owners specifically, Gatch reports that in 1500 the manuscript was owned by *Sebaldus von Plaben of Nürnberg*.² It follows the manuscript tradition of German texts

of the Middle Ages, demonstrating particularly unique features both in binding and text writing style.³ This codicological description will seek to uncover some of these unique features, in addition to gaining some understanding of the region, reasons and purpose for the writing of this manuscript.

CODICOLOGICAL DESCRIPTION

This well preserved medieval manuscript is protected by stiff wooden boards on both the front and the back according and covered with calf leather. Although there were noticeable areas of deterioration on both the front and back covers, there is a clearly visible stamped geographic

¹ Digital Scriptorium website, http://ds.lib.berkeley.edu/UTSMS024_22 accessed March 22, 2015; Raymond Clemens and Timothy Graham, "Manuscript Description" In *Introduction to Manuscript Studies*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 2007), p 129-133.

² Milton McC. Gatch, *So precious a foundation: the library of Leander Van Ess at the Burke Library of Union Theological Seminary in the city of New York*, Translated by translation by Wolfgang Heuss and Jeremy S. Roth, (New York : Union Theological Seminary and The Grolier Club, 1996), p158-159.

³ Seymour de Ricci with the assistance of WJ Wilson, *Census of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the United States and Canada, Vol. II*, New York 1937 (reprint 1961), p 1643.



(B) Damaged Leather Cover and design with blind indentation

pattern in the leather covering, produced either with a die or a panel stamp using a metal hand tool. The particular design example on this book remained uncolored, with the indentation being described as a *blind*. Prior to 1500, this



(C) Missing Boss from front cover

method was employed for design book cover designs. After around 1500 roll tools were used for impressing continuous patterns on book covers.⁴

Also noticeable was the absence of five *raised bosses* removed from both sides of the book cover.

These would have been protruding ornaments, which



(D) Distinctive features of the manuscript, showing intact and exposed (with exposed parchment manuscript waste) **raised bands** along the book spine

became prominent in the 15th century, made of metal and serving the a protective purpose.⁵ The



(E) Ornamental clasps and hinges

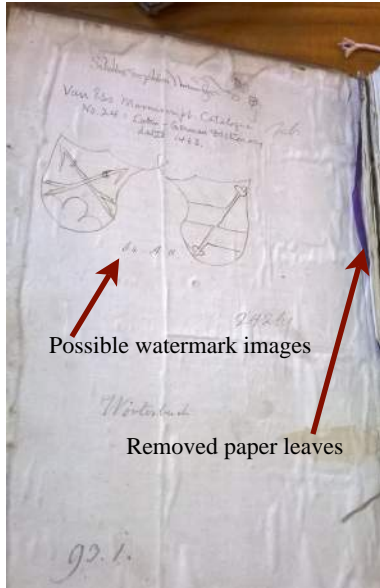
book spine also displayed unique features, indicative of the 15th century with prominent *raised*

bands, where cords are used to bind the *book block* together were present. Also it was observed that the torn away or exposed portion of the book spine consisted of parchment manuscript waste used to strengthen the book itself. A third very interesting feature of this manuscript was the presence of ornamental clasps and hinges, described as a *Chain book*.

⁴Geoffrey Ashall Glaister, *Encyclopedia of the Book, 2nd edition*, (Delaware: Oak Knoll Press, 1996), p 55

⁵ Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts Glossary of terms-B, British Library accessed March 20, 2015 <https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/GlossB.asp>

On the inside front cover of the book are writings which highlight the name, date and provenance of the manuscript, as well as a diagram that may probably be the watermarks found



(F) Writings on inner cover

on the paper that the book was made with. A search on the online

Gravell Watermark database,

however did not yield any

conclusive results about these

watermarks. Additionally, on the inside cover there were also

areas where pages were removed from the book. At the back of

the book there was also legible text on

the parchment manuscript waste. Several

interesting features were noted on the

pages that make up the manuscript. Of

significance was the fact that the paper itself

inside the book was well preserved, showing

no reddish brown spots, also known as foxing.

This latter observation was particularly

important, suggesting that the process of paper

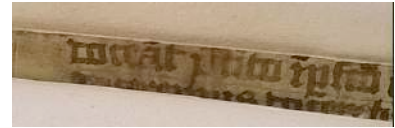
making probably did not consist of the use of

chemicals known to produce such markings or just that manuscript was

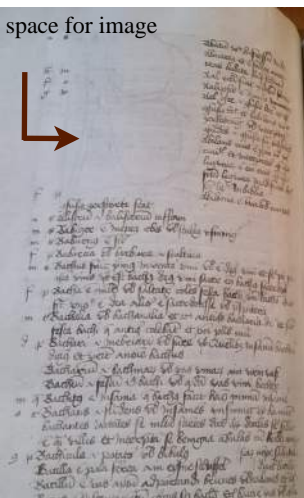
well stored over an extended period of time. Each page consisted of 40 lines on 320mm x

220mm sheets, based on a single folded sheet of paper of folio. Some of these pages had sections

