

Recommended citation

Vito Lorusso et al., ‘Searching for a definition of “manuscript”’

DOI: [10.25592/uhhfdm.9796](https://doi.org/10.25592/uhhfdm.9796)

Published: March 2015

CSMC – Occasional Paper No. 1

Searching for a definition of “manuscript”

Vito Lorusso with support of the TNT members¹

The definition of “manuscript” (MS) contained in this document originates from the activities carried out by the working group “Theory and Terminology” (TNT) between May 2013 and June 2014. In order to produce this definition, TNT aimed at finding a number of features that are common to all manuscript cultures studied here at the SFB 950. A collection of definitions of MS taken from the relevant literature on the topic served as starting point for the discussion. These definitions are contained on the subsequent pages, too.

Six categories have been so far emerged: planned, having prepared surfaces, carrying handwriting, portable, self-contained, and unique. They have been combined and presented in a definition, which is intended to be as general as possible, in order to avoid any opposition such as MSS vs orality, or MSS vs inscriptions, or MSS vs printed books. It goes without saying that there are quite a few cases in which one or the other criterion might be disputed. For many manuscript cultures, however, the following definition seems to be working well:

A MS is an artefact planned and realised to provide surfaces on which visible signs are applied by hand; it is portable, self-contained, and unique.

The table below further explains the main features of a MS. While working on MS features, one should be aware of the existence of borderline cases, too. Those listed in the table are intended only as examples. Further cases can be, of course, added to the list.

¹ A. Bausi, D. Bondarev, A. Brita, Ch. Brockmann, G. Ciotti, M. Friedrich, H. Isaacson, J. Karolewski, J. B. Quenzer, R. Samsom, S. Valente, E. Wilden, H. Wimmer

MS features	explanation/examples	borderline cases
planned	the plan is carried out by several actors, such as scribes, correctors, rubricators, illuminators, book-binders, etc., or by one	“unplanned” composite MSS, such as “Oriental” MSS bound by European librarians
having prepared surfaces	materials suitable for writing and/or drawing have to be treated before writing and/or drawing is applied. Further treatments are e.g. determining the layout, pricking and ruling the surface	recycled/retrieved materials with suitable surface, e.g. ostraca
carrying handwriting	the fact of being carrier of visible signs, i.e. writing, musical notation, images, etc., as well as the fact of being applied by hand to the surface with specific tools	- writing: a. painting (e.g. ostraca, surfaces that require a long time to be written on, etc.) b. incising (e.g. copper plate inscriptions) c. invisible writing
portable	easy to carry or move around	giants MSS, e.g. a. Guru Granth Sahib at the Sikh Golden Temple of Amritsar: limited movement within the temple itself b. giant Qur’ans
self-contained	not only in relation to another item	e.g. tag bearing the name of a saint attached to his supposed relic
unique	while “copying” a MS, the scribe may aim to give an accurate representation of the content and/or layout of the original. The final result, however, is never an exact reproduction (or facsimile) of the original	e.g. the attempt to “copy” as many aspects of a MS as possible resulting in two almost undistinguishable MSS

The definitions collected below are the serendipitous result of a first search. They are grouped into four main sections: A: Manuscript as a handwritten document, B: Manuscript as a codex, C: Manuscript as a book, and D: Manuscript as a medium. Since codex books do not occur in all manuscript cultures, section C refers to a more general understanding of book. Within each section, the definitions are arranged in chronological order.

0. Some preliminary considerations:

66. Betrachte z. B. einmal die Vorgänge, die wir »Spiele« nennen. Ich meine Brettspiele, Kartenspiele, Ballspiel, Kampfspiele, usw. Was ist allen diesen gemeinsam? [...] Das Ergebnis dieser Betrachtung lautet nun: Wir sehen ein kompliziertes Netz von Ähnlichkeiten, die einander übergreifen und kreuzen. Ähnlichkeiten im Großen und Kleinen.

67. Ich kann diese Ähnlichkeiten nicht besser charakterisieren als durch das Wort »Familienähnlichkeiten« [...].

69. »Das, und Ähnliches, nennt man >Spiele<. Und wissen wir selbst denn mehr? Können wir etwa nur dem Andern nicht genau sagen, was ein Spiel ist? [...].

