

FOREWORD

This volume celebrates Christopher de Hamel's sixtieth birthday. Knowledge and appreciation of medieval manuscripts have expanded dramatically during the four decades that Christopher has been active in this field, and in considerable measure because of his estimable contributions both to learning and to the wide community of those who study, collect, and delight in the entrée that hand-produced books offer into the history, the beliefs, the values, and the lives of those who made and used them.

Christopher's many accomplishments during his years at Sotheby's and more recently as the Gaylord Donnelley Fellow Librarian of the Parker Library at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, are well worth celebrating. Some high points: In over twenty-five years at Sotheby's, Christopher described more medieval manuscripts than any other living scholar, producing sale catalogues that set new standards of quality and stimulated new generations of institutional and private collectors. His *Glossed Books of the Bible* (1984) is a masterful and authoritative study of an entire class of books, and an exemplary demonstration of the ways in which book design played a central role in shaping the understanding and study of theology in the high Middle Ages.

Christopher's monograph on the manuscript collections of the Rothschild Family (French and English editions, 2004 and 2005 respectively), his Roxburghe Club publication on the library of the Bridgettine Nuns of Syon Abbey (1991), and his Sandars Lectures on Sir Sydney Cockerell (published 2006) are but three in a longer list of publications on the history of books, libraries and collectors. He has published important studies of individual manuscripts (including the Gospels of Henry the Lion and the Becket Leaves), and widely used manuals such as *Scribes and Illuminators* (1992). His *History of Illuminated Manuscripts* (1986 and 1994), written in lively and accessible language, is the best introduction ever published on the subject, boldly and successfully abandoning previous geographical and chronological surveys in favour of an arrangement based on types of books and their users. So too his study of the Bible, *The Book, A History of the Bible* (2001), which is an extraordinarily useful and readable introduction to the history of the Book of Books. A glance at the list of Christopher's publications, which we include in this volume, demonstrates that they cover virtually all the major categories of scholarship on medieval manuscripts: book types and production, library and collection history, manuscript cataloguing, palaeography, and book illumination. Christopher has advanced knowledge in all these areas while also writing many of the most influential studies of medieval manuscripts that are directed to lay readers rather than just specialists. We know of no other scholar since M. R. James who has contributed so widely and effectively, and to so wide an audience, on the subject of medieval books.

Christopher is as impressive a figure in person as he is in print. He possesses extraordinary generosity of spirit, sharing his learning, enthusiasm, and droll wit with all who come into his orbit, including beginners and lay people as well as specialists and VIPs. He is a marvellous lecturer, one who defines ideas cogently, illustrates them effectively, and com-

municates them in lively and unpretentious language. Christopher has the rare gift of being able to convey to virtually any listener a vivid sense of the importance and interest of medieval manuscripts, of their unique qualities as dense historical, social and aesthetic documents, and of the roles they have played in giving form to thought and shaping knowledge and belief. He is, quite simply, without peer as a spokesperson for this field.

In 2000, Christopher accepted an appointment as the first Gaylord Donnelley Fellow Librarian at Corpus Christi College. Who better to have been chosen for this position in view of the challenging tasks that face libraries and librarians today, which would seem to demand, ideally, intellectual accomplishment and breadth, openness to strategic collaboration with other institutions and individuals, outstanding managerial and inter-personal skills, a keen sense of the role that library holdings can play in contributing to learning and enjoyment on all levels, and the ability to convey the importance of all these activities to a wide spectrum of supporters and users? In Christopher's first decade at Corpus Christi he has played major roles in all aspects of the planning and the implementation for the expansion and redesign of the Parker Library, one of the finest and most important collections of rare books and manuscripts worldwide. He has also superintended the complete digitisation of the Library's holdings of medieval manuscripts in an innovative project organized together with Stanford University and the Cambridge University Library, and now distributed worldwide as the 'Parker Library on the Web'.

In all these areas, Christopher has been motivated by genuine passion for medieval books and manuscripts and respect for all those who love and work with them. He has introduced a generation of new collectors to the possibilities and delights of acquiring manuscripts or single leaves, whether of textual, historical, artistic, or palaeographical interest. Christopher has shared his wide range of knowledge with a host of institutional and private owners, and offered them practical help in multiple areas, ranging from issues concerning valuation, conservation, and exhibition (to name only a few), and he has facilitated the work of legions of students and scholars.

We offer this volume as a tribute to Christopher's learning, his industry, imagination, spirit and good fellowship, and his capacity to inspire others. The contributions we publish here come from a representative group of friends and colleagues who responded enthusiastically to invitations to participate. The authors include collectors, colleagues at Sotheby's and elsewhere in the book trade, librarians and curators, students of book history, and scholars active in many of the areas of special interest to our honoree. The material is organized under the rubrics 'Books', 'The Book Trade', and 'Collectors and Collecting'.

We are grateful to all the authors who contributed studies and personal recollections to this volume. Mette de Hamel and Camilla Previt  offered essential help in organizing the publication. We thank Tony Edwards for his assistance to Lynley Herbert in the compilation of the bibliography of Christopher's published works. We are particularly indebted to Charles Dibble for his tireless and accomplished editorial assistance on the volume, and for his translation of Fran ois Avril's contribution. Jerry Kelly designed the volume, which has

been published and will be distributed by Hes & De Graaf Publishers, leading publishers of books in the fields of book history and bibliography. To all, we express our gratitude for their considerable efforts, expertise, and helpful spirit of collaboration.

We owe special thanks to those who generously offered the financial support to insure that the volume could be published in a form and format worthy of the recipient, the occasion and the volume's subject matter: Gifford Combs, Lord Egremont, Jack Lunzer, Henri Schiller, Lawrence J. Schoenberg, Mel Seiden, and Toshiyuki Takamiya.

The alert mind, smiling face, and the compelling fascination for the world of medieval manuscripts that some of us first encountered in the young Christopher de Hamel (here shown in a photograph taken outside of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University in 1977) are all still in evidence more than three decades later. Long may he continue to inspire old and new friends and to contribute to knowledge in the many areas in which he moves with such skill and flair.

James H. Marrow
Richard A. Linenthal
William Noel

