

# Manuscript

The word *manuscript* derives from Latin *manus* = 'hand' and *scribere* = 'to write' and means a handwritten document, in a portable format, written on papyrus (mainly used in antiquity), parchment (widespread after the 3rd century AD) or paper (since the 12th century AD). Inscriptions are normally excluded from this definition. As a format, the **codex** is generally used for Western manuscripts since the 3rd century AD, replacing the scroll. Medieval manuscripts are often composite: they are composed of several "codicological units", that may date from different periods.

Before the invention of the printing press (mid 15th century), written texts were transmitted through **copying** of manuscripts. Most manuscripts carry many texts and will therefore be used as **witnesses** for the study of several textual traditions.

Except for the study of their contents, which is the object of **textual criticism**, manuscripts can also be studied as archaeological objects (**codicology**).

## Other usage

The term manuscript is also used for the final draft of a modern text that is sent to the printer, no matter whether it is hand-written or not.

## References

- Gumbert, Johann Peter. 2004. "Codicological Units. Towards a Terminology for the Stratigraphy of the Non-Homogeneous Codex." *Segno e Testa* 2, 17-42.
- Maniaci, Marilena, ed. 2015. "Chapter 1: Codicology." In *Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies: An Introduction*, edited by Alessandro Bausi et al., 69–266. Hamburg: Tredition. <http://www1.uni-hamburg.de/COMST/handbookonline.html>

## In other languages

DE: Handschrift; Manuskript (usually only for the "other usage")

FR: manuscrit

IT: manoscritto

[CM](#), [TB](#)