

THE HILL  
MUSEUM &  
MANUSCRIPT  
LIBRARY  
NEWSLETTER

# ILLUMINATIONS

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**Front cover:** 14<sup>th</sup> century Armenian Book of the Gospels, frontispiece to the Gospel of Luke. Ms. Bzommar 18, fols. 128v-129r.

# Illuminations

## CONTENTS

- 3 From Microfilm to the Digital Age
- 7 Current Projects
- 8 News at HMML

## THE HILL MUSEUM & MANUSCRIPT LIBRARY

In the Benedictine tradition of reverence for human thought and creativity, the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library (HMML) preserves manuscripts, printed books and art at Saint John's University and undertakes photographic projects in regions throughout the world.

HMML is the home of the world's largest collection of manuscript images and of *The Saint John's Bible*, a handwritten, illuminated Bible in modern English.

## THE HILL MUSEUM & MANUSCRIPT LIBRARY

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*Illuminations* is a publication of the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library and is published for scholars and friends of HMML twice a year.

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# From Microfilm to the Digital Age

When people think about the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library, they usually think about microfilm. For 40 years, HMML has been photographing manuscript collections in Western Europe, Ethiopia and Malta, producing the largest microfilm collection of its kind. The image of scholarly research at HMML is one of people examining black and white manuscript images on reels of film.

In recent years, advancing technologies have changed HMML's direction. Photography has gone digital, and researchers now use resources such as the Internet and electronic databases in their studies. In keeping with its mission of preserving manuscripts and providing scholarly access to them, HMML realized that maintaining its leadership in this field would mean adopting digital preservation and access strategies. Starting in the spring of 2003, all of HMML's new manuscript preservation projects employ digital technology.

Significant advances in digital photographic technology were an important catalyst for this change. Up to that point, high-resolution digital equipment was extremely expensive, delicate and slow to operate. In 2003, a new generation of high-quality digital

cameras appeared, offering the combination of image quality, speed and cost-effectiveness needed for successful preservation work.

"We knew when we went all digital that we had reached the technological tipping point," said Fr. Columba Stewart, OSB, HMML's Executive Director. "It tells people that we continue to be serious players who explore and make the best possible use of available technologies. This is what we did in the early days when we began preserving manuscripts on microfilm. This is what we are committed to doing today. This is where we will invest in the future."

The investment is paying off. Researchers now have access to full-color digital manuscript images of amazing clarity and detail. Sample images are available via the Internet, and HMML's online manuscript catalog is being enhanced to allow the display of images along with bibliographic information.

## A FORTY-YEAR TRACK RECORD

While its technical methods are thoroughly up-to-date, HMML's philosophy behind the projects has a long history. The Benedictine traditions of scholarship, cultural preservation and reverence for human thought

and creativity were founding principles in the formation of HMML in 1965. Imaging manuscripts still begins with a personal connection between HMML and the holding library. These institutions recognize HMML as a trustworthy and valued partner. "We demonstrate



Photographer Taki Louca carefully prepares a manuscript for digitization at Balamand's photography studio.

this through the cost-effective use of sophisticated digital technology as well as our 40-year track record," said Fr. Columba. "As we work in these libraries or monasteries, their foremost concern is maintaining effective control and guardianship over their collections. They know that we are not going to do something without their agreement. The fact that we are Americans working in the Middle East is not always an advantage these days. However, our history and our Benedictine

monastic background greatly help us.”

One of the first steps in negotiating agreements for digitizing an institution’s manuscripts is communicating what HMML can bring to the table. “When we talk to prospective partners, they ask us ‘Why shouldn’t we just do this ourselves? Why do we need you?’ The reason they need us is that capturing the image is only the first stage of the process. The added value happens *after* the capture, through cataloging, archiving and access.” said Fr. Columba.

