

Digital Resource and Database for Palaeography, Manuscripts and Diplomatic

DigiPal

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Background to DigiPal

- Four-year project funded by ERC, started Oct. 2010
- Objective is to create a web-based **framework** for the study of script in its manuscript or diplomatic context
- Our focus is 11th century English Vernacular minuscule, which will provide a substantial test-case for this framework
- Will catalogue about 1200 scribal hands in total
- Digital images for as many of these hands as is feasible
- Incorporate existing content from ManCASS C11, EM1060–1220, eSawyer, Scragg Handlist, Gneuss List, Stokes DB
- Create a substantial body of new material
- Develop a taxonomy for describing script features



- The DigiPal team will develop innovative forms of visualisation that have not previously been used to their full potential with web-based manuscript projects
- These will include linked annotation of images, interactive timelines, user-configurable grids of images, and user workspace to save and manipulate images



Underlying Principles

- Responding to criticism of palaeography as ‘dogma’
 - Need to present **evidence** in support of an **argument**
 - Cf. Derolez, Ganz, Davis, Ciula
- Responding to perceived issues with ‘computational’ palaeography
- Responding to criticisms of the field as too discursive
 - Should be using digital tools for visualisation, exploration, knowledge-creation, citation, communication



Principles

- Goal: ‘allow scholars, students and the broader public to **manipulate, view and interpret images and information**’
- Must be **friendly** to ‘traditional’ palaeographers
 - Heavily statistical methods are **not useful** (yet)? (Stokes)
- Need to fully integrate **visual, verbal** and **numerical** content
- Need to allow **exploration**, ‘knowledge discovery’
 - Use for suggestions, provocations, **not** answers (Sculley & Pasanek)
- Need to allow **citation** of results as **evidence for argument**
 - Must be **repeatable, verifiable, intelligible** (Jessop; Davis; Stokes)



Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 23

English glosses and titles added to Latin texts

Date: s. xi^{med}, s. xi² or xi/xii

OE glosses to s. x² texts of Prudentius' *Psychomachia* and *Peristephanon*, and OE translations of some of the titles of illustrations to the *Psychomachia*. Main texts in Latin and probably in England. OE glosses dated by Ker 1957 to s. xi; OE titles in three hands, dated to s. x/xi, s. xi^{med} and s. xi² or xi/xii. From Malmesbury.

Bibliography:

Ker, N. R., *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957; repr. 1990), item 31.



Back to [Portal to Mss](#)

www.le.ac.uk/english/em1060to1220/



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MANCASS C11 DATABASE PROJECT

An Inventory of Script and Spellings in Eleventh-Century English. The project was funded by the [AHRB \(2001-2005\)](#), by the Faculty of Arts, University of Manchester (2004-2005) and by the British Academy (2006-2007). A subsequent project to add annotations was funded by the AHRC (2007-2009).

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Advisory Board for the Annotations project: Prof. Keynes, Dr Rumble, and Dr Mary Swan (University of Leeds).



Arts & Humanities
Research Council

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SEARCH FOR LETTER COMBINATIONS

Ash 3 2 2 1 1

A 2 2 2 1 1

s 5 2 3 1 1 1

**S.4 known as: Ælsinus**

[A] forward-sloping hand...The æg and æt ligatures and the upward slope to the cross-bar of f are noteworthy (Ker, p. 340); a forward sloping hand of marked character (Ker, p. 266).

Λ D E Æ G 6

æg æt f s þ x

**S.4 known as: Ælsinus**

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æg æt f s þ x

mesien on þæs emniltres cipe
Zeape on middage. þuðan ze
man



‘Proof of Concept’ Demonstration

- Demonstrator created by Peter Stokes working alone
- Team working on full DigiPal project
- Demonstrator includes 500 scribal hands datable c. 990-1035
- More than 17,000 scribal features
- 55 of these have images

