

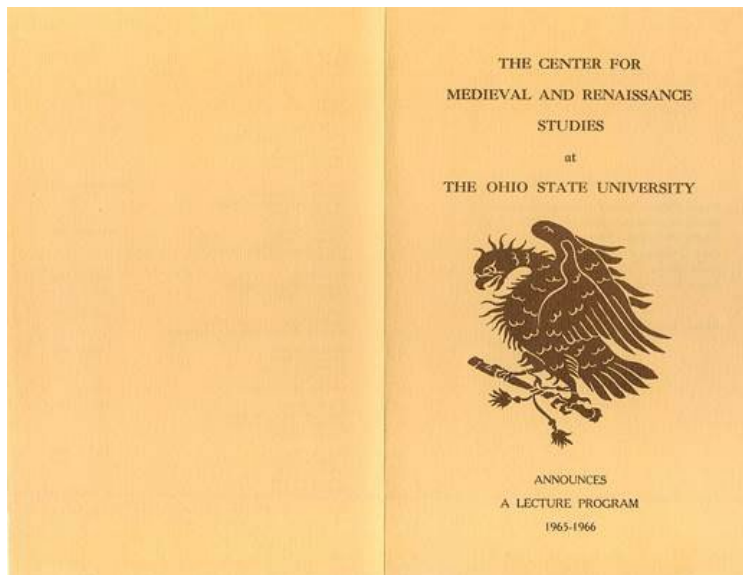
THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

CENTER FOR MEDIEVAL AND
RENAISSANCE STUDIES

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Petites Nouvelles – Issue #2

October 5, 2020



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Suggestions and submissions of content for future issues are always welcome! Please contact either cmrs@osu.edu or spitulski.1@osu.edu with your ideas. The deadline for submitting items for inclusion in the next issue will be **Friday, October 16**.

Also, be sure to "like" us on [Facebook](#) and check out our [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#) feeds for more news, links, & MedRen miscellany!

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[Visit the Nouvelles Archive](#)

Greetings: 55 Years Ago...

Dear Affiliates and Friends:

Upon poking around our network folder this morning looking for a fun image to position at the top of this second issue of *Petites Nouvelles*, I came across a copy of the program brochure for the Center's very first lecture series in 1965-1966, and was subsequently struck by the fact that we must be very close to the anniversary date of the first lecture hosted by CMRS under that name, with formal funding first being provided by the OSU Office of Research 55 years ago this fall. Sure enough, Mary Dominica Legge, at the time Reader in French and later Professor of French (Anglo-Norman Studies) at the University of Edinburgh, gave her talk on October 14, 1965, 55 years ago next week. (The topic of the presentation? Apparently lost to history, sadly...)

As I pass the ten-year mark on my own tenure as staff here (plus two years as a GAA – where does the time go?), it's a bit humbling to consider how much longer than that the Center has been around, through administrative changes, office moves, budget crunches, and now a pandemic to boot. With the strong and constant support of all of you through previous turbulences, the current crisis, and beyond, however, I have little doubt that my 2075 counterpart will continue to send forth all things MedRen into whatever Gibsonian networks of transmission have evolved by that point. At present, enjoy this newest issue of *Petites Nouvelles* and send your announcements and feature ideas for future postings my way!

Nick Spitulski
Administrative Coordinator, Humanities Institute

From the Pandemic to the Page: The “La Sfera Challenge”

Challenge I

The COVID-19 has cancelled conferences, moved classes online, closed archives and libraries, and made research opportunities disappear before our eyes. But luckily for me, Benjamin Albritton (Rare Books Curator, Stanford University Libraries) and Laura Morreale (Independent Scholar) started the “La Sfera Challenge”, an international competition to transcribe manuscripts of Goro Dati's *La Sfera*, an early fifteenth-century work focusing on astrology, geography, and cosmology.

The first round of the challenge was made up of three teams from three countries: Italy, France, and the U.S. “Squadra Italia” transcribed Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Urb. Lat. 752; “Équipe France” transcribed Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Arsenal MS 8536; and “Team USA” transcribed New Haven, Beinecke Library, MS 328. Each copy was fully digitized on the crowdsourcing transcription software FromThePage, and we competed to see which team could accurately transcribe their copy the fastest. The collated copies would be useful for anyone who wanted to analyze the discrepancies between the texts or hands. And, of course, international bragging rights awaited the winners.

I joined Team USA after participating in a virtual session on Stanford University's fragmentary manuscript collection led by Dr. Albritton, who invited anyone interested to join in the pandemic-era digital manuscript fun. The first round took place in May/June 2020, and it was such a hit among manuscript scholars (and Twitter users!) that the judges decided to hold a second round. I texted my classmate and friend, Izzy, to join La Sfera with me...

Rose McCandless
Senior MedRen and History major

Challenge II

For this round of the challenge, five teams of scholars were assembled around five copies of *La Sfera*. This time, instead of being divided by country, scholars worked in international teams named for the library of

their manuscript. Rose and I were members of “Team Wellcome”, which centered on the manuscript in the Wellcome Collection in London; competing teams worked on manuscripts from the Beinecke, Vatican, Spencer, and Newberry Libraries. We were the youngest members on the team, and the only team members without PhDs in some area of Medieval and Renaissance Studies. While this fact intimidated me at first—as did the fact that our manuscript was in Italian, a language I don’t speak—our teammates were so “welcoming”!