### CAPTURING THE IMAGES

For image capture, HMML developed an efficient and mobile digital studio system consisting of a digital camera, customized copy stand, strobe lights, book cradle system and PC computer equipment. Without the computers (which are purchased locally for each project), the system is compact and easily shipped anywhere in the world.

Considerable care is taken to find cost effective solutions. The copy stands, for example, are purchased inexpensively on the used market and modified to accommodate the digital cameras. The book cradles are made in-house and were custom-designed by Wayne Torborg, HMML’s Director of Digital Collections. They are made of foam board, cloth tape, Velcro material and soft fabric. Extremely light, they fold flat for

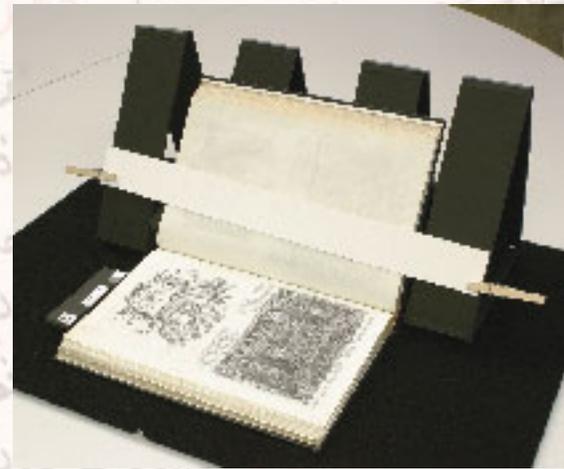
shipment and cost next to nothing. The cradles are used to hold books open for photography without damaging them.

HMML relies on local residents to conduct and manage these overseas projects. In Beirut, Lebanon for example, regional field director Walid Mourad assembles digital studios, purchases computers, and hires, trains and supervises the technicians. By employing people at each locale, HMML accomplishes several things. The high cost of sending staff members overseas for extended periods of time is avoided, and the local economy benefits.

Hiring on-site people to work in the studios also enhances the holding libraries’ control over the handling of their collections and serves to build trust. As a side benefit, the workers learn digitization and computer skills that can be valuable in other areas.

Once a studio is set up and the training completed, the imaging of books begins. Workers photograph all the pages in a manuscript, applying a special file-naming system to ensure that the images will sort in the correct order for the presentation of the text. In addition, the photographers record the front and back covers, the spine, the edges, the front and back paste-downs and all leading and ending blank pages for each book.

“When HMML’s work began 40 years ago, people were interested in text and text alone. Black and white images were fine,” said Fr.



A custom-designed book cradle holds a manuscript open for imaging.

Columba. “You didn’t have to have all the binding details. You didn’t have to photograph every fly leaf or paste down page. Now it is different. Scholars want this information and we are able to provide it.” Torborg added, “By photographing everything, we give scholars all the information that they would have if they actually had the book in front of them. They can take a look at how the book is put together, what kind of decorative work is on the cover, what the covers are made of and what kind of shelf mark it might have.” The quality of the resulting images makes it easy for researchers to study the smallest of these details.

### HANDLING THE DATA

As the photography of manuscripts proceeds, the resulting image files are recorded to DVDs, one for HMML and the other for the holding library. When several hundred of these disks are produced from a number of studios, they are gathered and shipped to HMML

for further archiving.

Upon arrival, the digital data from these disks is copied onto a sophisticated data storage server located in the Saint John's University Information Technology department. Periodically, backup tapes are made of the data on these storage systems. In this way, the data resides in four different places:

HMML's digital initiative preserves over a million individual pages.

### CATALOGING AND SCHOLARLY VALUE

HMML's mission is based on the conviction that manuscripts speak in important ways to the richness, beauty and wisdom of the cultures that created them. Its

retrieval system, allows people to find the manuscript that suits their interests in terms of language, subject, author, and place and actually look at it."

HMML puts images on the Internet in accordance with agreements it makes with holding libraries. Generally, these are lower-resolution samples rather than complete works. Visitors to HMML are able to study complete digital manuscripts as well as microfilms. Today, when a scholar requests a microfilm copy, it is now scanned and recorded to disk for the researcher; this scanned copy also gives HMML the opportunity to put more image samples online.