71. Man kann sagen, der Begriff >Spiel< ist ein Begriff mit verschwommenen Rändern. – »Aber ist ein verschwommener Begriff überhaupt ein *Begriff*?« – Ist eine unscharfe Photographie überhaupt ein Bild eines Menschen? Ja, kann man ein unscharfes Bild immer mit Vorteil durch ein scharfes ersetzen? Ist das unscharfe nicht oft gerade das, was wir brauchen? (Wittgenstein 1984: 277–280).

A. Manuscript as a handwritten document:

1. Manoscritto (fr. *manuscrit*; sp. *manuscrito*; ted. *Handschrift*, ingl. *manuscript*). - Con questo vocabolo si suole indicare qualunque documento che sia scritto a mano su materiali adatti, valendosi della penna o di altro consimile strumento, che renda facile e rapida l'operazione del tracciare le parole, a differenza di ciò che succede quando si incidano o si scolpiscano delle lettere su materie dure, come pietra o metallo. Ma nell'uso letterario con la voce manoscritto si vogliono designare specialmente le opere tramandateci dall'antichità e dal Medioevo nella forma di scrittura del tempo. Infatti prima dell'invenzione della stampa il manoscritto servì a conservare e a divulgare i monumenti letterari, scientifici e religiosi, assolvendo la stessa funzione che ha il libro moderno (Fava 1934).
2. Manoscritto, agg. Scritto a mano (... in contrapposizione a *stampato*). [...] 2. Sm. Foglio o fascicolo, di carta o di pergamena, scritto a mano, che contiene un singolo documento o un'intera opera. [...] 3. Foglio o serie di fogli che contengono, genericamente, un testo scritto a mano. – In partic.: l'originale di un'opera destinata alla stampa. [...] – Anche: gli appunti. [...] – Per estens.: il testo scritto a mano; opera autografa (Battaglia 1975: s. v. Manoscritto).
3. Für jeden der Beschreibstoffe Papyrus, Pergament und Papier bildet das Einzelblatt die einfachste Form für eine Niederschrift. Ein einzelnes Blatt, dessen Größe sehr variabel war, ist für kürzere Aufzeichnungen bestimmt. Es wurde in der Regel in einer Kolumne beschrieben. Seinen »Sitz im Leben« hat das Einzelblatt vornehmlich für Aufzeichnungen des täglichen Gebrauches, für Notizen, Rechnungen, Quittungen, Flugblätter, Ankündigungen, aber auch für Briefe und Urkunden. Eine Aufbewahrung konnte in ungebrochener, gefalteter oder gerollter Form erfolgen. An Termini sind vor allem die Bezeichnungen *scheda*, *plagula* oder *schedula* bezeugt.
Einen bedeutenden Platz nimmt das Einzelblatt in der modernen Handschriftenkunde ein. Es spielt vor allem im Autographen- und Nachlaßwesen eine bedeutsame Rolle. Aus den Jahrhunderten der Neuzeit sind in großer Zahl die nachgelassenen Papiere und Korrespondenzen zahlreicher Dichter, Schriftsteller, Künstler und Wissenschaftler erhalten (Mazal 1986: 61).
4. Manuskript, lat. *manu scriptum* = mit der Hand geschrieben. 1. M. heißt die eigenhändige Urschrift des Verfassers (Autograph) 2. Als M. wird darüber hinaus jede mit der Hand gefertigte Niederschrift (Handschrift) bezeichnet. In diesem Sinne sind alle aus Altertum und MA erhaltenen Texte, Bücher, Urkunden, Briefe usw. M.e, im Gegensatz zum Druck. Dagegen fehlen aus dem Altertum M.e im Sinne von eigenhändigen Urschriften vollst. [...] (Corsten 1999: s. v. Manuskript).
5. Handschrift. (1) H. ist die dt. Übersetzung des lat. *manu scriptum* (d. h.: mit der Hand geschrieben, → Manuskript¹; vgl. die ähnliche Bildung *manu factum*), das schon bei

