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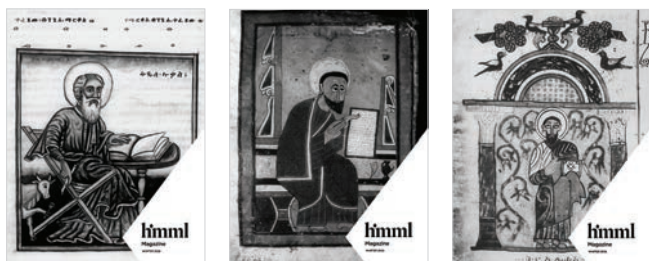
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Magazine

WINTER 2025



The Hill Museum & Manuscript Library (HMML)

is a global organization that advances manuscript research and scholarly inquiry by digitally preserving, providing access to, and interpreting manuscript collections around the world. HMML places a special priority on manuscripts in regions endangered by war, political instability, or other threats. Current partnerships to photograph manuscript collections are with repositories in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, Gaza, Great Britain, India, Iraq, Italy, Lebanon, Malta, Mauritania, Montenegro, Pakistan, Slovenia, Turkey, and Yemen. HMML's collection of resources for the study of manuscript cultures includes approximately 486,000 manuscripts photographed in partnership with more than 1,500 libraries and archives worldwide. View the cataloged manuscripts in Reading Room (vhmml.org).

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On the Cover

This special issue has three different covers celebrating 60 years of HMML preservation projects and a milestone achieved in 2025: all Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library (EMML) microfilms located at HMML are now digitized and available online (vhmml.org). Cataloging is ongoing. Pictured (left to right): miniatures opening the Gospel of Luke, in three manuscripts photographed in Ethiopia by EMML: EMML 1215, commissioned by Emperor Ḥäyla Śellāsē in the 20th century (Qeddest Śellāsē Cathedral, Addis Ababa); EMML 1930, likely copied in the 14th–15th century (Ḥayq Eṣṭifānos Monastery, Wallo Province); and EMML 1832, copied in the 13th century (Ḥayq Eṣṭifānos Monastery).

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HMML Magazine

Is published twice a year in support of HMML's mission: to preserve and share the world's handwritten past to inspire a deeper understanding of our present and future.

Margaret Bresnahan—Editor

Dr. Jeremy R. Brown—Reviewer

Dr. Jennifer Carnell—Contributing Writer

Dr. Daniel K. Gullo—Contributing Writer

Dr. Josh Mugler—Contributing Writer

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Contributing Writer

Dr. Catherine Walsh—Contributing Writer

Juniper Creative, Graphic Design | Palmer, Printer
Set in Noto Serif TC and Montserrat

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Dear Friends,

The literal meaning of the term “palimpsest” comes from ancient Greek words signifying “to rub smooth again.” In Latin, this became a reference to manuscript reuse. A leaf of parchment—rubbed or washed clean of its contents so that a new text could be written upon it—still retains traces of the original writing. Sometimes you can glimpse ghostly shapes of letters underneath the surface, while in some cases only ultraviolet light or highly specialized scanning techniques will reveal it.

At HMML we have a “double palimpsest” leaf that has three layers of writing—from the 6th, 8th, and 10th centuries—in two languages, Syriac and Georgian. It’s an amazing object but also a metaphor for many of the places where HMML has been active in the last six decades.

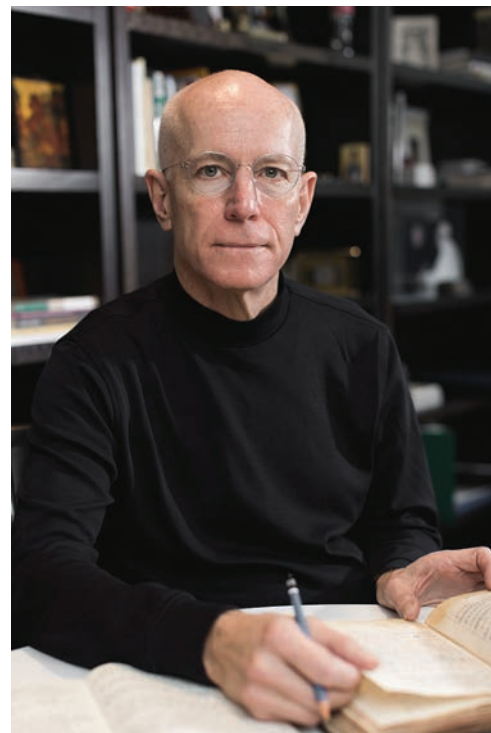
Manuscript collections, too, can reveal layers of cultural identity. In countries like Ukraine—in the city known over the last century as Austro-Hungarian “Lemberg,” Polish “Lwów,” Russian “Lvov,” and now “L’viv”—the Austrian architecture, Polish Catholic cathedral, and faint traces of Yiddish on a building reveal an urban palimpsest, also visible in the manuscripts that have survived from each community. I’ve experienced this phenomenon in so many parts of HMML’s world, from Syria and Iraq to India and Pakistan. Empires come and go; hegemonic cultures fade and are replaced. Sometimes only the surviving manuscripts are able to remind us of the many voices which constituted the past. That is why we must photograph and share them, to bear witness to the people who came before.