Once the extent of HMML's digital holdings becomes more widely known, the library expects to become an even more important research hub. "Right now we have the largest collection of Eastern Christian manuscripts in the world," said Torborg. "This is more than the British Museum and the Vatican Library combined. The big challenge now is to get the word out to scholars to let them know they don't have to go to Lebanon or Syria and get permission to look at these manuscripts. You can find many of them here."

The digitized manuscripts will be generating scholarly discovery for centuries to come. "A manuscript has a certain intrinsic value as an old object," said Fr. Columba. "But its scholarly value is transformative in its ability to make a difference in how we think about our world."



HMML Field Director Walid Mourad conducts a training session on manuscript imaging procedures.

the disks at the holding library, the disks at HMML, the storage server at IT and in backup tapes that are stored off-campus. This is an important step in ensuring the safety and preservation of the images.

HMML has archived almost 475,000 digital images since the summer of 2003. Many of these images are of two-page spreads, so it won't be long before

vast archive enables visitors to learn from works of religious, artistic, scientific and intellectual importance spanning many centuries.

Electronic cataloging is central to meeting this mission. "A manuscript image is just like a book on a library shelf — it is useless unless someone can find it," says Fr. Columba. "HMML's electronic catalog, now linked to *Vivarium*, our online image

# Where We Are. What We've Preserved: *HMML's Current Projects*

Here we feature four of the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library's ten current manuscript preservation projects. Future issues of *Illuminations* will profile additional projects elsewhere in the Middle East and in Europe. To find out more about how HMML preserves these manuscripts for long-term access, see the article on page three or visit [www.hmml.org](http://www.hmml.org).



17<sup>th</sup> century Armenian Book of the Gospels, frontispiece to the Gospel of Matthew with zoomorphic letters. Ms. Bzommar 22, fols. 45v-46r.

**Location:** Bzommar, Lebanon  
**Collection Size:** 1200+ manuscripts  
**Time Period:** April 2005-August 2006 for Phase One (450 manuscripts).

The Armenian Catholic Clergy Institute of Bzommar in Lebanon contains one of the great Armenian manuscript collections in the world, as well as significant holdings of Syriac and Arabic manuscripts. Many of these manuscripts were brought to Lebanon from Istanbul and other locations in Turkey at the time of the Armenian Genocide in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. HMML has made a digitized version of the manuscript catalog of the Bzommar collection available on *Vivarium*, HMML's website for digital images from its collections.



Opening pages of a 19<sup>th</sup> century Arabic book of Christian prayers for lay people. Ms. BO-USJ 907, fols. 13r-12v.

**Location:** Beirut, Lebanon  
**Collection Size:** 3500 manuscripts.  
**Time Period:** February 2004—.

The Bibliothèque Orientale at the Université Saint-Joseph was founded by French Jesuits to house the manuscripts they had collected in various parts of the Middle East. Today it is the premier research library in the region. The digitization project at the Bibliothèque Orientale was originally begun by Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. HMML assumed responsibility and technical direction of the project in 2004 as part of its broader manuscript preservation initiative in the Middle East. HMML has made a digitized version of the manuscript catalog of the Bibliothèque Orientale available on *Vivarium*, HMML's website for digital images from its collections.

**Location:** Tripoli, North Lebanon.  
**Collection Size:** 450 manuscripts in Phase One  
(Lebanon and smaller Syrian collections).  
**Time Period:** April 2003-June 2006.

