

Even at the relatively few and privileged institutions in North America with holdings of medieval manuscripts, it is not feasible or responsible to arrange for hands-on exposure to materials from the Middle Ages in large lecture courses. Many more universities and colleges, to say nothing of high schools, own and can borrow no manuscripts or even detached leaves of manuscripts. Facsimiles and the web are resources that can help to fill the gap, but another possibility exists.

This presentation will introduce a kit that enables a different approach, one that enables students to experience the palpable reality of writing and reading as they took place in the Middle Ages. The kit contains examples of such items as a stylus, a wax tablet, parchment, a quill, ingredients for ink production (gallnuts) and parchment production (alum). In addition, it includes medieval-style gatherings of parchment that have upon them Latin and English text written in a variety of medieval scripts.

Many who teach palaeography and codicology assemble on their own collections of items similar to the ones mentioned in the foregoing paragraph. It might be profitable for a manuscript-loving businessperson to use economy of scale to produce kits for sale to professors and teachers. Failing that, individuals who attend this presentation will be given ideas and information on how to put together their own kits.