This issue of *HMML Magazine* ranges across continents and cultures, sharing with you some of the manuscripts that your support has helped preserve and share with the world. Thank you for letting these voices speak anew.

Sincerely,

Columba Stewart

Columba Stewart
Executive Director / CEO



ABOVE: Columba Stewart in his office at HMML in Collegeville, Minnesota.

The Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library is Now Digital

By Wayne Torborg

Manuscripts were never meant to be microfilmed. A scribe carefully copying a text by hand in the 19th century had no idea that technology would soon allow images of books to be created in seconds, reduced in size by a factor of 15 onto transparent photographic film. Nor did they know that this microfilm would allow their books to be easily copied and distributed worldwide.

This *conversion technology* was the basis for the Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library (EMML) project, a joint effort between HMML, Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, and the Ethiopian Orthodox Patriarchate. Libraries across Ethiopia were given the opportunity to have their manuscripts photographed onto microfilm for preservation and scholarly access.

Microfilming began in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in late 1973 and continued for 20 years, a tumultuous period that included a Marxist revolution, the arrest and execution of the Ethiopian Orthodox patriarch, famine, and civil war.

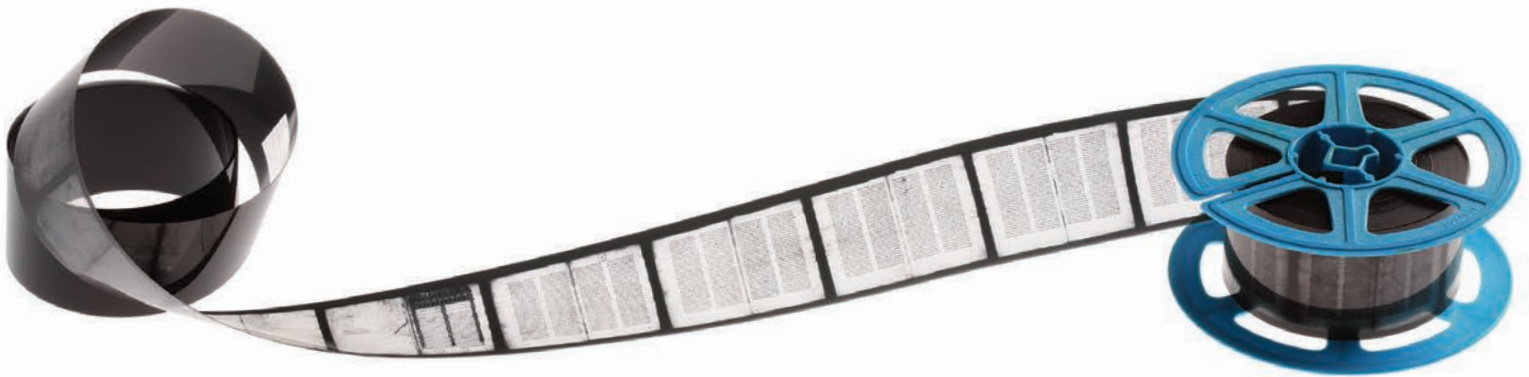
Hundreds of libraries had their manuscripts photographed by the EMML team, forming the world's most important source of texts for scholars of pre-modern Ethiopic culture. Eventually, the photographic project shut down due to an inability to obtain proper microfilming supplies. Completed microfilm reels were given to Ethiopian partners; around 7,500 copies were shipped to HMML for long-term preservation, cataloging, and scholarly access.

