

The Essential Scribes Bookshelf By Lady Saradwen Ariandalen, Marche of Gwyntarian

The purpose of this article is to give the working scribe, whether beginner or advanced, a listing of good books which should be a part of their reference library. Some of them do not necessarily deal with what we call "period" topics, but rather are books that should aid the working scribe in his or her craft. Most of these books, to my knowledge, are currently in print and available from your favourite bookstore, be it Amazon.com online or the Borders or Barnes and Noble near you. They are also readily available in any good public or academic library. So forthwith is a listing of books that I call "The Essential Scribes Bookshelf":

Understanding Illuminated Manuscripts: A Guide to Technical Terms by Michelle P. Brown, ISBN 0-89236-217-0, published by J. Paul Getty Museum, 1994, \$14.95

To me, this is one book every working scribe ought to have. It is a superb guide to the technical terms used in the study of illuminated manuscripts. It also is, as a result, a book I have referred to time and again for technical information for doing documentation for scrolls I have done. It is chock full of valuable tidbits of information and I use this particular book a lot. Highly recommended!

Writing & Illuminating & Lettering by Edward Johnston, ISBN 0486285340, published by Dover, 1995, \$13.95

I have a battered British edition of this book that was gifted to me shortly after I began scribing. It rapidly became my "bible" for learning my craft, and is still a book I refer to time and again for things. It was originally published around the turn of the century and has been a favourite with scribes ever since. It gives very clear instructions on everything from how to hold your pen to making period pens, pigments and inks, how to make manuscript books, illumination theory and more, and even a section in the rear on how to carve calligraphy in stone! A real "must own" for the scribe.

Calligraphy & Illumination by Patricia Lovett, ISBN 0-8109-4119-8, published by Harry N. Abrams Books, 2000, \$39.95

This recently published book is a thorough compendium on calligraphy and illumination. Included are sections on Calligraphy, with information on such things as Materials and Equipment, Historical Alphabets and a lot of other valuable calligraphic information, a section on Illumination with a good chapter on gilding and a section on illumination projects and even a section on heraldry and its use in illumination, so even a herald might find some use with this most excellent book! Contributors to this book include Rosemary Sassoon, author of a number of books on handwriting and calligraphy; Michelle P. Brown, Curator of Illuminated Manuscripts at the British Library in London; Hermann Zapf, a renowned calligrapher and typesetter who created many typefaces that are commonly used today; and Hubert Chesshyre, Clarenceux King of Arms at the College of Arms in London and one of England's most senior heralds. This book ought to be in every working scribe's library and is a real "must own" book!

A History of Illuminated Manuscripts by Christopher DeHamel, ISBN 0714834521, published by Phaidon Press, 1997 (2nd Ed.), \$35.00

This is a second edition of this most wonderful book by Christopher DeHamel, who is the head of the Western Manuscripts Department at Sotheby's in London. I own an autographed first edition that I bought from Mr. DeHamel himself while he was on a lecture tour here in the US. This book is full of beautiful plates, alone making it worth having if only for the exemplars in it. But it is also full of very valuable information on the history of the illuminated manuscript, techniques used in its production and more. I've used this book a great deal myself for documentation purposes as well as studying the exemplars in the book for doing my own scrolls.

Time Sanctified: The Book of Hours in Medieval Art and Life by Roger S. Wieck, ISBN 0-8076-1189-1, published by George Braziller, 1988, out-of-print. This book, sadly, is out of print, but can no doubt be found if you know a good out-of-print book dealer who would be willing to find you a copy. It was the companion volume for an exhibition held at the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore, Maryland in 1988. It is valuable for its information on Books of Hours, just one type of illuminated manuscript that was popular in the Middle Ages. It has a lot of beautiful exemplars as well as great information on the structure of Books of Hours. Mr. Wieck is the Associate Curator of Manuscripts and Rare Books at the Walters Art Gallery.

