

Introduction to Manuscript Description

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Why are manuscripts special?

- Manuscripts are *unique objects*, often of great cultural or political value.
- Books, by contrast, exist in multiple copies, and can be described adequately by well-established and formalised bibliographic conventions.
- For manuscripts, there are several traditions, often descriptive or **belle lettriste**, and little consensus.

Similar concerns apply to other text-bearing objects.

Objectives

The TEI <msDesc> element is intended for several different kinds of applications:

- standalone database of library records (*finding aid*)
- discursive text collecting many records (*catalogue raisonné*)
- metadata component within a digital surrogate (*electronic edition*)
- tool for 'quantitative codicology'

Catalogue Raisonné

An `<msDesc>` can appear anywhere a `<p>` paragraph can

```
<div>
  <head>The Arnamagnæan Manuscript Collection</head>
  <p>The Arnamagnæan Collection is widely
    recognised as one of the most significant collections
    of early Scandinavian manuscripts in the world...</p>
  <p>Among its more important holdings are:
<msDesc xml:id="AM02-0101" xml:lang="en">
<!-- ...-->
  </msDesc>
</p>
<p>In the following manuscript...
<msDesc xml:id="AM04-0595" xml:lang="en">
<!-- ...-->
  </msDesc>
</p>
</div>
```

Having one's cake and eating it

Two conflicting desires:

- preserve (or perpetuate) existing descriptive prose
- reliable search, retrieval, and analysis of data

The <msDesc> tries, wherever possible, to do both of these things.

Components of a manuscript description

Within the `<msDesc>` element come a required `<msIdentifier>` element, which groups information identifying the manuscript, followed by an optional `<head>`, which can be used to provide in a brief, unstructured way information on the manuscript's contents etc. These are then followed either by one or more paragraphs (`<p>`), or one or more of the following specialised elements:

- `<msContents>`: an itemised list of the intellectual content of the manuscript, with transcriptions of rubrics, incipits, explicits etc, as well as primary bibliographic references
- `<physDesc>`: groups information concerning all physical aspects of the manuscript, its material, size, format, script, decoration, binding, marginalia etc.
- `<history>`: provides information on the history of the manuscript, its origin, provenance and acquisition by its holding institution

Components of a manuscript description (cont.)

- `<additional>`: groups other information about the manuscript, in particular, administrative information relating to its availability, custodial history, surrogates etc.
- `<msPart>`: contains in essence a nested `<msDesc>`, in cases of composite manuscripts now regarded as constituting a single unit but made up of two or more parts which were originally physically distinct.

Within each of these elements a number of sub-elements is available; `<msContents>`, for example, will normally consist of one or more `<msItem>` elements, each in turn containing specific elements for `<rubric>`, `<incipit>`, `<explicit>` and `<colophon>`, as well as the standard TEI elements `<author>`, `<title>` and `<bibl>` for bibliographic references. As with `<msDescription>` itself, however, the contents of these first-level and second-level elements need not be this structured, since there is also the option of using paragraphs.

Identification (1)

The `<msIdentifier>`

Traditional three part specification:

- place (`<country>`, `<region>`, `<settlement>`)
- repository (`<institution>`, `<repository>`)
- identifier (`<collection>`, `<idno>`)

```
<msIdentifier>  
  <country>France</country>  
  <settlement>Troyes</settlement>  
  <repository>Bibliothèque Municipale</repository>  
  <idno>50</idno>  
</msIdentifier>
```


Identification (2)

Alternative or additional names can also be included:

```
<msIdentifier>
  <country>Danmark</country>
  <settlement>København</settlement>
  <repository> Det ArnemagnæanskeInstitut </repository>
  <idno>AM 45 fol.</idno>
  <msName xml:lang="la">Codex Frisianus</msName>
  <msName xml:lang="is">Fríssbók</msName>
</msIdentifier>
```

Intellectual Content

- May simply use paragraphs of text...
- ... or a tree of `<msItem>` elements
- ... optionally preceded by a prose summary

We can describe the content in general terms:

```
<msContents>
  <p>An extraordinary charivari of heroic deeds and improving tales,
    including an early version of <title>Guy of Warwick</title> and
    several hymns.</p>
</msContents>
```

or we can provide detail about each distinct item:

```
<msContents>
  <summary>An extraordinary charivari of heroic deeds, improving tales,
    and hymns.</summary>
  <msItem>
    <!-- details of Guy of Warwick here -->
  </msItem>
  <msItem>
    <!-- other items here -->
  </msItem>
</msContents>
```

The <msItem> element

Manuscripts contain identifiable items, usually physically tied to a *locus*.