Microfilm was never meant to be digitized.

By the 1930s, microfilm technology was in widespread use for archiving such things as newspapers, but the idea of creating electronic copies of the tiny film images was something out of science fiction.

Science fiction became fact in the 21st century, and researchers preferred the ease and access of digital files over analog film. This new process—*digital conversion*—required specialized scanning equipment.

HMML began scanning (digitizing) its vast collection of microfilm in late 2004. ColorMax, a local digital



ABOVE: A reel of EMML microfilm containing photographs of a 15th-century manuscript in the collection of Şa'edā Embā Šellāsē Monastery in the Ānsabā region of Eritrea. (EMML 1479)

service provider, funded the purchase of an expensive microfilm scanner through an agreement with HMML to scan a minimum number of microfilms per month. Microfilms requested by scholars were scanned first, with the remainder of the monthly quota made up by what were called “filler” scans. Most of these were EMMML microfilms, as HMML already had permission from EMMML to scan them. Slowly, HMML’s collection of digitized EMMML microfilms grew.

ColorMax purchased a new scanner in 2012 that employed the latest technology. A roll of film passed through the machine in one uninterrupted motion, creating a single long “ribbon” image file containing the contents of the entire film reel. A technician adjusted the cropping, brightness, margins, and alignment of the individual images and then saved all of the image files from the reel at once. It was fast, efficient, and produced microfilm scans of the highest quality. Jeffrey Zumwalde, a technician at ColorMax, became highly skilled in working with this sophisticated scanner to get the finest results possible from HMML’s films.

By mid-2014, ColorMax changed its business focus and Zumwalde had left the company, prompting HMML to purchase its own microfilm scanner. This scanner, although capable of producing images of high quality, scanned one frame at a time—a much slower process. As microfilm digitization started to consume more and more staff time, Zumwalde was offered a part-time scanning job in 2016. He has been with HMML ever since.

Over time, it became known that some EMMML partner libraries in Ethiopia were losing access to their microfilm content because their viewing equipment was wearing out. New microfilm readers were expensive and hard to get, and many scholars couldn’t afford to pay for multiple films to be scanned. The original manuscripts, located throughout the country, were generally unobtainable for research.

HMML decided to put the 1,500 scanned EMMML films into HMML Reading Room (vhmml.org) for free online access. This helped, but it still left a mountain of EMMML films that needed digitization.

In 2021, a generous donation from Robert Weyerhaeuser made it possible for HMML to obtain a microfilm scanning system using the same “ribbon image” technology that Zumwalde had mastered at ColorMax. HMML prioritized the high-volume scanning of EMMML microfilm; in a four-year period,



ABOVE: Microfilm technician Beshawered Assefa Chernet and librarian Kassahum Temesgen with the original EMMML microfilm camera system at the National Archives and Library of Ethiopia in Addis Ababa, 2005.

Zumwalde digitized the remaining 6,000 EMMML films, four times what was scanned in the previous 16 years. All of HMML’s EMMML manuscripts are now online in HMML Reading Room after this 20-year analog-to-digital conversion project, which took as long as the original microfilming in Ethiopia. Cataloging of the collection is ongoing and recently reached the milestone of making descriptions available online for 4,000 EMMML manuscripts.

Digital images were never meant to be...?

What will the next conversion of this information look like? We won’t know until that new technology develops, but it’s certain that the treasury of Ethiopian culture contained in the EMMML collection has not ended its journey.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Wayne Torborg is director of digital collections & imaging at HMML.

Anjuman-i Taraqqī-yi Urdū Pākistān

By Josh Mugler

In November 1947, the Urdu scholar ‘Abdulḥaq (1869–1961) entered his library in Delhi for the first time since the independence and partition of India that August. He and his Anjuman-i Taraqqī-yi Urdū (Association for the Advancement of Urdu) had witnessed a momentous few months.

Millions of Indian Muslims fled to newly independent Pakistan in the face of riots and violence, while Hindus across the new border faced similar threats. A Hindu-owned insurance company, relocated from Lahore to Delhi, was given possession of the Anjuman’s library building to replace its lost office space. ‘Abdulḥaq hoped to find his library intact as he sought new locations for the collection.

