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In January 2016, a group of institutions organized by the Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries ([PACSCL](#)) was awarded almost \$500,000 by the [Council on Library and Information Resources](#) to digitize virtually all the region's medieval manuscripts. This project, *Bibliotheca Philadelphiensis*, will create the country's largest regional collection of digitized medieval manuscripts.

The three-year project, involving a total of 15 partner institutions, and led by Lehigh University, the University of Pennsylvania Libraries, and the Free Library of Philadelphia, will complete the digitization and online presentation of almost 160,000 pages from more than 500 individual volumes. Manuscripts included in the project are from across Western Europe, in Latin as well as many vernacular languages, and all date from before 1600.

For a combination of historical and financial reasons, the Philadelphia region and a number of its universities and libraries have become home to a large and important concentration of medieval manuscripts; this cluster of materials is almost unequalled in the United States, and is perhaps surpassed only by collections in the New York area. We are thrilled to make these collections available to the rest of the world.

The Philosophy

We believe that medieval manuscripts belong to everyone, and as curators we have the responsibility to both keep them physically safe, and to make them widely available to scholars and the public. In practice this means that digital images and metadata for manuscripts must be simple to access and licensed for reuse.

Bibliotheca Philadelphiensis' images and metadata will be hosted by the Penn Libraries' manuscript portal, [OPenn](#), and will also be served via the IIIF protocol. The images will be released into the public domain at high resolution and available for download (by the page, manuscript, or collection) with descriptive metadata provided under the Creative Commons CC-BY-4.0 license.



Philadelphia, Free Library, [Ms. LC 14 23](#), f. 1r