Tertullian (*early Christian Latin theologian ca. AD 160–after AD 220 – VL*) als Synonym für → Codex verwendet wird. Es handelt sich also ursprünglich nicht um eine Abgrenzung zum Gedruckten, sondern um eine Bez. für ein konkretes → Buch i. Ggs. zu einem u. U. in vielen Büchern vorliegenden zitierten → Text² (z. B. *scriptum est in libro Genesi*), oder aber um eine Bekräftigungsformel für die Eigenhändigkeit der Niederschrift, insbes. bei Schreibernennungen im → Kolophon (*scriptum manu mea propria*).

Die H. ist an keinen → Beschreibstoff gebunden, es treten auf: → Papyrus, Baumrinde, Palmblätter, Leinen, Wachstafeln, → Pergament und → Papier; Inschriften und Gravuren werden nicht zu den H. gezählt (→ Epigraphik). [...] (*In particular for the Western, European manuscripts – VL*): Ma. H. treten v. a. als Urkunden und Buch-H. auf, bei neuzeitlichen H. ist die Scheidung zwischen Buch-H., Notizen und Briefen wichtig. [...]

Durch den → Buchdruck verloren die Buch-H. etwa nach 1480 ihre zentrale Stellung als Überlieferungsmedium. Für Landes-, Stadt- oder Pfarrchroniken und v. a. für verbotene theolog. Traktate blieben sie noch bis ins 19. Jh. hinein der typische Überlieferungsträger, außerdem für persönliche Textsammlungen (insbes. Exzerpte und Vorlesungsnachschriften), Gedichtsammlungen und Stammbücher. Aus den beiden letzten entwickelte sich im 19. Jh. das Poesiealbum (Mentzel-Reuters 2003: 250–251).

6. Writing is done on the two-dimensional surface of three-dimensional objects. Some of these substrates were not intended as such and the writing was added to them by chance: names and graffiti were affixed to vases, trees, walls, statues, etc. Longer texts are generally inscribed on prepared surfaces (which are sometimes part of a larger object – a temple or statue, etc.) and their layout is a matter of intention, even when the substrate was not produced to be written on. [...] By contrast, no thought is usually given to the layout of casual notes written on ostraca. But most objects that are written on were designed with their use in mind; the design of the surface and the layout of the writing were only part of a larger project, in which material, social, economic, and personal considerations played an important part (Sirat 2006: 161).
7. Manuscript. Although the term ‘manuscript’ (Latin: manu scriptus) is sometimes used loosely, particularly in modern publishing parlance, to denote any non-print or pre-publication text, such as a typescript or computer print-out, it means a text or document, usually on paper or parchment, literally ‘written by hand’. If a document is partly printed, such as certain kinds of forms or certificates, then it is best described as a partly printed document with manuscript insertions (Beal 2008: 244).
8. Manuscript [Lat.: ‘written by hand’]. In its broadest sense, a handwritten book, roll, tablet or other form of portable means for storing information. Many different materials have been used for the production of manuscripts, the choice of which depends largely on geographical availability, the stage of technological development and prevailing

traditional values. These factors have in turn frequently played an important part in deciding the shape and appearance of the manuscript itself, as well as influencing the script (Ward 2008: 355).

9. "... it may be useful to consider for a moment what we mean by the term 'manuscript'. The usual definition of a manuscript as a book or document written by hand, not printed, is insufficient for our purposes. Rather, we would like to define the manuscript as a 'codicological entity': the intended end product of a scriptorium's scribal activities".

This quotation comes from a provisional list of manuscripts from the library of the monastery of Fleury, France, written by Marco Mostert and describes some of the problems one faces when demarcating the concept of 'manuscript'.

When we are asked what a manuscript looks like we often picture a number of quires of hand-written vellum or paper pages, bound together with parchment or with a leather-covered wooden fastening. Though generally true, such a picture is not always correct. Manuscripts can also be an album or a roll. Some manuscripts can even be written on plants leaves, as is the case in some parts of the tropics. In this study manuscripts are considered to be the end product of handwriting on either natural organic material or man-made paper. We have used a somewhat broadened version of Mostert's definition of a manuscript. We have deleted the word 'scriptorium', because writers and copyists were regularly producing manuscripts outside the confines of a monastic scriptorium. The lasting proof is many manuscripts copied from 'peciae' by medieval students at universities or professional scribes (Buringh 2011: 16).