The Anjuman had arisen out of the All-India Muhammadan Educational Conference, an effort to reform and modernize the educational system for India’s Muslims, centered on the northern city of Aligarh. In 1903, the Conference established a

department for the promotion of Urdu language, literature, and culture—this grew into the Anjuman-i Taraqqī-yi Urdū.

In 1912, leadership of the Anjuman was turned over to ‘Abdulḥaq, whose lifelong work on behalf of Urdu later earned him the nickname of *Bābā-yi Urdū*, the Father of Urdu. ‘Abdulḥaq moved the organization to Aurangābād (now Chatrapatī Sambhājīnagara) in southern India, where he collected works in Urdu’s southern dialect, Deccani, to complement the more widely known dialects of the north.

‘Abdulḥaq returned to northern India with the Anjuman’s infrastructure and library in 1938, settling in the capital city of Delhi. Less than 10 years later, the partition engulfed the organization in chaos. ‘Abdulḥaq described the events in a published account entitled *Taqsim-i Hind ke fasādāt aur Anjuman kī hijrat* (“The riots of the partition of India and the migration of the Anjuman”), analyzed in Andrew Amstutz’s 2020 article “A Partitioned Library” (*South Asia*, volume 43, issue 3).

The Anjuman library was looted and most of the staff fled to Pakistan, with one scribe and his family killed in the violence. When ‘Abdulḥaq reached the library after three months, the situation was dire. Sorting through the debris, he writes (translations by Amstutz) that “when we did not find any precious book or manuscript, its missing status broke our heart.” He acknowledges that this paled in comparison to the loss of life, asking “what sadness is due to those things when thousands, no, hundreds of thousands of precious lives have been hunted down with such oppression and cruelty.” Nevertheless, grief for the damaged library was also real: “in those torn pieces of waste paper, pieces of our heart can be found.”

As he and his colleagues salvaged what remained of the books and documents, a conflict arose between ‘Abdulḥaq and Abūlkālām Āzād (1888–1958), minister of education and the highest-ranking Muslim in the new Indian government. Āzād saw the Anjuman as a valuable part of the effort to maintain a Muslim cultural presence in partitioned India, and he wanted to maintain control of the collection even as he encouraged ‘Abdulḥaq to relocate to Pakistan for his own safety. For ‘Abdulḥaq, however, the culture



ABOVE: In Karachi, participants in HMML’s digitization project sort manuscripts in the library of the Anjuman-i Taraqqī-yi Urdū Pākistān.

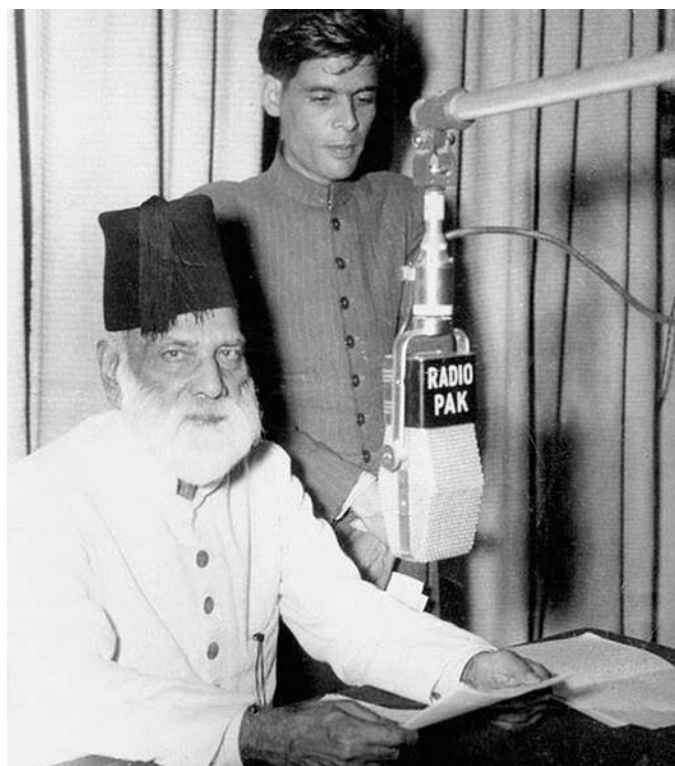


ABOVE: A manuscript of the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, a Hindu devotional text, here written in the Arabic script typically used by Muslims—a sign of the religious complexity of early modern South Asia. Copied in Hyderabad, India, in 1747. Collection of Anjuman-i Taraqqī-yi Urdū Pākistān in Karachi. (ATUP 00200, pages 5–6)

and community of Urdu could not be contained within the borders of the partitioned states. He insisted that “I wanted to work in both places, rather, even farther than this, in Afghanistan, Iran, China, Arabia, Indonesia, etc.”

