

Glossary of Terms

Acanthus leaf: a stylized fleshy leaf motif used extensively in decorated initials and foliate borders.

Alum tawed: a process for preparing animal skin (usually pigskin or goatskin) by soaking it in aluminium salts. Tawed skins are usually white, and are softer and more stretchy than tanned leathers.

Anglicana formata: a formal cursive script with a generally squat, rounded appearance, used as a book-hand in England in the 14th and 15th centuries. Less formal versions of Anglicana were often influenced by Secretary hand.

Armorial: an heraldic coat of arms, usually applied to a binding or bookplate to signify that a book belonged to a member of the aristocracy or landed gentry, or to a corporate body such as a college or religious house.

Ascender: a stroke which extends above the body of a letter, as in *b*, *d*, *h*, etc.; extenders along the top line of text were sometimes exaggerated and ornamented.

Bastard Secretary: a book-hand that developed in England from the hybridization of textura with the French Secretary hand.

Bezant: a decorative device, resembling a small gold coin or medal, found in floriated borders.

Bifolium: a sheet of writing material folded once to form two leaves.

Blind tooling: see tooling.

Boards: the stiff covering at the front and back of a volume, usually made of wood in the medieval period; pasteboard was used from the 16th century, and later millboard.

Book label: a simple printed or handwritten ticket (usually paper but sometimes leather), affixed to the inside of a book to identify its owner. Most book labels in medieval manuscripts date from the 18th century or later.

Bookplate: a label affixed to the inside of a book to identify its owner, often containing an engraved armorial. Most bookplates in medieval manuscripts date from the 18th century or later.

Border: decorative borders sometimes surround the text and/or images at the beginning of a volume, and at the start of major sections of a text. Some borders are made up of foliate decoration or bars sprouting plant-like forms. These are known as foliate bar borders.

Burnished: gold that has been highly polished to a mirror-like finish.

Calendar: a table of saints' days and feast days, preceding the main text of a liturgical manuscript. Calendars vary according to local use, e.g. Sarum Use.

Canticle: one of the hymns, derived from the Scriptures, used in the Church liturgy, including the Benedicite, Benedictus, Jubilate, Magnificat, Cantate, Nunc Dimittis, Deus misereatur and Te Deum.

Catchword: a word written at the end of a quire to indicate the first word of the next page; if the catchword does not tally with the first word, this suggests that a leaf is missing, or the quires have been bound in the wrong order.

Codex: a manuscript volume.

Collation: a description of a book's arrangement of leaves and quires. For example, '1-6¹², 7⁸ wants 8' means that a book is composed of six quires of 12 leaves each, followed by a seventh quire of eight leaves, of which the last is missing.

Commonplace book: a volume containing a collection of quotations, letters, poems, proverbs, prayers, legal formulas, medical recipes, etc.

Cursive script: an informal script written with a running hand, in which the characters are rapidly formed without raising the pen.

Dry-point ruling: see hard-point ruling.

Explicit: a closing statement at the end of a text, from the Latin *explicatus* ('unrolled'). The incipit and explicit are often used to identify manuscripts and incunables in the absence of title pages.

Extension: a decorative extension to an initial letter or border, often with floriate motifs such as tendrils, acanthus leaves, ivy leaves, etc.

Flesh side: the inner side of a sheet of vellum or parchment. It is generally whiter than the hair side.

Flourish: decoration surrounding an initial or border, consisting of flowing curves executed with a sweep of the pen.

Flyleaf: an extra leaf at the beginning and/or end of a book to provide protection to the text.

Foliate bar border: a border made up of a solid bars sprouting foliate (plant-like) decoration.

Foliation: the numbering of leaves, as opposed to pages; in most cases manuscripts have modern (19th- or 20th-century) foliation. See also Pagination.

Folio: a sheet or leaf of writing material, one half of a bifolium. Often abbreviated to f. (plural ff.). The front side of a folio is known as the recto (abbreviated to r), the reverse as the verso (v), e.g. 'f. 6v'.

Fore-edge: the edge of a book opposite the spine.

Formulary: a document setting out the established forms of legal proceedings, legal formulas, religious rituals, and other rituals and procedures.

Full-bound: a book entirely covered with one material, usually animal skin such as goatskin. See also half-bound and quarter-bound.

Gloss: text commenting on, explaining or translating the main text. Glosses were often written in the margins or between the lines of the main text.

Gold tooling: see tooling.

Grotesque: a fantastical or comic figure, often combining elements of human and animal forms. They are common in the margins of texts, either incorporated into the illumination, or added by early readers.

Ground: the background to an initial, heraldic device or image. Initials were often painted against a gold ground.

Gutter: the folded edge of a bifolia, along the spine of a codex.

Hair side: the side of a sheet of vellum or parchment that once carried the animal's hair. It is generally darker than the flesh side, and traces of hair follicles can often be seen.

Half-bound: a book covered with a leather (or vellum) spine and outer corners, the sides being covered with cloth or paper. See also full-bound and quarter-bound.

Hard-point ruling: ruling made with a pointed instrument, leaving a scored line in the writing material, rather than a graphic mark.

Historiated initial: a decorated initial letter containing a recognizable scene or figures within and/or around it.