The Antiochian Orthodox manuscripts at Our Lady of Balamand Monastery and University in north Lebanon were the first to be photographed by HMML in the Middle East. The collection at Balamand was finished in December 2005, but the studio has remained active while smaller collections of manuscripts have been brought to it from churches and monasteries in Lebanon and Syria. Many of the older liturgical manuscripts (from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries) contain a Syriac translation of the Greek Byzantine Rite that was used in the region until it was replaced by a vernacular Arabic version. If funding can be obtained, HMML hopes to photograph the two major remaining Antiochian Orthodox collections in Syria at the Patriarchate in Damascus and at the ancient Monastery of Our Lady of Saidnaya. In April 2005, Saint John's Abbey and University conferred its highest honor, the Pax Christi Award, on His Beatitude Ignatius IV Hazim, Patriarch of Antioch, in recognition of his support for HMML's work. HMML has made a digitized version of the manuscript catalog of the Balamand collection available on *Vivarium*, HMML's website for digital images from its collections.



18<sup>th</sup> century Arabic commentary on the Gospels from St George al-Humayra Monastery in Syria, opening page with the invocation "In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit..." Ms. St. George al-Humayra 21, fols. 4r-3v.

**Location:** Antelias, Lebanon  
**Collection Size:** 239 manuscripts  
**Time Period:** May 2004-June 2005.

The manuscript collection of the Armenian Apostolic Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia was brought to Lebanon in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century along with other precious items rescued from the former home of the Catholicosate in Sis, Cilicia, a region of southeastern Turkey that was the last independent Armenian kingdom until it was conquered by the Ottomans in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century. Many Armenians remained in Cilicia until the Armenian Genocide during World War I, when Catholicos Sahak II and many of his people were forced to flee. The refugees carried their most precious manuscripts and sacred objects with them to Syria and, finally, to Lebanon. HMML has made a digitized version of the manuscript catalog of the Catholicosate's collection available on *Vivarium*, HMML's website for digital images from its collections.



17<sup>th</sup> century Armenian Book of the Gospels, Letter of Eusebius to Carpian with images of both. Ms. Antelias 225, fols. 3v-4r.

# News at HMML

## MELLON FOUNDATION AWARDS GRANT OF \$545,000

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation award of \$545,000 in 2004 to HMML supports the electronic cataloging of major portions of the HMML collections, including the 9500 volumes in HMML's rare book collection and the outstanding reference library donated to Saint John's University by Frank Kacmarcik in 1994 along with *Arca Artium*, his collection of rare books and art. The Mellon Foundation grant is especially important at a time when digital access to significant collections held by libraries and museums around the world is becoming an indispensable vehicle in the transmission of human knowledge. "We have been a leading resource for scholarly research in

manuscripts for 40 years," said Br. Dietrich Reinhart, OSB, president of Saint John's University. "This award expands and fulfills a mission that our founders could only dream of."

## HMML RECEIVES GIFT FROM MILDRED H. KELLOGG TRUST

A \$44,623 gift from the Mildred H. Kellogg Trust made HMML's Ethiopian microfilm scanning project possible in October 2005. The generous gift enabled HMML to send a team to finish a filming project that was interrupted in 1987 at the National Archives and Library of Ethiopia (NALE). The team operated in NALE for two weeks, scanning 200 reels of microfilm. More than 800 previously microfilmed manuscripts were scanned, resulting in 137,000 digitized frames.

## CARPENTER ENDOWS HMML DIRECTORSHIP

The Hill Museum & Manuscript Library recently received the largest gift in its history. Nicky Benz Carpenter made a \$1 million gift to the Saint John's capital campaign, *One Generation to the Next*, to endow the directorship at HMML. "Giving back is a family tradition and something that was instilled in me at a young age," said Carpenter. "Saint John's has been important in my life for many years, dating back to my time on the University Board of Regents and more recently as chair of the HMML Board of Overseers. I chose to establish this endowed fund to ensure that HMML has the resources to attract talented executive directors in perpetuity."

Carpenter is founder of Nicky B. Carpenter & Associates, an independent educational consulting firm. She is a Lifetime Member of the HMML Board of Overseers and is currently serving as chair of the HMML campaign.



