

Frank COULSON Codices Latini Ohienses: Regional collections as research and teaching tools

The Census of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the United States and Canada (1935-40) and its Supplement (1962) surveyed for the first time the manuscript treasures housed in the private and public collections of America and Canada. Nearly 50 years have now elapsed since the publication of the Supplement, and the time is ripe for a new catalogue. First, many public collections have continued to acquire new codices since 1962, particularly through well-placed purchases at booksellers such as Maggs Bros., William Salloch, and the now defunct H.P. Kraus. Additionally, many manuscripts have found their way into public collections through gifts and legacies. Often, these are not catalogued, and all too often the curator is unaware of the potential value of the volume.

In this paper, I explore one regional collection in Ohio, namely the Latin manuscript collection at the William Oxley Thompson Library of the Ohio State University, with a view to underlining its potential as a research and teaching tool. The collection consists of 12 complete Latin manuscripts acquired between 1950 and 1988 primarily through judicious buying. Though three of the manuscripts were described in the Supplement to the Census (Latin manuscripts 1-3), the descriptions were very summary, and the contents were sometimes wrongly assessed.

The collection at Ohio State has many surprisingly significant manuscripts. Current Latin MS 6, a copy of the *Lumen confessorum* of Andreas de Escobar, concludes with a colophon stating that the author revised the text, originally written in 1428, in the year 1438 while he attended a church council at Ferrara. The Ohio State manuscript, it would appear, is the only copy of the text to be revised by its author. Latin MS 9 contains an incomplete copy of the *De planctu naturae* of Alan of Lille with two important medieval commentaries transmitted in the margins of the codex. Latin MS 12 contains a hitherto unedited collection of Neo-Latin poetry composed by the Jesuit poet Ippolito Grassetti (1603-1663), at Modena in 1631

But it is not only for its research potential that the collection is worth investigating. It also can play an extremely important role in the teaching of palaeography, codicology, and manuscript studies more generally. Firstly, the collection provides a wide-ranging overview of the development and regional peculiarities of Gothic script in the late medieval period. Latin MS 1 is written in a beautifully formed Anglicana hand, clear and legible. Latin MS 5 shows clearly the influence of the rotunda form of *littera textualis* in Italy, while MS 8, a miscellany, illustrates the German cursive form of Gothic. Secondly, the collection can be used to good effect in the field of codicology. Many of the manuscripts are in their original bindings. The manuscript of Alain of Lille (MS 9) has at some point been rebound and has suffered disturbances and losses in its original format of gatherings. Other manuscripts in the collection, however, show regular collections of gatherings, and thus can be used to show the student how to undertake a collation of the manuscript. Other manuscripts clearly reveal the importance of investigating such ancillary features of the manuscript as fly leaves, *probationes pennae*, and doodles.