Illumination: the decoration of a manuscript with colours and gold and silver. Illumination may take the form of decorated initials, borders, frames and pictures.

Incipit: the opening words of a text, from the Latin *incipere* ('to begin'). The incipit and explicit are often used to identify manuscripts and incunables in the absence of title pages.

Infill: decoration within the elements of an initial letter, often taking the form of elaborate penwork and/or floral devices.

Initial: an enlarged and (commonly) decorated letter introducing a section of a text. Within a hierarchy of decoration, initials have different levels of significance, according to the importance of the text they introduce. See also Historiated initial.

Inscription: writing added to a text, often indicating ownership or use of a manuscript.

Ivy leaf: a pointed leaf motif used extensively in foliate borders.

Leaf: see folio.

Manicule: a pointing figure, usually drawn in the margin, to draw the reader's attention to a section of text.

Marginalia: writing or decoration in the margins of a text, either as part of the original composition of the manuscript or added subsequently. In the latter case, marginalia often provide evidence of the ownership and use of a manuscript.

Morocco: Hard-wearing leather made from goatskin, of Islamic origin; also called Turkey in England during the 17th and early 18th centuries.

Pagination: the numbering of pages (not leaves) of a book. See also foliation.

Pastedown: a leaf pasted onto the inside of a board.

Pen-flourished initial: an initial decorated with delicate flowing lines and curves executed with a fine pen and either the ink used for the text or coloured inks.

Pen trial: matter written by a scribe to test a newly trimmed pen nib. Pen trials often consist of names, letters, catchphrases and doodles made in the margins of manuscripts.

Penwork: fine linear decoration made with a thin pen and ink (often blue and red). Initials were often infilled or extended with elaborate, intertwining penwork in foliate patterns.

Pricking: the process of marking a folio or bifolium with a knife, pointed instrument or spoked wheel, to serve as guides for the ruling. The term also refers to the regular series of holes which resulted.

Provenance: the history of a book's creation and ownership. Provenance information may come from inscriptions, marginalia, armorials, bookplates and library marks.

Quarter-bound: a book covered with a leather (or vellum) spine, the sides being covered with cloth or paper. See also full-bound and half-bound.

Quire: a gathering or 'booklet' of folded sheets from which a book is formed. A quire usually consists of four leaves folded to form eight leaves, but other compositions also occur. Quire numeration consists of numbers written on a quire to ensure that the leaves were arranged correctly during binding. See also Collation.

Recto: the front side of a folio; often abbreviated to r, e.g. 'f. 52r'.

Reversed calf: calf skin used flesh side out, with a suede-like finish.

Rubric: a title, heading or instruction, usually written in red ink, which is not strictly part of the text but helps to identify its components.

Ruling: the process by which a frame and/or horizontal lines are produced to guide the hand in writing; the word also refers to the linear guide so produced. Ruling was guided by Pricking. Prior to the late 11th century ruling was done in dry- or hard-point; that is, with a pointed implement which scored the writing surface. Later lead was generally used to make a graphic mark.

Sarum Use: the order of divine service used in the diocese of Salisbury and elsewhere in England from the 11th century to the Reformation.

Script: the handwriting used in manuscripts. The form and function of a manuscript determined the overall appearance of a script (its aspect), the speed and care with which the letters were formed (its ductus), and the number of abbreviations used. Scripts include Anglicana formata, Current anglicana, Secretary and Textura.

Secretary hand: a cursive general purpose document- and book-hand adopted widely in the later 14th and 15th centuries, characterised by looped ascenders, descenders sweeping below the line, and sloping letter-forms.

Secundo folio: the opening words of the second folio of a manuscript, often used to identify individual copies of a text.

Signature: a mark, usually comprising a letter and number at the foot of a leaf, indicating the sequence of sheets within a quire, and the arrangement of quires, e.g. 'a1', 'a2'... 'b1', 'b2', etc.

Signe-de-renvoi: a 'sign of return', a graphic symbol marking the place in the text where a correction or insertion is to be made.

Singleton: a single folio that lacks its corresponding half (the other half of the bifolium).

Tacketed: a non-adhesive binding in which the quire(s) and the limp vellum covers are attached by tackets (strips of vellum, gut or leather).

Text block: the body of a book, consisting of the leaves or sections making up the volume; also the block of text on a single page.

Textura: a formal book-hand, characterized by angular letterforms, pronounced serifs and feet, and separate downstrokes (minims) making it difficult to distinguish between *m*, *n*, *u* and *i*.

Tipped in: used to describe any matter lightly attached by glue or paste to a book; such as a single inserted leaf or an autograph letter.

Tooling: the decoration of a binding by impressing heated metal tools into the binding material. Gold tooling was done by laying gold leaf onto a coating of glair (egg white) and impressing it into the binding material using a heated metal tool. The excess was rubbed off leaving the image. Blind tooling was executed by impressing the heated tools into the binding material without the use of gold or colour.

Vellum: writing material made from calf skin, soaked in lime solution, stretched on a frame, and scraped with a crescent-shaped knife before drying and polishing. See also Hair side and Flesh side.

Verso: the back or reverse of a folio; often abbreviated to v, e.g. 'f. 52v'.

Sources:

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