Ultimately, ‘Abdulḥaq separated his personal collection from the Anjuman’s institutional library and emigrated with his books to Karachi, the great port city near the mouth of the Indus River. There, he reestablished the Anjuman in Pakistan in early 1949. The remainder of the library was left in India and became the collection of the Anjuman in that country. The two organizations maintain a separate existence in Karachi and New Delhi today.

In 2020—early in HMML’s work with Islamic collections in South Asia—HMML began to photograph the collection of the Anjuman-i Taraqqī-yi Urdū Pākistān in Karachi (project code ATUP). It is now one of dozens of HMML projects that are underway in both Pakistan and India. Today, the Anjuman library in Pakistan includes approximately 2,000 manuscripts—mainly in Urdu, Persian, and Arabic—that are currently being digitized, cataloged, and added to HMML Reading Room (vhmml.org). The online availability of the Karachi collection will help further ‘Abdulḥaq’s dream of enabling the study of Urdu language and literature across borders and partitions.



ABOVE: ‘Abdulḥaq (1869–1961) in the studio of Radio Pakistan (seated). Image used with permission of Rashid Ashraf, Karachi, Pakistan.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Dr. Josh Mugler is curator of Eastern Christian and Islamic manuscripts at HMML.

News in Brief

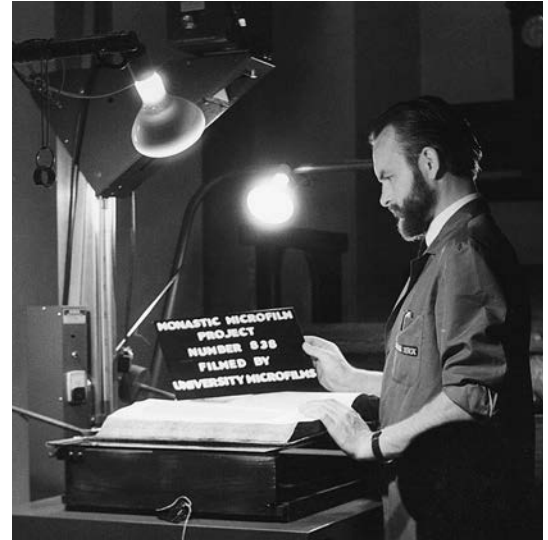
Highlights from HMML's cultural preservation initiatives and activities

The 2026 Winter Lecture Series

HMML is celebrating 60 years of manuscript preservation, from our early days of photographing collections in Austria (pictured) to current operations across 15 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. Join us for the 2026 Winter Lecture Series, exploring "Preserve & Share" within HMML's methodology, collections, and history.

- January 28: "The Extraordinary, Ordinary Work of Building a Digital Library" with Wayne Torborg, Dr. Catherine Walsh, and John Meyerhofer.
- February 25: "Manuscripts in Partition" with Dr. Josh Mugler.
- March 25: "Finding Common Ground Across Cultures: Building Relationships Through HMML's Work" with Dr. Matthew Z. Heintzelman.

Register today for these free, virtual events (hmml.org/events).



Collaborations Extend HMML's Reach

Endangered manuscripts exist all around the world, yet HMML cannot be everywhere. Thankfully, others share our goals. Alliances make even more preservation work possible and increase the breadth of material available in HMML Reading Room (vhmml.org).

This year, HMML completed a collaboration with DREAMSEA (Digital Repository of Endangered and Affected Manuscripts in Southeast Asia), a seven-year project led by the Center for the Study of Islam and Society at Jakarta State Islamic University in Indonesia and the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Culture (CSMC) at the University of Hamburg, Germany. HMML Reading Room now hosts DREAMSEA's images of 8,791 manuscripts photographed across 164 collections in Indonesia, Laos, Thailand, Malaysia, and Vietnam (such as DS 0037 00001, pictured).

As one project ended, another began: DiPiKA (Digital Preservation of Kerala Archives), focuses on private collections of Hindu palm-leaf and paper manuscripts in Kerala, India. HMML Reading Room will host images and cataloging produced jointly by the Vadakke Madham Brahmaswam in Thrissur, India; the École française d'Extrême-Orient in Paris and Pondicherry; and the CSMC.



