



The Medieval Book: Illustrated from the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library (MART: The Medieval Academy Reprints for Teaching)

Barbara Shailor

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For centuries philologists, linguists, and historians have read medieval books to study the language of a given work or to establish an accurate and readable text. Art historians also have considered illuminated manuscripts as important repositories for works of art. But in recent decades new interest has developed in the over-all physical format of the medieval book and its historical context – how manuscript books were made and how they have deepened our understanding of the intellectual and social milieu of the Middle Ages and Renaissance.

One of the richest storehouses of early manuscripts is Yale University's Beinecke Library. Its collection provides the basis for Barbara Shailor's fully illustrated study of the medieval book and its place in society.

Shailor first examines the manuscript books as an archaeological artifact of a period when mass-production was unknown and every volume had to be written and assembled by hand. She then groups books by genre – both religious and secular – to show how the contents of a volume and its function within society influenced its physical appearance and the way in which it was produced. A brief look at the transition from manuscript to printed book concludes the survey.

Originally published by the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library in 1988, this work has quickly become an indispensable guide for scholars in a wide range of medieval studies.

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