# N E W S   A T   H M M L

## HMML ACHIEVES RECORD ANNUAL FUND IN 2005, SETS RECORD GOAL IN 2006

With gratitude and celebration, HMML reached its annual fund goal in 2005 of \$175,000 – ending its fiscal year with the most successful annual fund in its history. A record goal of \$200,000 has been set for 2006, requiring more support from friends old and new. “The world is full of manuscripts in need of photographic preservation,” said Fr. Columba Stewart, OSB. “We invite friends to share in HMML’s work of preserving and studying the cultural legacies of Western, African and Middle Eastern civilizations, handed down on the pages of manuscripts.” To learn more about HMML’s annual fund, visit [www.hmml.org/friends/donate.asp](http://www.hmml.org/friends/donate.asp)

## MILESTONE REACHED FOR \$2.25 MILLION NEH CHALLENGE

HMML reached the second benchmark set by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) in a Challenge Grant to raise \$2.25 million for endowment of its Malta Study Center. As part of a four-year fundraising drive launched in 2003, the NEH provides a \$1 match for every \$4 raised by HMML for the center. The NEH set fundraising benchmarks that must be met in order to receive the match. HMML must now raise \$600,000 in FY 05-06 to meet this benchmark. To make a matching gift, visit our website. The endowment will fund a curatorial position, acquisitions, programming and preservation of rare manuscripts and documents related to Malta.

## *Illuminating the Word*

THE SAINT JOHN’S BIBLE

### *The Saint John’s Bible* Exhibition Schedule

*The Saint John’s Bible* began its national and international exhibition tour April 2005 with the opening of *Illuminating the Word* at The Minneapolis Institute of Arts. Throughout the next three years, *The Saint John’s Bible* will travel to London and several museums throughout the United States.

January 21, 2006 - April 16, 2006: **Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, NE**

February 2, 2006 - May 1, 2006: **Victoria & Albert Museum, London, England** (*Prophets* only).

June 8, 2006 - September 3, 2006: **Tyler Museum of Art, Tyler, TX**

September 6, 2006 – November 26, 2006 **Museum of Biblical Art, New York, NY** (*Prophets* only)

October 6, 2006 - December 15, 2006: **Library of Congress, Washington, DC**

January 26, 2007 - April 6, 2007: **Naples Art Museum, Naples, FL**

December 21, 2007 - March 7, 2008: **Phoenix Art Museum, Phoenix, AZ**

October 10, 2008 - April 10, 2009: **Mobile Museum of Art, Mobile, AL**

More information will follow as it becomes available or visit [www.saintjohnsbible.org](http://www.saintjohnsbible.org)

# N E W S   A T   H M M L

## PSALMS VOLUME RELEASED

The second in a seven-volume series of full-color, large format, page-by-page reproductions from *The Saint John's Bible, Psalms*, released in January, engages the eye with five distinct scripts and bold, non-representational illuminations that include digital voice prints of sacred songs from many ethnic and religious traditions.



*Psalms* features a distinctive lighter-weight script, which supports the poetic nature of these biblical songs.

“People want to spend time with the Book of Psalms, the prayer book of the Bible,” said Fr. Michael Patella, OSB, chair of *The Saint John's Bible* Committee on Illumination and Text. “The way the Psalms appear in *The Saint John's Bible* provides people with a way to read their favorite Psalm with new eyes. We wanted to do something new and are very excited about the results.”

*Gospels and Acts*, the first in the seven-volume series, was released in April 2005 along with *Illuminating the Word: The Making of The Saint John's Bible*. Available in hardcover, the new volume of *Psalms* consists of 80 magnificent full-color pages and sells for \$59.95. For more information or to order any of the three books, call 1-800-858-5450 or visit [www.litpress.org](http://www.litpress.org).

## PRINTED POSTCARDS FROM DIGITAL IMAGES AVAILABLE

The Hill Museum & Manuscript Library has a series of high quality postcards available for sale. Featuring color images from a variety of manuscripts, printed books and art collections at HMML, these beautiful cards highlight HMML's preservation work and research collections.