Preserving History, Advancing Learning: the Impact of Endowment Support

In 2024, HMML's Malta Study Center partnered with the University of Malta and the State Archive of Florence, Italy, to form the School in Archival Studies. Founded by Dr. Valeria Vanesio, Dr. Emanuel Buttigieg, Dr. Daniel K. Gullo, and Dr. Francesca Fiori, the goal of the program is to equip archive professionals and emerging scholars with knowledge of the complex historical and legal contexts surrounding the production and preservation of the archival history of the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem.

The school's second session, in September 2025, was a weeklong course entitled *Malta and the Order of Saint John in Europe (16th–18th centuries): Documents, People, Institutions*. Twenty-seven participants from seven countries took part in this transformative educational experience, which included hands-on demonstrations of modern conservation and digitization practices and visits to archives and historical sites in Florence.

The success and growth of the School in Archival Studies was made possible in part by the generous support of HMML's Malta Study Center endowment. This endowment ensures long-term access to the precious handwritten history of Malta and the manuscripts of the Order through digitization, cataloging, research, and public engagement. People across the world—50 years ago, yesterday, today, and tomorrow—make the future of these vital initiatives possible through their generosity, expanding global access to critical resources and scholarly development. Lives and legacies are linked when individuals come together, contributing to the preservation of cultural heritage for the next generation.

Notable

HMML STAFF AND ASSOCIATES
PRESENT AT GLOBAL CONFERENCES

MAY 8–10, 2025

International Congress on Medieval Studies
(Kalamazoo, Michigan, USA)

Speaker—Dr. Jennifer Carnell

Topic—The Frogs and the Nightingale: Aurality and Morality in German Literature

SEPTEMBER 5, 2025

Library of the Franciscan Monastery, Ljubljana; Manuscript Heritage for the Future
(Ljubljana, Slovenia)

Speaker—Dr. Columba Stewart

Topic—The Work of HMML

OCTOBER 7, 2025

Annual Lepanto Event for the Pittsburg Regional Association of the Order of Malta
(Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA)

Speaker—Dr. Daniel K. Gullo

Topic—Daily Life in the Order of Malta: Recovering History in Endangered Archives

OCTOBER 27, 2025

University of Pennsylvania, Workshop in the History of Material Texts
(Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA)

Speaker—Dr. Josh Mugler

Topic—Manuscripts and Violence in Modern Mesopotamia

DECEMBER 8, 2025

Institute of Historical Research's "Crusades and the Latin East" Seminar
(London, UK)

Speaker—Dr. Daniel K. Gullo

Topic—Rediscovering the Archival and Library Collections of the Museum of the Order of St. John

ABOUT THE AUTHORS: Dr. Audrey Thorstad is director of programming at HMML; Dr. Catherine Walsh is director of cataloging & library services at HMML; Dr. Daniel K. Gullo is the Joseph S. Micallef director of the Malta Study Center at HMML.

Advancing Scholarship

Meet Eight Scholars Completing Fellowships at HMML



Dr. Nebeyou Alemu Terefe
Nicky B. Carpenter Fellowship

Addis Ababa University,
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Project title: "A Critical Edition
of the Pastoral Epistles
in Ge'ez"
At HMML: October 7–19, 2024



Dr. Botros Sadek
Swenson Family Fellowship

Claremont Graduate
University, Claremont,
California, USA
Project title: "Post-Baptismal
Forgiveness in Coptic and
Syriac Tradition"
At HMML: October 19–27, 2024



Dr. Tsehay Ademe Belay
Heckman Stipend

Addis Ababa University,
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Project title: "Textual
Criticism and Reception
Theory in the Ethiopic
Book of Joel"
At HMML: January 7–21, 2025



Dr. Necla Kaplan
Nicky B. Carpenter Fellowship

Mardin Artuklu Üniversitesi,
Mardin, Turkey
Project title: "The
Examination of MS. 31
Dayr Seyyidat el-Bishara
Manuscript and 34 Lebanon
Manuscripts in HMML
Collections"
At HMML: August 10–
September 14, 2025



Maria Pia Barbier
Heckman Stipend

University of Salamanca,
Salamanca, Spain
Project Title: "The Order
of St. John and the Spanish
Monarchy in the
18th Century"
At HMML: August 24–
September 25, 2025



