

# European Manuscripts, Pre-1500



Flight into Egypt, from Heures de Notre Dame selonc l'usage de Rome. c.1400. Case MS 188.

For the period before 1500, there are currently some 260 manuscript codices, several dozen individual documents and charters, and hundreds of fragments at the Newberry. The collection of codices, assembled over the course of a century and a half by both lay collectors and scholar-bibliographers, “has its fair share of beautiful books, both liturgical and secular. However, it also has a wide variety of visually modest books collected for their textual, paleographical, and codicological interest. It is this special mixture which makes the Newberry collection a rare pedagogical tool for the art historian, the editor of texts, the paleographer, and especially the student of the history of written and printed communication” (Saenger, xiv).

The pre-1500 manuscripts include good representations of:

- Classical, Patristic, and Humanistic authors
- Early texts in music, medicine, and science
- A wide variety of genres, including alphabet books, Bibles, books of hours, breviaries, calendars, capitularies, cartularies, florilegia, genealogies, lapidaries, missals, prayers, and sermons

The most thorough guide is Paul Saenger’s [\*Catalogue of the Pre-1500 Western Manuscript Books at the Newberry Library\*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989). A short-title list, which includes accessions since the Saenger catalog, is the [New Acquisitions of Pre-1500 Manuscripts](#). A number of manuscript fragments are described in Michael Masi, “Newberry MSS Fragments, S. VIII - S. XV,” *Mediaeval Studies* 34 (1972): 99-112. Manuscripts acquired since 1978 can be searched in the Library’s online catalog. See our bibliographic guide

[Manuscripts – Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts – Publications about the Newberry Library Collections](#) for a list of titles.

Please note: Occasionally we are unable to bring out vellum or parchment materials due to unstable environmental conditions. For more information on our vellum handling practices, please [Contact a Librarian](#).