

Descriptions Glossary

This document explains basic terms used to describe manuscripts, their physical components, and their contents. ***Boldfaced italics*** mark cross-references to other entries in this Glossary.

BIFOLIO: A sheet of writing material folded in half to create two *folios*, one **leading** and one **trailing**. With one page per folio *side*, each bifolio totals four pages. Plural: **bifolios**.

BIS: Latin for “twice.” Occasionally the same *folio numbering* appears on two separate leaves of the same manuscript; the second instance is distinguished by adding “bis” between the number and **r** (for *recto*) or **v** (for *verso*). Example: 1r, 1v, 1-bis-r, 1-bis-v, 2r, 2v, 3r, 3v.

BOARDS: The covers of a *codex*.

The front cover is the **upper** board. The back cover is the **lower** board. Front and back are defined in relation to *folio numbering*.

The exterior face of each cover is an **outer** (or outside) board. The interior face of each is an **inner** (or inside) board.

Four *sides* per codex thus occur in this order from front to back: “outer upper board,” “inner upper board,” “inner lower board,” and “outer lower board.”

BOOK: In reference to a written work, “book” denotes a conceptual unit. Ancient texts are frequently divided into books and then into chapters. In reference to a bound “book” as a physical unit, the terms *codex* and *manuscript* are preferred.

CODEX: Several *quires* that were bound together and put between *boards* to make up a single physical unit. Plural: **codices**.

N.B. For entire codices, even those without boards, measurements of height, width, and depth (i.e., thickness) are indicated in the codicological description. Compare *fragment*.

COLOPHON: A scribal note, usually at the end of a *codex*.

COLUMN: Scribes usually arranged writing on a page either in one text block or in two vertical groupings, numbered as col. a and col. b. In a palimpsest layer, it is possible that more than two columns of text (or parts thereof) are visible, depending on how the original *bifolio*, with four columns per *side* (two columns per page), was cut.

CONJOIN: The other half of a *bifolio*. Depending on its position, it can be either leading or trailing. Example: Fol. 1r is the leading conjoin to fol. 8v. Fol. 8r is the trailing conjoin to fol. 1v.

DOUBLE PALIMPSEST: Writing material on which two distinct layers of *undertext* were written and removed, each at different times, before the current *overttext* was added. Also known as *bis rescriptus* (“twice re-written”).

EXPLICIT: The last words of a text. (Compare *incipit*.)

FLESH SIDE: The parchment side that was closest to the flesh of the animal whose skin was used to produce the writing material. It often has a smoother, lighter surface than the *hair side*. Flesh and hair often interact differently with the same inks and respond differently to multispectral imaging.

FLY LEAF: To cover the inside of the upper and lower *boards* in a *codex*, an entire *bifolio* is used for each side. One *folio*—the *pastedown*—is attached to each inner board (upper and lower); its *conjoin* folio is the fly leaf.

Fly leaves are numbered in Roman numerals: I (for the fly leaf inside the upper board) and I' (for the fly leaf inside the lower board).

Fly leaves usually do not carry *overtext*, but may be palimpsested (i.e., preserve *undertext*).

FOLIO: A sheet of writing material, originating as half of a *bifolio*, with both a *recto* and a *verso* side (thus two pages). Plural: **folios**. Synonym: **leaf** (plural **leaves**).

N.B. On the project website, the catalog-field title “Folios” serves as shorthand for *folios and other manuscript components (including also boards, fly leaves, stubs, etc.)*, that contain *undertext* and for which individual physical descriptions are provided.

FOLIO NUMBERING (= FOLIATION): Modern scholarship follows medieval tradition in numbering only the upper (i.e., front) side of a folio. The two *sides* of a folio are distinguished by the addition of **r** (for *recto*) and **v** (for *verso*). Example: fol. 15r, fol. 15v.

In languages written left-to-right (Greek, Latin, etc.) a folio’s recto side appears on the right when a *codex* or *bifolio* is open, and its verso side on the left.

In languages written right-to-left (Syriac, Arabic, etc.), a folio’s recto side appears on the left when a *codex* or *bifolio* is open, and its verso side on the right.

In palimpsests, the sequence of numbers follows the order of the *overtext*. See also *bis*.

FRAGMENT: A part of an individual *folio* or *bifolio* that does not survive intact and exists outside a *quire* context. Fragment numbering varies depending on context.

N.B. For each individual fragment, measurements indicate maximum and minimum height and width.

GUTTER: The place where *bifolios* are folded and meet the *spine* inside a *codex*.

HAIR SIDE: The parchment side that faced outward on the animal whose skin was used to produce the writing material. It often has a rougher surface, and is yellower or darker than the *flesh side*. Hair and flesh often interact differently with the same inks and respond differently to multispectral imaging.

INCIPIT: The first few words of a text. (Compare *explicit*.)

