MEDIEVAL MANUSCRIPTS AND THE COMPUTATIONAL HUMANITIES

BIG DATA, SCRIBES, AND THE "PARIS BIBLE"

This Book Cultures Short volume examines the transformations in medieval studies—and the humanities more broadly—enabled by decades of digitization and advances in computational methods. Centring on the Paris Bible, a widely copied thirteenth- and fourteenth-century manuscript genre, we demonstrate how automated transcription produces scribal data at a scale once inaccessible, and how automation can support new approaches to localizing, dating, and contextualizing manuscripts. We argue that bringing machine learning and artificial intelligence to medieval studies not only requires re-centring expert human intelligence within computational systems, but also raises the question of the infrastructures needed for equitable, collaborative scholarship across the field. The book models how medieval studies might rethink interpretation, highlighting both the promise and risks of computational methods in manuscript research.

Book Cultures, Medieval to Modern This series takes as its point of departure the premodern handmade book as an object but extends beyond the book's page to its trajectory in the world. Building on developments in manuscript studies and book history, it aims to explore the book both as a medium and a technology in its own right, transcending easy periodization boundaries and capable of functioning as an axis of various cultures. It is not bound to the Eurocentric notion of the medieval, allowing for both a global perspective and innovative comparisons. It encompasses both non-elite and elite forms of book and is not limited to books in codex form.

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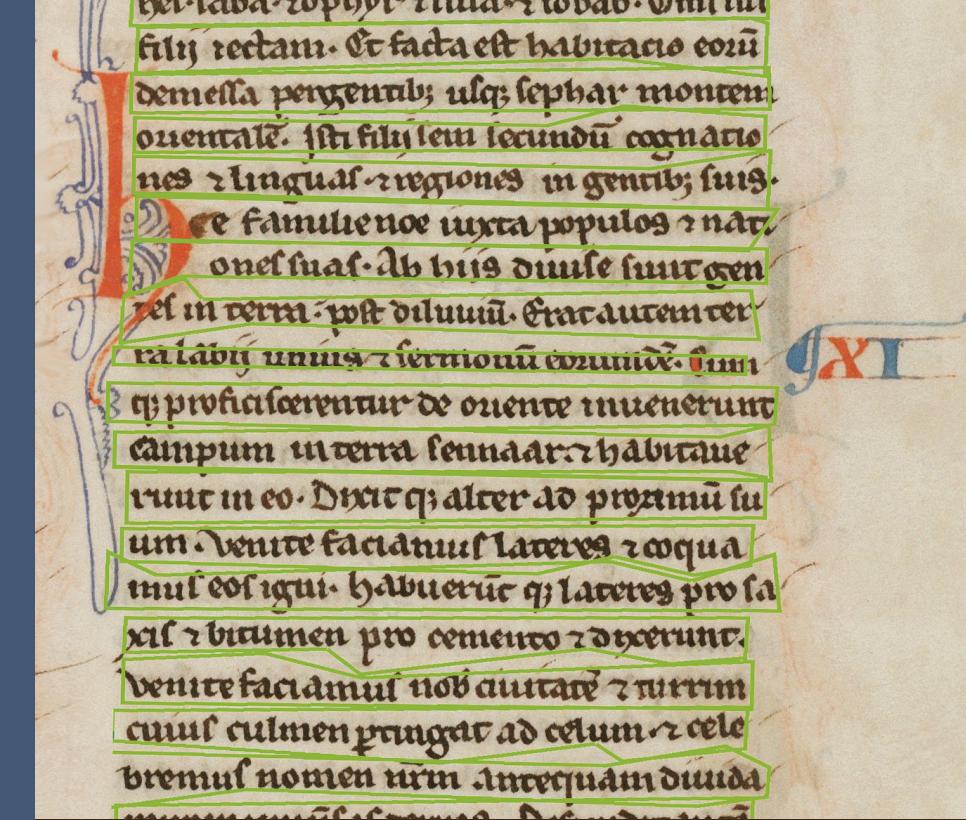
The authors are co-directors of the Paris Bible Project, using computational methods to study the creation and diffusion of medieval Latin bibles. Their co-authored publications have appeared in *Digital Studies in Language and Literature*, *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities,* and the *Journal of Data Mining and Digital Humanities*.

Cover image: "Genesis 11 on the Tower of Babel." New Haven, Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, MS 387 (the Ruskin Bible), fol. 7r, 1225–1250. The image is overlaid with polygons from the page layout XML generated by Transkribus. Courtesy of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Public Domain.

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