-

Case-study 1: Wedged round **d**

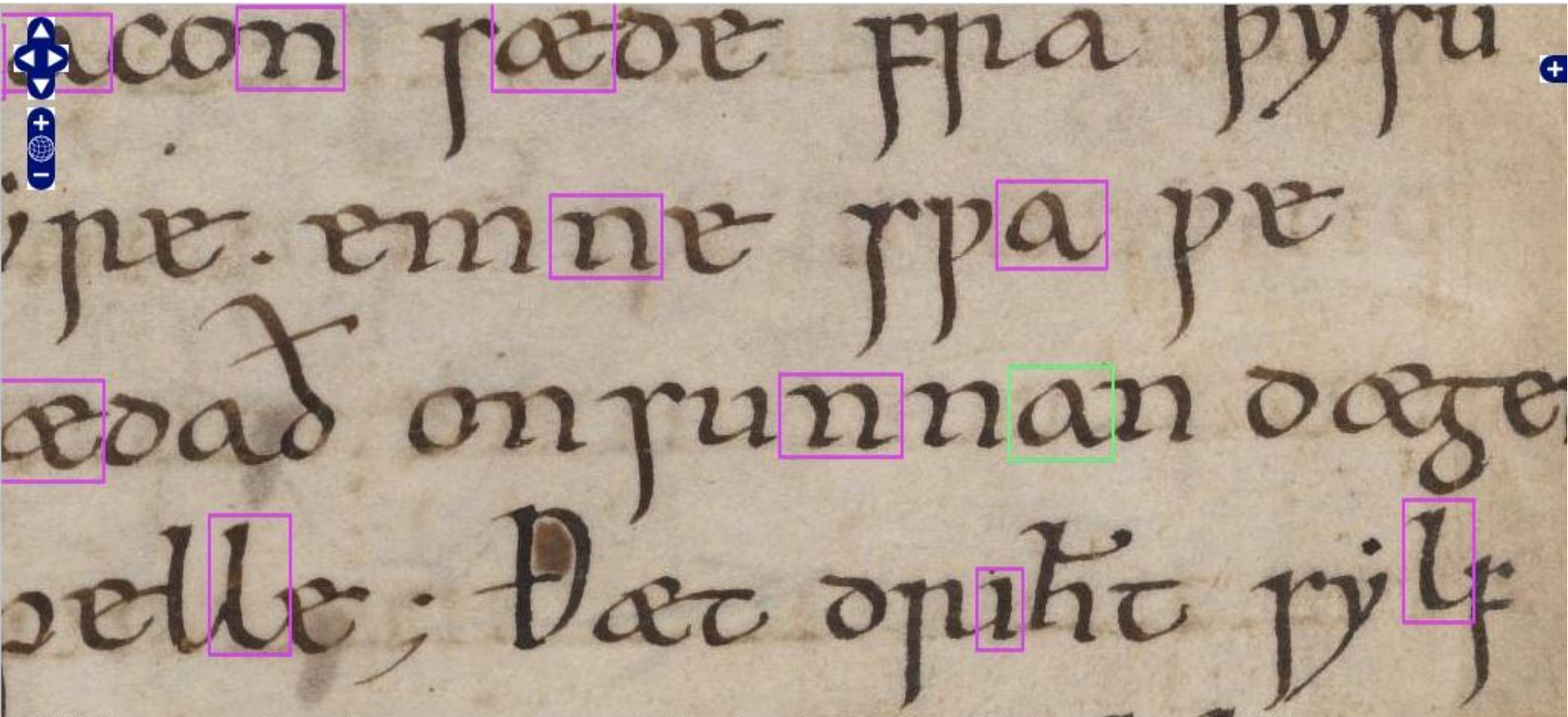
- ‘Is this distinctive of a scribe/scriptorium/date/...?’
- ‘What features (if any) do these hands have in common?’
- ‘In what MS/charter context(s) are these hands found?’





Problems

- How can we search for letterforms?
 - No common terminology, but visual alone insufficient
- How do we avoid the illusion of objectivity?
 - Computers are always designed, built, and used by **people**. Therefore **they are not objective** in any meaningful way.
- How do we avoid the temptation of 'truth'?
 - Computers are tools, but are often expected to work as oracles
 - Visualisations are 'seductive' (Jessop), give **illusion of certainty**
- To what extent (if at all) should statistics be involved?
 - Are they helpful? In what way? What are the limitations?
 - What about computer-assisted searching? Cf Google Image Search
 - Does it matter if the 'old guard' are alienated? If the discipline divides?



