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AWARDED NEH GRANT FOR
DIGITAL SCRIPTORIUM PROJECT

NEW YORK, May 20, 2004 - Columbia University Libraries has been awarded a \$300,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to continue the development of *Digital Scriptorium*, a collaborative online project that digitizes and catalogs medieval and renaissance manuscripts from institutions across the United States. Under the two-year grant, the online project will move from its current home at the University of California, Berkeley, to Columbia. Jean Ashton, Director of the Rare Book and Manuscript Library, is the principal investigator on the grant; Consuelo Dutschke, Columbia's Curator of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts, was one of the founders of the project, and is serving as the Managing Director.

Digital Scriptorium is one of the oldest collaborative digital content projects. It is an image database of medieval and renaissance manuscripts that unites resources from numerous separate libraries into an international tool for teaching and scholarly research. Since its inception in 1996 and debut online in 1997, it has evolved into a union catalog for the use of paleographers, codicologists, art historians, textual scholars, and other researchers. As a visual catalog, currently holding 15,000 images and 3,500 records from 19 participating institutions (with two more in process), it allows scholars to verify with their own eyes cataloging information about places and dates of origin, scripts, artistic styles, and quality.

"This is an extraordinarily exciting and significant project," said James Neal, Vice President, Information Services and University Librarian at Columbia. "It is built on collaboration among important repositories of manuscript material, between library and researcher, and between library and technologist. We look forward to our continuing partnership with UC Berkeley as the *Digital Scriptorium* continues to advance."

The grant from NEH will bring seven new institutional partners into *Digital Scriptorium*: Fordham, Rutgers, Oberlin, Notre Dame, Harvard's Houghton Library, University of Kansas, and the Free Library of Philadelphia. Diversity in location, size and type of institution has been a goal from the start, in building this representative "virtual" collection of the holdings of American libraries; the broad scope of collections responds to the wide range of research and teaching interests in classical, medieval and renaissance studies.

Columbia will also develop a new technological foundation for the resource, improving search and navigation methods, and allowing for direct expansions of content, independently of the source format. Columbia will also develop a business plan to ensure the project's long-term sustainability.

The NEH is an independent grant-making agency of the United States government dedicated to supporting research, education, preservation, and public programs in the humanities. For

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additional information about *Digital Scriptorium* please contact Consuelo Dutschke, Curator, Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts at Columbia, 212-854-4139 or visit <http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/Scriptorium/>.

The Rare Book and Manuscript Library owns over 500,000 rare books in some 20 book collections and almost 28 million manuscripts in nearly 3,000 separate manuscript collections. It is particularly strong in English and American literature and history, classical authors, children's literature, education, mathematics and astronomy, economics and banking, photography, the history of printing, New York City politics, librarianship, and the performing arts. Individual collections are as eclectic as they are extensive. For additional information about the Rare Book and Manuscript Library, please call 212-854-5153.

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