The Calligrapher's Handbook ed. by Heather Child, ISBN 0-8008-1198-4, published by Taplinger, 1986, \$15.95

This book is definitely a "must own" for the working scribe. It is full of valuable technique information on writing instruments, pigments, writing surfaces, letter design, parchment, vellum, quill preparation, gilding, manuscript binding and more! The authors of the articles in the book are all members of the Society of Scribes and Illuminators, so they know of what they speak. A book you will find yourself referring to time and again. A great all around reference book for just about all facets of scribing.

Medieval Illuminators and their Methods of Work by Jonathan J.G. Alexander, ISBN 0-300-06073-4, published by Yale University Press, 1992, \$27.95

What makes this book so valuable is that it shows unfinished works of illumination, allowing us to see the process of creating an illuminated page. Typically what we see in books is already completed pages, and as much as they are a delight to the eye to see, one is still sometimes curious as to what the process was in order to create the page. This book shows us that. It is also chock full of valuable information on process as well as giving plentiful illustrations of exemplars. This book is another one of those "must own" books that will be referred to time and again for reference.

Medieval Craftsmen: Scribes and Illuminators by Christopher DeHamel, ISBN 0-8020-7707-2, published by University of Toronto Press, 1992, \$20.95

This Medieval Craftsmen series is really nice because the books are short but filled with a lot of really great information, and this book is no exception. I've referred to this book many times when composing documentation for a piece I have done. It gives valuable information on materials and techniques, shows some photos of unfinished works and

breaks down the processes of creating an illuminated book. The chapters are entitled "Paper and Parchment makers", "Ink makers and scribes" and "Illuminators, binders and booksellers". Anything written by DeHamel is going to be good, so this little book is a nice addition to any scribal library.

Medieval Calligraphy: Its History and Technique by Marc Drogin, ISBN 0486261425, published by Dover, 1989, \$12.95

This is THE Medieval calligraphy reference. Drogin's book belongs in the library of every scribe who wants to know period calligraphic styles and techniques, and the lovely thing is that it is a Dover edition, which means it is durable and inexpensive, as well as being readily available. He shows just about every period hand out there and how to do it. It is, without a doubt, a book that will be referred to time and again. A book not to be missed!

The Illuminated Alphabet by Patricia Seligman, ISBN 1561384585, published by Running Press, 1994, \$24.95

This is a really nice book for learning techniques of illumination. It has nice illustrations showing the various techniques one would use to do everything from making paints to gilding. It's a great book to own for learning many of the techniques used in doing illumination, as well as for learning how to do historiated initials. This book comes highly recommended and will get plenty of use if you own it.

The Medieval Book by Barbara Shailor, ISBN 0-8020-6853-7, published by University of Toronto Press, 1991, \$17.99

This book is really nice in that it explains the process of creation of a Medieval book. It gives plentiful technical information on period book production. Bookbinding, tools, techniques of illumination, calligraphic styles and book production are all here. Excellent illustrations throughout the book give valuable information on period books and the processes required to create one. Nice exemplars in both black and white and colour as well. A recommended addition to the scribal library.

The Art of Calligraphy by David Harris, ISBN 1564588491, published by Dorling Kindersley, 1995, \$24.95

Dorling Kindersley books are becoming immensely popular for publishing very visual guides to many, many topics. Children love their beautiful pictures and adults love them for about the same reasons. Harris's book is no exception. What makes this book so valuable is that each hand is shown using a different colour for each pen stroke, which gives you a far better idea of how each hand is constructed. A superb calligraphic reference, it is recommended highly for its excellent instruction in period calligraphic hands.

Blue and Yellow don't make Green by Michael Wilcox, ISBN 0891346228, published by North Light Books, 1994, \$27.99

Although this book does not deal with anything necessarily period, its value is in teaching the reader colour theory beyond anything we learned in school. For example, Ultramarine blue and bright lemon yellow do NOT make green. However, a Cobalt blue

and a bright lemon yellow will yield a specific colour of green. This book will teach the student of painting how to create the same colour desired time and again, so its value lies in the blending of colours to achieve the desired pigment successfully. A real must in the scribal library!