B. Manuscript as a codex:

1. Le terme *codex* [...] désigne une réunion de feuilles de papyrus ou de parchemin, pliées en deux, groupées en cahier(s), cousues ensemble par le dos et habituellement protégées par une couverture. Son contenu, à la différence de celui du codex dit documentaire, est un ouvrage, c'est-à-dire un texte destiné à la diffusion et à la conservation. Celui-ci peut être littéraire (œuvres classiques) ou professionnel, technique (biblique, juridique, magique, médical, scolaire, etc.) (Haelst 1989: 13).
2. Codex (δέλτος, πυκτίον, τεῦχος, κῶδιξ), the preponderant form of the Byz.—and modern—book. It consists of quires made of sheets of papyrus, parchment, or, later, paper, which were prepared for copying by the application of ruling patterns in order to guide the writing; the written quires were stitched, usually one to another, to form the smooth spine characteristic of Byz. bookbinding. Unlike the earlier roll, the codex fitted more text into less space because each sheet was written on both sides. Moreover, since the codex could be immediately opened to any page, it allowed random consultation. In appearance, Byz.

codices range from sumptuous illuminated mss or lavish editions of the classics to tax registers or heavily annotated working texts produced by scholars for their personal use (Gamillscheg and McCormick 1991: 473).

3. Die Geschichte des Bucheinbandes ist untrennbar mit derjenigen Form des Buches verbunden, die wir als Codex bezeichnen. Diese noch dem Zeitgenossen der Gegenwart vertraute Buchform hat sich in ihren Wesenszügen seit der Spätantike nicht sehr verändert. Ein aus einer oder mehreren Lagen von Papyrus-, Pergament- oder Papierblättern gebildeter Buchblock wird durch Heftfäden und Bünde zusammengehalten und von einer schützenden Hülle umgeben. [...] Erst die *Codexform* des Buches hatte die Entwicklung eines Einbandes zur Folge (Mazal 1997: 1).
4. Il termine «codice», al contrario (*in contrast to the term 'book' – VL*), si riferisce unicamente all'aspetto strutturale del libro. La definizione non soffre di ambiguità: si tratta, infatti, di un «libro formato da fogli piegati in due (bifogli) e riuniti in uno o più fascicoli, cuciti mediante un filo lungo la linea di piegatura» (Maniaci 2002: 72).
5. Codex. Deriving from the Latin *caudex* ('tree bark') and most commonly applied to ancient and medieval written books, whether on papyrus, vellum, or paper, the term 'codex' (plural: codices) denotes a manuscript volume, comprising quires sewn together at the fold and usually also bound, in contrast to the tablet or scroll of earlier usage. The earliest codex forms were probably wax-covered or ivory tablets hinged together like the leaves of a book (Beal 2008: 78).
6. Come era ottenuto e organizzato un manoscritto in forma di codice? Quest'ultimo era normalmente costituito da un certo numero di fascicoli rilegati, formati a loro volta da fogli ripiegati sia di pergamena sia, in epoca più antica, di papiro sia, nel Medioevo e Rinascimento, di carta; solo in origine si possono incontrare codici di papiro formati da un unico grosso fascicolo. I fogli ripiegati – detti bifogli – venivano inseriti l'uno nell'altro in numero variabile formando fascicoli per lo più di quattro bifogli (quaternione); ma se ne incontrano anche di due (binione), di tre (ternione), di cinque (quinione), di sei (senione) e raramente di un numero maggiore (Cavallo 2008: 15).
7. Codex. The leaves are (normally) *bifolia*, which are nested to form *quires*; these are connected by *sewing through the fold*, i.e. thread or similar material passes through holes in the folds of the bifolia (so, each hole used for sewing pierces each bifolium once, not each leaf once).
There exist *spineless codices*, which look like a loose-leaf form, but layout and page succession suggest that they are to be considered border cases of the normal codex (Gumbert 2014: 3).