“These images, as beautiful as they are, only begin



to suggest how our work will preserve a tradition of incredible literary and artistic richness,” said Fr. Columba Stewart, OSB. “Sharing news of our work in the form of images is the best way we can think of to communicate HMML's important task of preserving cultural legacies.”

Whether featuring a 14<sup>th</sup> century manuscript image of Saint Luke from an Armenian collection or a detail from a 15<sup>th</sup> century printed book in the collection of the Malta Study Center, the postcards represent HMML's mission across cultures and time periods. The postcards cost \$.75 each and are available for purchase at the HMML Gift Shop. Complete sets may be ordered by calling 320-363-3514. Proceeds support HMML's work in manuscript preservation.

## VANN COMPLETES SABBATICAL, RETURNS TO HMML

Theresa M. Vann, the Joseph S. Micallef Curator of the Malta Study Center at the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library, returned to Saint John's at the beginning of fall semester 2005 after spending the 2004-2005 academic year on a Fulbright Scholar grant to lecture at the University of Malta



# N E W S   A T   H M M L

in Msida, Malta. Vann lectured on the care and study of Malta's handwritten heritage. She was one of approximately 800 U.S. faculty and professionals who traveled abroad in 2004-2005 through the Fulbright Scholar Program.

## MALTA STUDY CENTER WEB SITE HAS NEW LOOK, NEW IMAGES

With the Malta digitization project begun at the priory of Rome, more material is being archived on *Vivarium* for the Malta Study Center ([www.hmml.org/centers/malta](http://www.hmml.org/centers/malta)). You are invited to view sample images archived online: MS 144, a book of signals for the Order's vessels (thumb-indexed for easy reference onboard ship) and a *Cabreo*, an illustrated land survey of one of the Order's commandaries (estates). The center has digitized and put online a complete copy of one of its rare books, Giovanfrancesco Abela's *Descrittione di Malta isola nel mare Siciliano con le sve* (Malta, 1647). Abela, vice-chancellor of the Order of Malta, wrote this important history of the island. It was the first book printed in Malta.

In addition to a new look, work on the web site

also resulted in more and updated catalog information. To see the sample images and more, visit <http://www.hmml.org/centers/malta> and click on *Vivarium*.

## HMML LAUNCHES MANUSCRIPT RESEARCH COURSE

HMML co-sponsored a course on manuscript research with the University of Minnesota's Centre of Medieval Studies. The one-week course was held in June 2005 for University of Minnesota graduate and undergraduate students seeking to learn more about manuscript research techniques. The instructors included Theresa Vann, HMML's Joseph S. Micallef Curator of the Malta Study Center, Diane Warne Anderson, an independent scholar working with the Center for Medieval Studies on the Minnesota Manuscript Research Laboratory and Susan Noakes, director of the University of Minnesota's Center for Medieval Studies and professor of French and Italian at the University of Minnesota. The program will be repeated in June 2006.

HMML celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary with an open house that attracted more than 300 visitors during Saint John's University's Homecoming Weekend. Special exhibits showcased HMML's collections of art, rare books along with original pages from *Prophets*, the newest volume of *The Saint John's Bible*. Calligraphic artists were on hand to demonstrate lettering and quill cutting. Many guests left with their names beautifully penned by one of *The Saint John's Bible* special treatment artists, Diane von Arx, and by Jo White, a longtime friend of HMML and current member of HMML's Board of Overseers.



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Members of the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library's Board of Overseers and spouses are photographed atop Mount Sinai. The group traveled to Egypt and Ethiopia in October to explore possible opportunities for HMML in manuscript preservation. Pictured are: (left to right): Nicky Carpenter, Fr. Columba Stewart, OSB, Tom Joyce, Lois Rogers, John Rogers, Marge Barrett, Br. Dietrich Reinhart, OSB, Tom Barrett and Anne Miller.