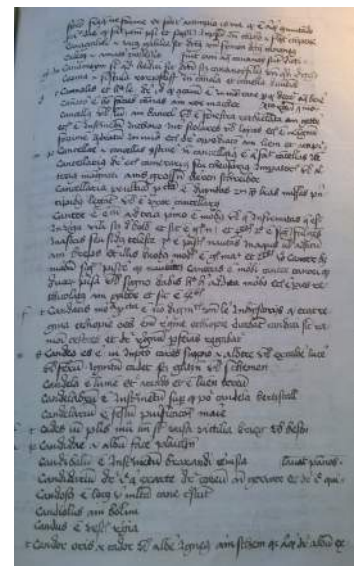
devoid of writing, and some with sketches. This is suggestive of an unfinished work, but could



(G) Example of parchment waste with inscription

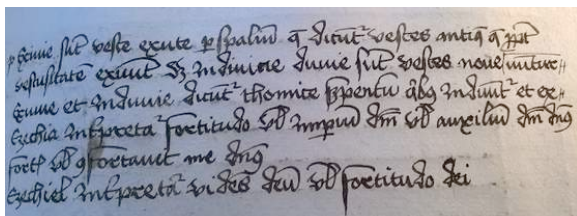


(H) Page highlighting space for image with faint outline.

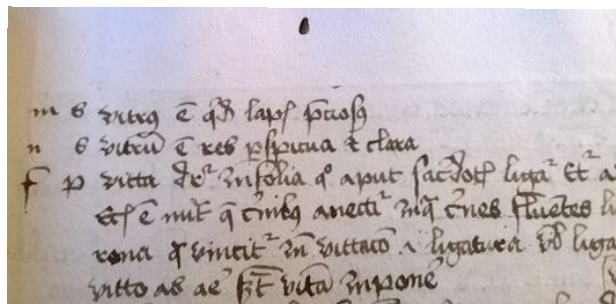


(I) Example of a typical page, highlighting paper integrity and number of lines. The bright area at the top righthand corner was a result of the lighting in the room.

be representative of other imagery or writings. The other interesting observation that was made, was the presence of different types of ink colors and possibly, but only very faintly discernible, different types of writing styles. On pages 22A and 239, there was an observable change in ink color from lighter to darker in addition to slight variations in writing style. This was only seen



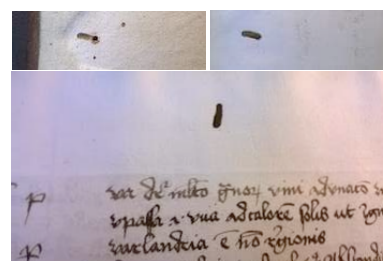
(J) Slight variation in text style observable between page 22A and 239



when looking at the text from the page level.

Closer examination of the text needed to be done however to confirm this observation. In this regard, one of the most remarkable observations that was made during this examination was the uniqueness of the text style. A preliminary review of different text styles did not provide clarity on the regional significance of the text, although it was noted that the writing style, according to Gatch, was a *Cursiva* script from *ostschwäbisch* in East Scabisch. This latter information is suggestive of an East Swabian dialect, but no mention is made by Gatch on this fact specifically.⁶

Obvious insect damage was also identified on the back inner cover and page 249 to approximately page 239. This damage was also observable on the back book board and leather covering. Yet the manuscript as indicated previously was in extremely good condition.



(K) Insect damage from the back cover and page 249 through to page 239

⁶ Handschriftencensus, An Inventory of the Manuscript tradition of German texts of the mIddle Ages, accessed March 22, 2015, <http://www.handschriftencensus.de/4230>; Milton McC. Gatch, "So precious a foundation." p 158.

POSSIBLE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS DICTIONARY

This hand written manuscript written in *Cursiva* script, and lacking imagery and color inside the book, strongly suggests that this dictionary was used in a scholarly way. It was not meant for a general readership, but for those engaged in research. The region from which the owner *Sebaldu* *von Plaben of Nürnberg*, was known to be a conservatively and free Lutheran city, where authorities allowed evangelical preaching in 1521.⁷

Depending on the depth of the preaching, it can be imagined that exegesis of biblical text may have required research and translation from Latin to German. The Free City of *Nürnberg* would have been fertile ground on which to expand and expound ideas of Lutheranism through preaching in German. This was a time of reformation in Europe, where writing and knowledge of scripture fueled Protestant ambitions.⁸ Outside of the fascinating history of the late 15th and early 16th century, the other point of interest for this author was in the technology used to produce the manuscript. Particularly the use of cords in the binding of the paper and the use of parchment waste to strengthen the manuscript. The thought of further study on where the waste came from and what books were they first published in, if any, posed interesting thoughts for pondering. The necessity for clasps and hinges also was of interest, and it is hoped that further research would lead to better understanding of the reasons for these types of ornaments during this time.

This project has been an incredible eye opener into the depth of book making in 15th century Germany, challenging much of my understanding of the bookmaking process.

⁷ Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years*, (New York: The Penguin Group, 2009), p616, 630

⁸ Steven Ozment, *The Age of the Reformation 1250-1550*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), p 257, 436