Dr. Nicholas Doublet
Heckman Stipend

University of Malta,
Msida, Malta
Project title: "The Collegium
Melitense Research Project"
At HMML: August 26–
September 3, 2025



Dr. Petra Dingli
Heckman Stipend

University of Malta,
Msida, Malta
Project Title: "The Female
Monasteries of the Order
of St. John"
At HMML: August 26–
September 3, 2025



Letizia Curreri
Heckman Stipend

Technical University of
Darmstadt, Darmstadt,
Germany
Project title: "Military Orders
and Water: Infrastructures,
People, and Crisis"
At HMML: October 1–31, 2025

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Dr. Audrey Thorstad is director of programming at HMML.

A Closer Look at a Single Manuscript

By Jennifer Carnell

In 1994, HMML microfilmed the collection of manuscripts at the Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek in Weimar, Germany. Among these was a prayer book accompanied by a set of 68 illuminations that were stored separately in a wooden box (HMML 47251). This unusual arrangement allowed for the illuminations to be viewed simultaneously with the prayer book's text.

The illuminations depict scenes from the life of Christ, portraits of saints, and a portrait of the manuscript's owner and commissioner: Margarethe von Rodemachern (1426–1490), a noblewoman whose life and family ties cross the modern-day borders of France and Germany.

In her portrait (pictured), Margarethe kneels in prayer before a book while an angel guides her thoughts toward Christ. Coats of arms surround Margarethe, representing her marriage (front), her father (above), and the noble families of her father's mother and grandmothers as well as of her political allegiances (behind). Above, text identifies her as "Margarethe of Nassau, wife [or lady] of Rodemachern."

The prayer book was made when Margarethe was flourishing in her late 30s or early 40s and belonged to a literary circle of men and women from different social classes. Eventually, the book was given to her daughter—Margarethe, countess of Sayn-Wittgenstein—and remained with this branch of the family until it was acquired in 1770 by the Duchess Anna Amalia's newly formed library.

In many ways, Margarethe participated in a family tradition of women sharing a love of literacy with the next generation. This is witnessed by another work microfilmed by HMML: *Loher und Maller*—an epic, fictive, founding story for the ducal family of Lorraine.

Marguerite de Joinville had the oral French original of *Loher und Maller* written down in 1405 when her daughter—who would become Margarethe's mother, Elisabeth of Lorraine—was around nine years old. Later, Elisabeth had her mother's verse epics translated into German and updated into the latest prose style. She commissioned this reworking of *Loher und Maller* when her daughter, Margarethe, was about 11 years old, perhaps making the story easier for her to read. In turn, Margarethe von Rodemachern had the story copied around the time her oldest daughter was turning seven.



ABOVE: Portrait of Margarethe von Rodemachern (1426–1490). Collection of Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek, Weimar, Germany. Photograph used with permission of Klassik Stiftung Weimar. (HMML 47251, folio 31*r)

In all, three generations of women undertook the project of transcribing, translating, and transforming a literary work that was important to their family's sense of identity and history—each when their daughters were learning to read and were only a few years away from becoming women themselves, in an era when virtually no European women were producing secular texts.

Although the prayer book and *Loher und Maller* were dispersed to different families, libraries, and archives, images of both are reunited in HMML's microfilm collection. In preserving this legacy of female literacy, HMML also participates in the shared vision of these women to make cultural heritage accessible to the next generation.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Dr. Jennifer Carnell is cataloger of Western manuscripts at HMML.

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Preserve and Share

Working with communities around the world to preserve rare and endangered cultural heritage

“If we listen to the past, if we read the manuscripts, if we look at the art, we see that there was incredible depth in the life of our ancestors.”

—Archbishop Borys Gudziak, president of Ukrainian Catholic University in L'viv, Ukraine,
in conversation with Columba Stewart, executive director / CEO of HMML (March 18, 2022).



ABOVE: HMML Journeys in 2005, with HMML board members, friends, and staff visiting current and potential manuscript preservation sites in Egypt (pictured) and Ethiopia. Left to right: Nicky B. Carpenter; Columba Stewart; Tom Joyce; Lois Rogers; John Rogers; Marge Barrett; Brother Dietrich Reinhart, OSB; Tom Barrett; and Anne Miller.

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