

## Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: A Bibliographical Handlist of Manuscripts and Manuscript Fragments Written or Owned in England up to 1100. Compiled by Helmut Gneuss and Michael Lapidge

[Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: A Bibliographical Handlist of Manuscripts and Manuscript Fragments Written or Owned in England up to 1100.](#) Compiled by Helmut Gneuss and Michael Lapidge. Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press, 2014. xix, 937 p. ISBN: 9781442648234. Â£119.99 / \$175.00 (hardback).

Attempting to compile and record the entire known corpus of manuscripts produced or historically owned in a single country over a period of five centuries is at best a daunting, if not impossible, task. Trying to do so while also providing as comprehensive a record as possible of the critical multi- and interdisciplinary scholarship dealing with those manuscripts transforms such a project from a (relatively) simple “if painstaking, lengthy, and exceptionally useful” act of bibliography to a scholarly effort of heroic proportions. In their *Handlist* (surely a word that understates the massive undertaking this work represents), Professors Gneuss and Lapidge have provided Anglo-Saxon and manuscript studies scholars with a remarkable, elegantly organized, and exhaustively informative resource that will not just guide the work of researchers in these fields, but one that also will help determine the course of future scholarship in these areas for decades to come.

The publication of the *Handlist* represents the culmination of a project whose origins stretch back over 60 years to Prof. Gneuss’s days as a young scholar at St. John’s College, Cambridge, when, as the volume’s preface states, he first began to lay out plans for such an effort. The first version of the list emerged in the 1970s as an in-house reference tool for graduate students at the University of Munich, but recognizing its wider utility, Prof. Gneuss expanded its contents and eventually published it for international scholarly consumption in 1981. With contributions of further information and research from scholars around the world, a much fuller and more detailed updated list was published in 2001, with two subsequent lists of additions and corrections appearing in 2003 and 2012. In collaboration with Prof. Lapidge, work on the *Handlist*’s final form commenced in 2005 with the identification and addition to the list of all relevant secondary publications related to each of the included manuscripts. The result of this massive undertaking is impressive, to say the least, and the data presented includes entries for 1,291 known Anglo-Saxon manuscripts “whether codex or fragment” written in England up to the year 1100, and additional manuscripts written in the rest of Britain, Ireland, or the European continent, provided that they “certainly or probably” reached England before 1100.

The *Handlist* is a model of organizational elegance and efficiency designed to make each entry as informative and illustrative as possible, while at the same time remaining clear and easy to read. The compilers divide the list into two main sections, the first recording manuscripts housed in British libraries, and the second listing those manuscripts now located in collections outside Britain. Also included is a third, very brief, section identifying known, but now lost and untraced, manuscripts and fragments. Within the two major divisions, each individual entry provides a wealth of data laid out with economy and clarity, including standard information such as the following: each manuscript’s current location and shelfmark; its date of production (determined by a combination of information related to its history, contents, and codicological and paleographical qualities); its firm or tentative place of origin; its known or inferred provenance history; and a listing of its textual contents. Not

included are descriptions of the manuscripts'™ codicological, paleographical, and decorative features, as full descriptions of such details are readily available in other published resources.

Supplementing all of this is a massive " and massively useful " systematic bibliography of secondary resources published primarily up to 2010 (with studies of "œunquestionable importance" published through 2012) that deal with each of the manuscripts included in the inventory. As useful as the individual entries recording the manuscripts'™ locations, origins, provenance, and content may be, it is the added value of this complementary secondary information that, in my opinion, makes the *Handlist* an absolutely essential and successful reference tool. The bibliographical portions of each entry are subdivided into numerous sections citing secondary resources dealing with a range of topics, including: studies of the manuscript as codicological or paleographical object; examinations of decorative, illustrative, and art historical content; citations of published editions of the texts included in each manuscript (but only in the case of editions that are based on the manuscript in question or that include the manuscript in its formal collation of sources); analyses of language and linguistic elements; general studies that consider the cultural, historical and textual contexts of the works preserved in each manuscript; and references to facsimile appearances of the manuscripts, whether in complete editions or as selected reproductions of individual pages published to accompany scholarly works. Although the compilers do not include references to digital facsimiles due to a variety of (good) reasons related to space and the often ephemeral nature of web-based content, in the volume's™ general introduction they do provide a list of some of the more important (and stable) online resources, such as the British Library's™ [Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts](#), the [Parker on the Web](#) featuring relevant manuscripts at Corpus Christi College (Cambridge), and the [Bodleian Library website](#). If the volume has any weakness, it would be its inability to update its secondary bibliography automatically. Hopefully, however, there are plans in place to update this critical information at regular intervals in the years to come.

More than 60 years in the making, this *Handlist* represents the most significant bibliographic achievement in the field of Anglo-Saxon manuscript studies. But it is also much more than a tool that facilitates access by listing known manuscripts and their current locations. It also enables researchers to contextualize individual manuscripts within their larger historical, textual, and artistic settings, as well as identify critical lacunae waiting to be filled. Additionally, it provides a remarkable bibliographical model upon which many future catalogues of medieval manuscripts could " and should " be based.

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