C. Manuscript as a book:

1. Assemblage portatif d'éléments présentant une surface plane, sur lesquels un texte peut être écrit de façon durable (Muzerelle 1985: 57).
2. Die ökonomischen, insbesondere aber die technischen Einzelheiten der Gutenbergschen Erfindung werden in älteren und jüngeren Arbeiten ausführlich geschildert. [...] Zudem muß nochmals die Fragestellung behandelt werden, die bereits in die Untersuchung der Manuskriptproduktion einleitete: In welchem Ausmaß wirkten äußere Faktoren auf den Buchmarkt bzw. auf die Buchproduktion?

Die Druckerpresse und die Vervielfältigung übereinstimmender Typen mit wiederverwendbaren Werkzeugen ermöglichen es nicht nur, in kurzer Zeit tausende oder gar zehntausende identischer Produkte anzufertigen, sie zwangen auch dazu, die Herstellung einer größeren Anzahl von Büchern vorzufinanzieren und diese dann möglichst rasch zu verkaufen. Insofern wurde der Buchmarkt bzw. die Buchrezeption zweifelsohne durch inhärente technische und wirtschaftliche Umstände geprägt. Fraglich ist allerdings, inwiefern bzw. in welchem Ausmaß sich diese neben der Nachfrage oder gar in Konkurrenz dazu auf das Buchangebot auswirkten. Gelegentlich waren schon im „Manuskriptzeitalter“ Bücher für den Verkauf geschrieben worden, ohne daß die Endabnehmer im einzelnen feststanden. Auch wenn erste Anzeichen einer Kommerzialisierung also bereits zuvor beobachtet werden können, brachte die Erfindung des Buchdrucks dennoch einen gravierenden Wandel mit sich. Jede Entscheidung, ob ein Buch hergestellt werden sollte, betraf nicht mehr einzelne Exemplare, sondern ganze Auflagen, deren Höhe ferner im voraus festgelegt werden mußte (Neddermeyer 1998: 387).

3. Book. Apparently deriving from forms of the Germanic *bok*, originally meaning ‘beech’ (the wood of that tree traditionally providing the tablets on which runes were carved), the word ‘book’ is today most commonly understood to be a bound printed volume. Although a bound manuscript volume can technically be described as a codex, the term ‘book’ is applicable to it as well, as indeed it was before the invention of printing. Certain divisions of literary texts (in the Bible or in Virgil’s *Aeneid*, for instance) denote units that might (though not necessarily) once have been separate and independent, or which are now conceived as metaphorically so, originally because a book often represented the contents of a single papyrus scroll.

The term ‘book’ has, however, been applied historically to almost any kind of written document, both bound and otherwise. If a common feature may be detected it is not anything to do with its physical form, but rather a sense of authority that the record in question has: i.e. that it is the main or official source of reference or finality. Thus, for

example, a commercial company's books are the definitive, neatly drawn up accounts of its financial transactions, which may be open to inspection. The book in the Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre was the full and final text of the play provided usually by its author(s) and used as the exemplar for all subsequent copies of actors' parts and during rehearsals and performances by the theatre's manager and stage prompter. A book in the parlance of government officials, at least in Elizabethan times, was the document relating to a particular matter (the warrant, commission, instructions, or whatever) formally drawn up or engrossed for the attention of a lord chancellor or other eminent official, or else prepared for the monarch's seal of approval. The book in a related legal and administrative context was the engrossed charter, grant, letters patent, or other formal instrument embodying the final text and arrangements authorized (as opposed to preliminary drafts of it). [...]

No doubt many other uses of the term 'book' can be found, including the naming of particular classes of records kept by departments of state or local government; branches of the military; or professional organizations such as livery companies (e.g. freedom books recording the names of apprentices admitted to the freedom of the company) (Beal 2008: 43–44).