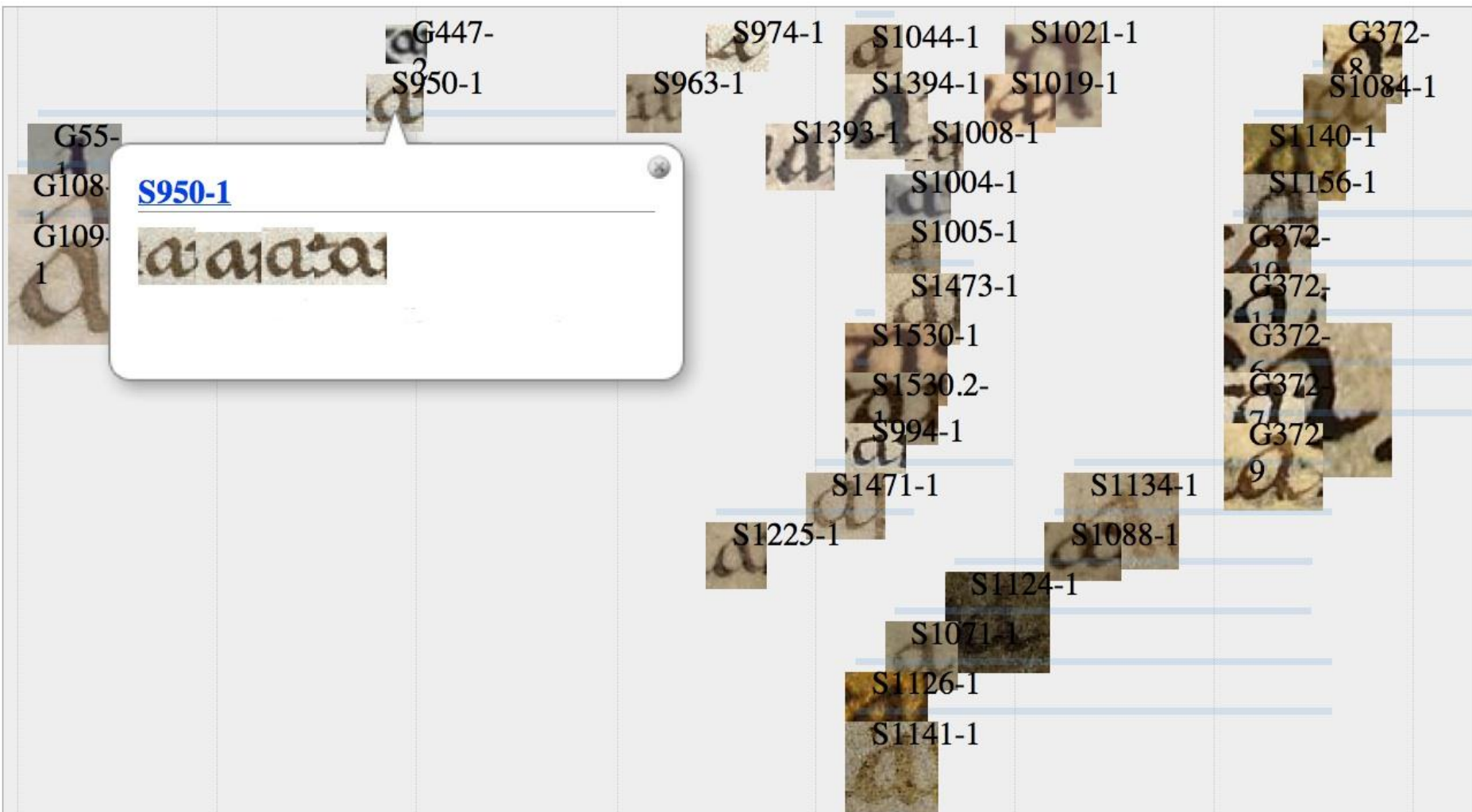
Digital Resource for Palaeography prototype showing detail of Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 419, p. 40. Manuscript image used by permission of the Master and Fellows, Corpus Christi College Cambridge.



a

S1400-1		1038×1050	CaCC	Hand MS Img.
S1467-1		1037×1040	CaCC	Hand MS Img.
S1471-1		ca 1045	CaCC	Hand MS Img.
S1472-1		1044×1045	CaCC	Hand MS Img.
S1473-1		1044×1048	CaCC	Hand MS Img.
S1530-1		1042×1043	CaCC	Hand MS Img.
S1530.2-1				Hand MS Img.

Forms of a in eleventh century vernacular minuscule





‘Digital Resources for Palaeography’ One-Day Symposium

5 September 2011, King’s College London

- Elaine Treharne, ‘A Site for Sore Eyes: Digital, Visual and Haptic Manuscript Studies’
- Peter Stokes, Stewart Brookes ‘DigiPal in Theory and Practice’
- Wim Van-Mierlo, ‘How to Work with Modern Manuscripts in a Digital Environment — Some Desiderata’
- Franck Le Bourgeois, ‘Overview of Image Analysis Technologies’
- Erik Kwakkel, ‘The Digital Eye of the Paleographer: Using Databases to Identify Scribes and Date their Handwriting’
- John McEwan and Elizabeth New, ‘The Seals in Medieval Wales Project: Towards a New Standard in Digital Sigillography’
- Els De Paermentier, ‘Diplomata Belgica: Towards a More Creative and Comparative Palaeographical Research on Medieval Charters’
- James Brusuelas and John Wallin, ‘The Papyrologist in the Shell’
- Ben Outhwaite and Huw Jones, ‘Navigating Cambridge’s Digital Library: the Cairo Genizah and Beyond’



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Select References

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T. Davis, 'The Practice of Handwriting Identification', *The Library* 8 (2007): 251–76
M. Jessop, 'Digital Visualization as a Scholarly Activity', *Lit. & Ling. Comp.* 23 (2008): 281–93
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P.A. Stokes, 'Computer-Aided Palaeography: Present and Future', in Rehbein *et al.*
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