

CALL FOR PAPERS
INTERNATIONAL MEDIEVAL CONGRESS, 7 – 10 JULY 2025
UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS



EDUCATED SISTERS IN THE CITY.

MEDIEVAL FEMALE COMMUNITIES AS *LIEUX DE SAVOIR*

Female communities played a significant role in the strata of medieval society. In the recent decades, they have been thoroughly investigated across various disciplines of medieval studies.

The following sessions at the IMC 2025 will combine two methodological approaches that have been applied in the field of medieval studies most recently. It is the sociologically and anthropologically defined concept of community that cultivates its devotion and knowledge experienced by its members. The female community presents a *Lieu de Savoir*, a gathering point for the collection and transmission of knowledge and skills that have shaped a communal identity.

Focusing on Benedictine nuns in medieval cities, the sessions will explore different ways of learning, reflected in manuscripts and libraries, which show how female communities achieved high levels of knowledge and/or crafts, including literacy. This can also be seen in comparison with other communities in the late Middle Ages represented by for example by female members of royal courts who were usually closely associated with women religious and their communities.

We await contributions from across the disciplines of medieval studies including case studies demonstrating, for example, how instructions functioned, or may have functioned, within a community in numerous aspects of its life.

The new approaches may take the form of comprehensive studies, e.g. of surviving or reconstructed libraries of female communities, archival records or other preserved objects and materials of the convents as well as liturgical devices, works of art, devotional pictures, wall paintings, textile production etc.

In this way, we aim to shed more light on daily lives of the sisters living within city walls. This entails a comprehensive examination of their engagement with the liturgy and the Bible, as well as their involvement in various monastic activities that demanded a high degree of specialised knowledge.

Particularly encouraged are contributions addressing following topics:

- Case studies on any kind of handwritten material (e.g. prayer books, vocabularies, charters, letters).
- Examination of specific elements of art and cultural history (e.g. devotional pictures, wall paintings).
- Examination of materials (e.g. embroideries, tapestries, liturgical vestments).
- History of collections (e.g. reconstruction of libraries, afterlife and biographies of objects).
- Archive studies (e.g. account books, charters, testaments).

Please, submit an abstract of no more than 250 words as well as a short bio to Lenka Panušková (panuskova@udu.cas.cz) and Katrin Janz-Wenig (katrin.janzwenig@sub.uni-hamburg.de) by **1 September 2024**. The proposals should include your name, email address and academic affiliation.

Organisers:

Lenka Panušková PhD (Institute of Art History, Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague)

Dr. Katrin Janz-Wenig (State und University Library/Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures, Hamburg)

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