4. *Manoscritto*: [...] questo termine deve la sua ragion d'esistere, per contrapposizione, alla tipografia, che mutando le tecniche di produzione e di editoria crea un profondo spartiacque nella lunga storia del libro. Vero è che con *manoscritto* può intendersi qualunque tipo di scritto che non sia stampato (autografi, documenti, atti, inventari...), di qualunque epoca e su un supporto di qualsivoglia natura, si è tuttavia sclerotizzato l'uso nel senso precipuo di *libro* (da sottendersi), qual portatore di testo (letterario, filosofico, giuridico, religioso ecc.) destinato alla circolazione e al commercio, copiato da un amanuense (e quindi entro chiari limiti cronologici), e realizzato con materiali differenziati che determinano epoche distinte nella sua evoluzione: l'oggetto della codicologia.

Emerge, da questa premessa, l'improprietà terminologica di questa disciplina: se il suo oggetto di studio è il *libro manoscritto*, oltre al codice rientra nel suo dominio, sia pure un po' marginalmente, anche il rotolo, assieme alle forme librarie più primitive, come le stesse tavolette (Agati 2009: 29–30).

5. Objet transportable destiné à accueillir, partager et transmettre des contenus immédiatement lisible de façon durable (Andrist, Canart and Maniaci 2013: 46).
6. The apparently minor innovations of the second definition (*the definition C. 5. – VL*) consist of: i) explicit mention of the fundamental aim of the book – to host, share and transmit content – which does not necessarily imply a text; ii) the requirement that the

content be ordered, which makes the definition inapplicable to loose papers and drafts in which the sequence of leaves can be freely altered after writing; and iii) replacement of the adjective “portable” with “transportable” in order to include the possibility of moving very large and heavy books that were meant to be read or consulted *in situ* (Maniaci forthcoming).

D. Manuscript as a medium:

1. Sino alla prima metà di questo secolo (*the 20th – VL*) la parola /codice/ (tranne rari casi, come quando Saussure parla di «code de la langue») veniva usata in tre sensi precisi: paleografico, istituzionale e correlazionale. [...] L’accezione *paleografica* ci offre una traccia per capire le altre due: il *codex* era il tronco dell’albero, da cui si ricavano le tavolette di legno per scrivere, e quindi diventa libro. Anche alla base degli altri due sensi di /codice/ vi è sempre un libro: un *code-book* ovvero un *dizionario* per il codice correlazionale, che fa corrispondere certi simboli a certi altri, e un libro come raccolta di leggi o di norme per il codice istituzionale (Eco 1978: 243).
2. Am Anfang steht das Wort – auch für den Handschriftengelehrten oder Handschriftenbearbeiter; denn Handschriften sind in erster Linie Träger schriftlicher Überlieferung. In den Jahrhunderten des Mittelalters waren sie, wenn auch nicht die einzigen, so doch die wichtigsten Überlieferungsträger. Daher stehen Fragen nach ihrem Inhalt vorwiegend im Vordergrund der wissenschaftlichen Beschäftigung mit ihnen. [...] Ungleich umfangreicher als der erste Aspekt der Handschriftenkunde ist der zweite, der sich mit den äußerlichen Merkmalen befaßt. Der erste Blick beim Betrachten einer Handschrift fällt auf ihr äußeres Erscheinungsbild, auf ihren Einband, ihr Format, ihren Umfang, ihre Schrift. Es ist demnach vom Gegenstand her verständlich, daß sich die Handschriftenkunde in einem so hohen Maße diesem Äußeren widmet (Löffler and Milde 1997: 4–6).
3. We can define a text as a verbal communication, either oral or written, and a book as an organized written text, or a collection of texts, identified by a title and originally inscribed on papyrus or parchment. Rolls and codices - the ancient forerunners of our books - served as repositories for written texts whose survival depended on the durability of the inscribed surfaces that transmitted them. Typically, texts copied and recopied on perishable materials such as papyrus or parchment had a much longer lifespan than the so-called books that contained them. Books existed for the sake of texts, not the other way around. In principle, books were more dependent on texts for their existence than texts were on books. Shorter texts were routinely recorded on material unsuitable for books, such as stone, wood, metal, and pottery. Longer texts could most easily be accommodated on

papyrus or parchment, the very materials from which books were made, and this was actually the case when a text was bound to be stored in an archive. [...] Whatever the precise relationship between ancient texts and books, it was surely one of mutual dependence in which the book helped to perpetuate the text while the text imposed its imprint on the book (Henrichs 2003: 210 f.).

