

## Microform Manuscript Collections in the United States

by

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Several libraries in the United States hold extensive collections of manuscripts on microform (film or fiche), and some of these libraries also provide fellowships or stipends for qualified researchers. At AELAC 2007, Jean-Daniel Kaestli and Albert Frey enquired whether I might prepare a brief notice on the subject. The list that follows is meant to be instructive rather than exhaustive.

### 1. The Vatican Film Library, Saint Louis University (St. Louis, MO)

As many specialists know, the Vatican Library is currently under repair. What they might not know, however, is that microfilm copies of many of its manuscripts are stored in the Vatican Film Library (VFL), part of Saint Louis University in St. Louis, Missouri ([www.vfl.edu](http://www.vfl.edu)). In response to my request, Dr. Gregory Pass, the VFL librarian, kindly sent a letter for use in the *Bulletin*, which I have edited slightly with his permission:

Dear Colleagues,

In light of the recent announcement by the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana that it will be closed for renovations over the next three years, the Knights of Columbus Vatican Film Library at Saint Louis University would like to remind researchers that it holds on microfilm more than 37,000 of the Vatican Library's manuscripts, comprising major portions of its Greek, Latin, and Western European vernacular collections, in addition to materials in Arabic, Ethiopic, and Hebrew (see: [www.slu.edu/libraries/vfl/cllctns.htm](http://www.slu.edu/libraries/vfl/cllctns.htm) for our holdings). The VFL maintains a large reference collection of manuscript catalogues, which include complete sets of the Vatican Library's published manuscript catalogues and unpublished inventories, as well as 'Studi e testi,' as well as works in paleography, codicology, illumination, and other disciplines to support the study of medieval and Renaissance manuscripts and their texts.

The VFL also holds the microfiche editions of the Bibliotheca Palatina, consisting of more than 12,000 printed titles from the Palatine collection, and the Cicognara Library, consisting of more than 4,800 printed titles from the Cicognara collection on art, architecture, and archaeology. The library possesses many other resources that make Saint Louis University one of the most effective places to carry out research in medieval and Renaissance manuscript studies.

Two types of fellowship opportunities are available to researchers who use the VFL. For information on these programs and our collections, see: [www.slu.edu/libraries/vfl](http://www.slu.edu/libraries/vfl).

All roads may lead to Rome, but for the next three years, at least, St. Louis may be more expeditious for your research!

Having thrice visited the VFL, I can offer additional information that might be of some small use. The VFL, which also publishes the journal *Manuscripta* (Brepols), is located in the Pius XII Memorial Library. There is no limit to the number of microfilms that may be consulted per day (unlike, for example, the BnF Richelieu). Although researchers normally read films on machines at their personal desks inside the VFL, there are several digital microform readers on the second floor of the Pius XII Library that provide clearer images of the manuscript folia. These readers are equipped with photocopy and data-transfer

capabilities. The VFL also contains useful photocopies of an old, handwritten card catalogue of the Vatican manuscripts.

As Dr. Pass mentions, there are two types of fellowships available to qualified applicants. *VFL Mellon Fellowships* are designed for research trips from two to eight weeks in duration, and currently provide a stipend of \$2250.00 per month. Application deadlines occur three times a year: 1 March (for research between June and August), 1 June (for research between September and December), and 1 October (for research between January and May). The *Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Fellowships* are residential awards for periods of five weeks. These fellowships currently provide a stipend of \$1750.00, the use of a studio apartment, and a travel subsidy of up to \$1000.00.

When I was an NEH Fellow, I resided in an off-campus apartment a few blocks from the Pius XII Library. I understand that NEH Fellows are now housed in units on campus. As a Mellon Fellow, I stayed at the Water Tower Inn ([www.slu.edu/events/wti.html](http://www.slu.edu/events/wti.html)), which is part of the university and is located at the southern end of the campus. Their rates are very reasonable. A reliable campus shuttle runs between the Water Tower Inn and the Pius XII Library, a five minute ride north.

## 2. Library of the Medieval Institute, University of Notre Dame (Notre Dame, IN)

The Library of the Medieval Institute, which is situated on the seventh floor of the Hesburgh Library at the University of Notre Dame, contains microfilm copies of nearly all the mediaeval manuscripts of the Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milano. The Ambrosian microfilms are kept in a separate room, along with several microfilm readers. During my visit, I was permitted to make a limited number of photocopies for personal research. As one might expect, the monograph and journal collections of the Library of the Medieval Institute and the Hesburgh Library are superb.

Funds are available to qualified researchers. Five annual *Ambrosiana Stipends* of up to \$500.00 US assist scholars who wish to consult the Ambrosian microfilms. There is also a *Stipend for Short-Term Postdoctoral Research*, which offers \$1500.00 US per month for a period of three to six months. More information is available on the website ([www.library.nd.edu/medieval\\_library/ambrosiana\\_mss.shtml](http://www.library.nd.edu/medieval_library/ambrosiana_mss.shtml)).

A final note: As many scholars know, A. Ceruti's catalogue of the Ambrosiana manuscript books, now over a century old, lacks the details expected in a modern catalogue. Updates remain few in number. As a result, the possibility for discovery is very high. In a span of only a few weeks, for example, I found over a dozen previously unknown copies of two medieval prognostic texts attributed to Daniel.

## 3. The Hill Museum and Manuscript Library (Saint John's University, Collegeville, MI)

The Hill Museum & Manuscript Library (HMML) is located at Saint John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota ([www.hmml.org](http://www.hmml.org)). Their collection includes over 90,000 manuscripts, mostly on microfilm. Based on its catalogue titles, the HMML holds important collections of manuscripts from several European countries, plus manuscripts in Arabic, Armenian, and Syriac, as well as those that are listed in K. Gamber, *Codices liturgici latini antiquiores*, and E. A. Lowe, *Codices latini antiquiores*. I seem to recall that their collection of Ethiopic manuscripts is particularly outstanding.

The HMML offers up to ten annual *Heckman Research Stipends* of up to \$1,500 US to assist scholars. Length of residency may range from two weeks to six months. *Note*: only undergraduate, graduate, or postdoctoral scholars (those who are within three years of completing a terminal master's or doctoral degree) are eligible.

#### **4. The Hilander Research Library (The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH)**

The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio, is home to the Hilander Research Library ([cmrs.osu.edu/rcmss](http://cmrs.osu.edu/rcmss)). According to its website, the Hilander Library contains the largest collection of microfilmed Slavonic manuscripts in the world.

#### **5. The Library of Congress (Washington, DC)**

I include the Library of Congress (LOC) because scholars often visit Washington, and a trip to the LOC, located beside the Capitol, may be accommodated with relative ease. Their website ([www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov)) contains much information, including valuable finding aids to their microform collection ([www.loc.gov/rr/microform/guide](http://www.loc.gov/rr/microform/guide)).

Among the LOC microfilm holdings are 3,300 manuscripts from Mount Sinai, manuscripts of the libraries of the Greek and Armenian patriarchates of Jerusalem, and the Catholic Microfilm Center collection of manuscripts in Arabic and Syriac that are located (or had been located) in the monasteries and libraries of Lebanon and Syria. Also, during the Second World War, the American Council of Learned Societies undertook a project of microfilming European manuscripts. The results of this project are rather eclectic, but its checklist of manuscripts bears examination.

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