The Craftsman's Handbook, "Il Libro Dell'Arte" by Cennino d'Andrea Cennini, translated by Daniel V. Thompson, ISBN 0-486-20054-X, published by Dover Books, 1978, \$6.95

This is an actual period treatise on painting, making it an excellent primary source for information on period painting techniques. It was written in 15th century Florence and is full of information about how the period painter plied his craft. Pigments, binding agents, papers, gilding, stamping and more - it's all here. First hand information from a period artist make this one book no scribe should be without, and the fact that it is a Dover book makes it a durable and inexpensive book to acquire and use time and again.

On Divers Arts, "De Diversis Artibus" by Theophilus, translated from the Latin by John G. Hawthorne and Cyril Stanley Smith, ISBN 0-486-23784-2, published by Dover Books, 1979, \$9.95

This is the oldest extant manual on period crafts, having been written in 1122. It is a manual on period painting, glassmaking and metalwork, so it is not limited to the scribal arts. Still, it does have valuable first hand information on period painting techniques. For example, it covers pigments, binding agents, gilding, glues, varnishes, panel painting, tin leafing, inks - just about anything you would want to know about the painter's craft of that time period, making it, once again, a valuable primary source for documentation. It is a nice sturdy and inexpensive Dover edition, making it readily accessible even for the scribe on a budget.

The Materials and Techniques of Medieval Painting by Daniel V. Thompson, ISBN 0-486-20327-1, published by Dover Books, 1957, \$8.95

A superb reference book covering nearly every aspect of period painting. Sections of the book include carriers and grounds, binding media, pigments and metals and discusses how these were used in period. A very valuable book to own and one that belongs in every scribal library, especially because once again, even if you are a scribe on a tight budget, it is another one of those sturdy and inexpensive Dover editions that make it accessible even to someone with a tight financial situation. Thompson translated Cennini, discussed earlier, and this book together with Cennini makes an excellent companion volume. If you can only afford a few books on this list, make them Cennini, Thompson and Theophilus.

The Gottingen Model Book: The Facsimile Edition and Translations of a Fifteenth Century Illuminators Manual by Hellmut Lehmann-Haupt, ISBN 0826202616, University of Missouri Press, 1972.

This book, sadly, is out of print and one has to do some serious hunting to track down a copy, so prices will vary depending on which out-of-print book dealer you work with. It, again, is another one of those primary sources for period illumination techniques. It shows a lot of valuable style techniques, and for those of you who have struggled with

acanthus, it shows great construction technique on how to do it. A book, that if you can find it, belongs in every scribal library. There are a number of good used/rare book dealers online if you have access to a computer, and they may be able to help you find a copy without emptying your wallet in the process.

The Illuminated Page: Ten Centuries of Manuscript Painting by Janet Backhouse, ISBN 8020-4346-1, published by University of Toronto Press, 1997, \$39.95

This book should be owned if for no other reason than it is a gorgeous and lush overview of 1000 years of manuscript painting and shows exemplars that have previously been unpublished that are in the British Library. A book rich in colour illustrations and information written by the Curator of Illuminated Manuscripts at the British Library. A feast for the eyes and a great book from which to study period exemplars from a thousand years worth of manuscript painting. Any book by Ms. Backhouse is highly recommended.

I hope that these books have provided some good sources from which to begin creating a basic scribal library. Over time, the scribe will also wish to begin collecting the many published reproduction manuscripts, such as the Visconti Hours, Master of Mary of Burgundy, The Rohan Master, King René's Book of Love, The Hours of Catherine of Cleves, The Prayerbook of Michelino da Besozzo and other exemplars available. These are extremely valuable to own as a working scribe. Over time, you may find yourself wishing to specialise in a certain style or time period. Studying period illuminated manuscripts will allow you to become familiar with styles, colours, calligraphic hands used in period, etc. Many are published by Braziller and can be expensive, but are worth it to own as sources for study. Braziller does publish some less expensive exemplar books if you are on a budget, titles such as The Golden Age of English Manuscript Painting, 1200-1500, The Golden Age: Manuscript Painting at the time of Jean, Duke of Berry, The Decorated Letter, Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Painting, Italian Renaissance Painting and more. These are every bit as valuable as owning a full reproduction manuscript, and far and away cheaper as well. They provide lovely colour illustrations of exemplars from which to study for the budget minded scribe.