4. Medien sind Werkzeuge, welche das Handeln und Wahrnehmen des Menschen verbessern: So wie schon der Hammer eine künstliche Verbesserung und Ausweitung des menschlichen Körpers ist, so gilt dies [...] auch für andere Medien. Während die mechanischen Techniken die körperlichen Funktionen des Menschen nach außen verlagern, exteriorisieren die elektronischen Medien das zentrale Nervensystem und die Sinnesorgane. Durch Medien werden körperliche und organische Leistungen simuliert oder verstärkt, implementiert oder ersetzt (Wiesing 2008: 235).
5. When we look at the handwriting of someone that we do not know, we form an impression of their personality from their ‚character‘. We may not do so consciously, but we sense handwriting to be unique and revealing. [...] Looking at early printed books and manuscripts requires the same kind of visual, tactile, and historical discrimination: memory, comparative analysis, and sensory perception are fundamental skills that are as much applied as they are theoretical. [...] When we look at books as books, we are conscious of more than simply shape, colour, and weight. Imagine, for instance, that on the table is a copy of an early eighteenth-century poem, printed in folio and set in large type with obvious spaces between the lines. If a literary person was asked ‚What is the most obvious thing about what you are looking at?‘, their first reply might be something like ‚It is a poem‘. To the extent that a poem involves the layout of type on a page in a way that distinguishes it from prose, the answer would have some cunning, but to distinguish the text as ‚a poem‘ is to invite a literary reading of the words as *words*. [...] There is a second point to the example as well, and it has to do with the relationship between form and meaning. To recognize that the text is ‚a poem‘ is to recognize something about its form, its conventions, and its readership (Bland 2010: 1–3).
6. Die Textkultur der Antike war bekanntlich primär eine Kultur der Schriftrolle – besonders anschaulich greifbar in spektakulären Textfunden wie denen von Qumran, aber durchaus vertraut natürlich auch in unzähligen anderen Zeugnissen aus dem griechisch-römischen wie hebräisch-jüdischen Kulturkreis. [...] Die Form des Kodex mit aufeinander gelegten Seiten zum Blättern war wohl dem praktischen Sinn der Römer erwachsen, in Anlehnung an die ältere Form der Wachstafelchen, also dicke Blöcke aus wenigen „Einheiten“. [...] Man sollte diese Aspekte nicht ausschließlich sozialgeschichtlich deuten, aber es ist nicht zu leugnen, dass dieses Medium eine Verbreitung der Text- und Lesekultur in neue Schichten ermöglichte. [...] Im Alltag spielte dieser Aspekt der normalen Lektüre sicher

eine größere Rolle als ein anderer, damit verbundener: gewiss konnte der Kodex auch leichter versteckt werden als ein *rotulus*. [...] Das spätantike Buch gewinnt damit eine Bedeutungstiefe, die über die Funktion des Schreibens und Lesens weit hinausgeht. Es ist mehr als Textträger. Es gibt einen Überschuss an Sinn, an Aufwand, an medialer Wirkung, die den enthaltenen und tradierten Text transzendiert und sich nicht im Lesen erschöpft. Das Buch enthält nicht nur Zeichen, sondern es wird selbst zum Zeichen (Wallraff 2013: 8–13; 48).