The day of the challenge came in July, and I completed my portion while staying with my aunt in Chesapeake Bay. She made crab cakes while I mumbled in Italian and tried to remember the different abbreviations for “per” and “pro”. This exercise improved my confidence in my transcription skills—previously, I had only transcribed Latin, English, and French, all languages which I know, so it was really exciting to see that I could also work with Italian, especially when I had teammates in Italy who could check my work.

After completing my pages of transcription, my task was to revise the transcriptions of a teammate—basically, to check the abbreviations they chose to expand, and test my eye on confusing letter forms. As the art historian of the team, I also reviewed our descriptions of the maps and charts at the beginning of our manuscript. Thanks to the manuscript illumination course I took with Professor Whittington this past spring, I was able to identify the T-O and climate zone maps as typical for the period.

Team Wellcome was quick and accurate with our transcription—we won the challenge within 48 hours. Besides the thrill of eternal glory, I am grateful for the challenge to test my transcription skills in a new language, and to meet more scholars in the disciplines I love.

The *La Sfera* Challenge may be over (for now), but the collaborative transcribing was so popular that Laura Moreale started the “Image du Monde Challenge”, again using FromThePage to transcribe five copies of Gautier de Metz’s thirteenth-century French treatise. Rose is participating on Team 2, transcribing Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Fonds Français 2173 alongside manuscript scholars from the USA, UK, Russia, and beyond. These challenges have been a welcome respite from the stress and uncertainty of COVID-19, giving manuscript scholars a way to connect through transcription and digital humanities.

To find out more about the *La Sfera* and Image du Monde Challenges, you can visit <https://lasferachallenge.wordpress.com> and <https://imagedumonde.wordpress.com>, and search #LaSferaChallenge, #LaSferaChallenge2, and #ImageduMonde on Twitter. To learn more about (and sign up for) FromThePage, visit fromthepage.com.

Izzy DeSantis
Senior MedRen minor, History of Art and Creative Writing major

Upcoming CMRS Events

SAVE THE DATE:

2020-2021 Symposium on Digital Archaeology

Friday, October 23, 10:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m., Zoom

Presenters - Janelle Jenstad (University of Victoria), Anthony Masinton (Independent Scholar), Jim Knowles (North Carolina State)



****Free and Open to the Public****

If you require an accommodation such as live captioning or interpretation to participate in this event, please contact cmrs@osu.edu. Requests made by about 10 days before the event will generally allow us to provide seamless access, but the university will make every effort to meet requests made after this date.

**Additional
Information**



CMRS Affiliate Accomplishments

Naomi Fukumori (Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures), has been appointed director of the Institute for Japanese Studies (IJS). Fukumori will be responsible for enhancing Japanese studies programming to advance and disseminate knowledge about Japan, including its people, language, art, culture, history and its society to

students, faculty, staff and throughout the state of Ohio. [Read more >>](#)

Faculty affiliates Alan Farmer, Elizabeth Kolkovich, and Sarah Neville (Department of English) each have an essay in a collection that was published this summer:

- Farmer, Alan B. "Widow Publishers in London, 1540–1640." *Women's Labour and the History of the Book in Early Modern England*, edited by Valerie Wayne, London and New York: Arden Shakespeare, 2020, pp. 47–73.
- Kolkovich, Elizabeth Zeman. "Reader, Maker, Mentor: The Countess of Huntingdon and Her Networks." *Women's Labour and the History of the Book in Early Modern England*, edited by Valerie Wayne, London and New York: Arden Shakespeare, 2020, pp. 225–41.
- Neville, Sarah. "Female Stationers and Their Second-Plus Husbands." *Women's Labour and the History of the Book in Early Modern England*, edited by Valerie Wayne, London and New York: Arden Shakespeare, 2020, pp. 75–93.

Hannibal Hamlin has had two articles published recently:

- "How Far is Love from Charity?: The Literary Influence of Reformation Bible Translation." *Reformation*, vol. 25, no. 1, 2020, pp. 69-91 (a special issue commemorating founding editor David Daniell).
- "Staging Prophecy: A Looking Glass for London and the Book of Jonah." *Enacting the Bible in Medieval and Early Modern Drama*, edited by Chanita Goodblatt and Eva von Contzen, Manchester University Press, 2020, pp. 175-191.

News & Notes

MEDREN course listings for Spring 2021 are now posted on the CMRS website; the list of affiliated courses is in process and should be posted by October 16 before the first Spring term enrollment windows open.



Research fellowships are offered twice a year by the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library at Saint John's University. The deadline for the upcoming application cycle is October 15, 2020:

- Heckman Stipends;
- Nicky B. Carpenter Fellowship in Manuscript Studies;
- Swenson Family Fellowships in Eastern Christian Manuscript Studies for Junior Scholars.

[Additional Information](#)

[CMRS Courses Page](#)

Call for Papers:
Redefining the Middle Ages

A Virtual Graduate Student
Conference
March 11-12, 2021

University of New Mexico -
Institute for Medieval
Studies

Submission Deadline:
November 13

[CFP Link](#)

Next Issue: October 19 Submission Deadline: October 16



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455 Hagerty Hall, 1775 S. College Rd., Columbus, Ohio 43210
cmrs@osu.edu
osu.edu

Center for Medieval and
Renaissance Studies



The Ohio State University





Nick Spitulski

Administrative Coordinator
[Humanities Institute](#)

454 Hagerty Hall, 1775 College Rd., Columbus, OH 43210
Phone: 614-292-6591