MANUSCRIPT: Written by hand (rather than produced by, e.g., printing press). Refers especially but not exclusively to *folios* bound between *boards* to form a *codex*.

OVERTEXT: The writing that is uppermost—added more recently than the erased layer(s), and hence visible to the naked eye—on a palimpsested page. Also known as *scriptio superior* (“upper writing”). Compare *undertext*.

QUIRE: Several *bifolios* inserted one into the other and fixed with binding thread.

QUIRE NUMBERING: Used in manuscript descriptions to identify the physical sequence and grouping of manuscript components. *Folio numbering* appears in parentheses.

Example: I, 4x8 (32), 1x4+1 (37), 1x8-1 (44), 1x2 (46), I’.

I: Front *fly leaf*

4x8 (32): Four *quires* made up of eight *folios* (i.e., four *bifolios*) each. The last folio of this sequence of quires is fol. 32.

1x4+1 (37): One quire made up of four folios (i.e., two bifolios), with the addition of a single folio. The last folio of this sequence is fol. 37.

1x8-1 (44): One quire originally made up of eight folios (i.e. four bifolios), from which one folio was cut out. The last folio of this sequence is fol. 44.

1x2 (46): One bifolio. The last folio of this sequence is fol. 46.

I’: Back fly leaf.

PASTEDOWN: A *folio* used to cover the inner *board* of a *codex*. Usually has a *fly leaf* as its *conjoin*. Like fly leaves, pastedowns usually do not carry *overtext*, but may preserve *undertext*.

RECTO: The first (front or upper) *side* of a *folio*. Abbreviated *r*. See: *folio numbering*.

SIDE: Serves in this project as a technical term to refer to *the face of any manuscript component—folio, bifolio, board, fly leaf, fragment, stub, etc.—as seen by the camera*. Most often “side” serves as a synonym for page, referring to either the *recto* or the *verso* of a single *folio*. For a *bifolio*, by contrast, one “side” equals two *conjoined* pages.

SINGLETON: An individual *folio* outside a *quire* context. Its position relative to the quire with which it is most closely connected, based on on-site codicological examination, is indicated as follows: “after quire 6” or “before quire 7.”

SINGLE FOLIO: An individual folio within a *quire* context. It usually has a *stub* (a narrow strip of writing material) as a *conjoin*. Sometimes the single folio was added intentionally to expand a quire. Sometimes it was generated by removing one half of an original bifolio, which may have resulted in loss of text.

SPINE: The back of a *codex*, where the *quires* are joined together. The spine is usually covered with fabric and leather, but in damaged codices it may be exposed.

STUB: Stubs have diverse origins.

In some instances, a single **folio** sewn into a **quire** was produced by cutting off most of the second folio of an original **bifolio**, so that only a vertical strip of the latter, near the **gutter**, remained. Such stubs have their own **conjoins** and may thus be leading or trailing.

In other instances, an isolated strip of writing material was wrapped around a **quire** to reinforce the binding.

If stubs do not carry **foliation** (which is often the case) and are stable and large enough to be imaged, they are assigned a number with regard to the nearest foliated folio. This is noted by + (plus) if a stub is before a folio and - (minus) if it is after a folio.

Stubs have their own **recto** and **verso** sides, established by on-site codicological examination, indicated in the usual way as **r**(ecto) and **v**(erso).

Example: stub+14r refers to the recto side of a stub before fol. 14;
 stub+14v refers to the verso side of a stub before fol. 14;
 stub-14r refers to the recto side of a stub after fol. 14;
 stub-14v refers to the verso side of a stub after fol. 14.

VERSO: The second (back or lower) **side** of a **folio**. Abbreviated **v**. See: **folio numbering**.

UNDERTEXT: An older layer of ink—writing and/or drawing—that was removed in order to reuse its writing material (which thus becomes a “palimpsest”). Also known as *scriptio inferior* (“lower writing”).

This project coined the phrase “**Undertext Object**,” abbreviated **UTO**, to associate *manuscript components (folios, stubs, fragments, fly leaves, etc.) that share the same present-day shelf-mark and contain erased text*:

- from the *same literary work* (or, rarely, a documentary one)
- in the *same language*
- in the *same script*
- in the *same scribal hand*
- from the *same time period* and (where known) *place of origin*.

Each “UTO” thus represents a textual and paleographic unity, whether distributed across multiple and even discontinuous folios (etc.) or contained in a single fragmentary folio.

Each “UTO” is listed as a discrete “**Undertext**” within the **overtext** manuscript where it currently appears. This organization represents a first level of analysis that does not systematically attempt to draw conclusions about how different “UTO”s may have been connected in the past.

However, Participating Scholars often comment on how one “UTO” may be related to others. (For an example in context, see “[Navigating This Site](#),” under “Browsing Undertexts.”)