References:

- Agati, Maria Luisa (2009), *Il libro manoscritto da Oriente a Occidente: Per una codicologia comparata* (Rome).
- Andrist, Patrick, Paul Canart and Marilena Maniaci (2013), *La Syntaxe du codex: Essai de codicologie structurale* (Turnhout).
- Battaglia, Salvatore (1975), *Grande dizionario della lingua italiana*, vol. 9 (Turin).
- Beal, Peter (2008), *A Dictionary of English Manuscript Terminology 1450–2000* (Oxford).
- Bland, Mark (2010), *A Guide to Early Printed Books and Manuscripts* (Chichester – Malden, Mass.).
- Buringh, Eltjo (2011), *Medieval Manuscript Production in the Latin West: Explorations with a Global Database* (Leiden – Boston).
- Cavallo, Guglielmo (2008), “Del rotolo, del codice e di altri aspetti della cultura scritta antica e medievale”, in Franca Arduini (ed.), *La forma del libro: Dal rotolo al codice (secoli III a.C.–XIX d.C.)* (Florence), 9–23.
- Corsten, Severin and alii (1999), *Lexikon des gesamten Buchwesens*, vol. 5 (Stuttgart).
- Eco, Umberto (1978), “Codice”, in *Enciclopedia*, vol. 3 (Turin).
- Fava, Domenico (1934), “Manoscritto”, in *Enciclopedia italiana di scienze, lettere ed arti*, vol. 22 (Rome).
- Gamillscheg, Ernst and Michael McCormick (1991), “Codex”, in Alexander P. Kazhdan (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. 1 (New York – Oxford).
- Gumbert, J. Peter (2010), *Words for Codices: A Codicological Terminology in English* (available at www.cei.lmu.de/extern/VocCod/WOR10-1.pdf; www.cei.lmu.de/extern/VocCod/WOR10-2.pdf; www.cei.lmu.de/extern/VocCod/WOR10-3.pdf).
- (2014), Book-form classes – a proposal: Handout provided at the Conference “COMSt: Results and Outlook”, Hamburg 18-20 March 2014.

- Haelst, Joseph van (1989), “Les origines du codex”, in Alain Blanchard (ed.), *Les débuts du codex: Actes de la journée d'étude organisée à Paris les 3 et 4 juillet 1985 par l'Institut de Papyrologie de la Sorbonne et l'Institut de Recherche et d'Histoire des Textes* (Turnhout).
- Henrichs, Albert (2003), “*Hieroi Logoi and Hierai Bibloi: The (Un)Written Margins of the Sacred in Ancient Greece*”, in *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 101, 207–266.
- Löffler, Karl and Wolfgang Milde (1997), *Einführung in die Handschriftenkunde* (Stuttgart).
- Maniaci, Marilena (2002), *Archeologia del manoscritto: Metodi, problemi, bibliografia recente* (Rome).
- (forthcoming), “Manuscript Terminology: A Plurilingual Perspective”, in *Manuscript Cultures*.
- Mazal, Otto (1986), *Lehrbuch der Handschriftenkunde* (Wiesbaden).
- (1997), *Einbandkunde: Die Geschichte des Bucheinbandes* (Wiesbaden).
- Mentzel-Reuters, Arno (2003), “Handschrift”, in Ursula Rautenberg (ed.), *Reclams Sachlexikon des Buches* (Stuttgart).
- Muzerelle, Denis (1985), *Vocabulaire codicologique: Répertoire méthodique des terms français relatifs aux manuscrits* (Paris).
- Neddermeyer, Uwe (1998), *Von der Handschrift zum gedruckten Buch: Schriftlichkeit und Leseinteresse im Mittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit. Quantitative und qualitative Aspekte* (Wiesbaden).
- Sirat, Colette (2006), *Writing as Handwork: A History of Handwriting in Mediterranean and Western Culture* (Turnhout).
- Wallraff, Martin (2013), *Kodex und Kanon: Das Buch im frühen Christentum* (Berlin – Boston).
- Ward, Gerald W. R. (ed.) (2008), *The Grove Encyclopedia of Materials and Techniques in Art* (Oxford).
- Wiesing, Lambert (2008), “Was sind Medien?”, in Stefan Münker and Alexander Roesler (eds.), *Was ist ein Medium?* (Frankfurt am Main), 235–271.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig (1984), *Werkausgabe Band 1: Tractatus logico-philosophicus, Tagebücher 1914–1916, Philosophische Untersuchungen* (Frankfurt am Main).

Recommended citation

Vito Lorusso et al., ‘Searching for a definition of “manuscript”’

Link to this document: http://www.manuscript-cultures.uni-hamburg.de/papers_e.html

Published: March 2015