- <locus>, if present, must be given first
- then any of the following, in a specified order:
 - <author>, <respStmt>
 - <title>, <rubric>, <incipit>, <explicit>, <colophon>, <finalRubric>
 - <quote>, <textLang>, <decoNote>, <bibl>, <listBibl>, <note> ...
 - ... or nested <msItem>s

<msContents> with multiple <msItem>s

```
<msContents>
  <msItem n="1">
    <locus from="5r" to="7v">fols. 5r-7v</locus>
    <title type="supplied">An ABC</title>
  </msItem>
  <msItem n="2">
    <locus from="7v" to="8v">fols. 7v-8v</locus>
    <title type="uniform" xml:lang="fr">Lenvoy de Chaucer a
      Scogan</title>
  </msItem>
  <!-- ...further items here... -->
  <msItem n="6">
    <locus from="14r" to="126v">fols. 14r-126v</locus>
    <title type="uniform">Troilus and Criseyde</title>
    <note>Bk. 1:71-Bk. 5:1701, with additional losses due to
      mutilation throughout</note>
  </msItem>
</msContents>
```

Physical Description

An artificial (but helpful) grouping of many distinct items.

You can simply supply paragraphs of prose, covering such topics as

- <objectDesc>: the physical carrier
- <handDesc>: what is carried on it
- <musicNotation>, <decoDesc>, <additions>
- <bindingDesc> and <sealDesc>
- <accMat>: accompanying material

Or, group your discussion within the specific elements mentioned above.

Similarly, within the specific elements, you can supply paragraphs of prose, or further specific elements.

The carrier 1

The `<objectDesc>` can contain just paragraphs, or `<supportDesc>` and `<layoutDesc>`

```
<objectDesc form="codex">
  <supportDesc material="mixed">
    <p>Early modern <material>parchment</material> and
    <material>paper</material>.</p>
  </supportDesc>
  <layoutDesc>
    <layout columns="1" ruledLines="25 32"/>
  </layoutDesc>
</objectDesc>
```

The carrier 2

A more complex substructure with specific elements for <support>, <extent>, <foliation>, <collation>, <condition>.

Multiple layouts may also be specified:

```
<layoutDesc>
  <layout ruledLines="25" columns="1">
    <p>
      <locus from="1r" to="202v"/>
      <locus from="210r" to="212v"/> Between 25 and 32 ruled
        lines.</p>
    </layout>
  <layout ruledLines="34 50" columns="1">
    <p>
      <locus from="203r" to="209v"/>Between 34 and 50 ruled
        lines.</p>
    </layout>
  </layoutDesc>
```

<handDesc> and <decoDesc>

- <handNote> (note on hand) describes a particular style or hand distinguished within a manuscript.
- <decoNote> contains a note describing either a decorative component of a manuscript or a fairly homogenous class of such components.

<handDesc> example (1)

```
<handDesc hands="2">
```

```
  <p>The manuscript is written in two contemporary hands, otherwise  
    unknown, but clearly those of practised scribes. Hand I writes  
    ff.1r-22v and hand II ff. 23 and 24. Some scholars, notably  
    Verner Dahlerup and Hreinn Benediktsson, have argued for a  
    third hand on f. 24, but the evidence for this is  
    insubstantial.</p>
```

```
</handDesc>
```

<handDesc> example (2)

```
<handDesc hands="2">
  <handNote xml:id="Eirsp-1" scope="minor" script="other">
    <p>The first part of the manuscript,
<locus from="1v" to="72v:4">fols 1v-72v:4</locus>, is written in a
    practised Icelandic Gothic bookhand.
    This hand is not found elsewhere.</p>
  </handNote>
  <handNote xml:id="Eirsp-2" scope="major" script="other">
    <p>The second part of the manuscript,
<locus from="72v:4" to="194v">fols 72v:4-194</locus>, is written
    in a hand contemporary with the first; it can
    also be found in a fragment of<title>Knýtlinga saga</title>,
    <ref>AM 20b II fol.</ref>.</p>
  </handNote>
</handDesc>
```

<additions>

The <additions> element can be used to list or describe any additions to the manuscript, such as marginalia, scribblings, doodles, etc., which are considered to be of interest or importance.

<additions>

<p>The text of this manuscript is not interpolated with sentences from Royal decrees promulgated in 1294, 1305 and 1314. In the margins, however, another somewhat later scribe has added the relevant paragraphs of these decrees, see pp. 8, 24, 44, 47 etc.</p>

<p>As a humorous gesture the scribe in one opening of the manuscript, pp. 36 and 37, has prolonged the lower stems of one letter f and five letters p and has them drizzle down the margin.</p>

</additions>

<accMat>

<accMat> (accompanying material) contains details of any significant additional material which may be closely associated with the manuscript being described, such as non-contemporaneous documents or fragments bound in with the manuscript at some earlier historical period.

<accMat> A copy of a tax form from 1947 is included in the envelope with the letter. It is not catalogued separately. </accMat>

<history>

- <origin>: where it all began
- <provenance>: everything in between
- <acquisition>: how you acquired it

<origin> is *datable* element and thus has attributes *@notBefore* and *@notAfter, @when* etc.

Example

```
<history>
  <origin>
    <p>Written in <origPlace>England</origPlace> in the
    <origDate notAfter="1300" notBefore="1200">13th cent. </origDate>
    </p>
  </origin>
  <provenance>
    <p>On fol. 54v very faint is <q>Iste liber est fratris guillelmi
      de buria de <gap reason="illegible"/> Roberti ordinis
      fratrum Pred<ex>icatorum</ex>
      </q>, 14th cent. (?):
    <q>hanauilla</q> is written at the foot of the page
      (15th cent.).</p>
  </provenance>
  <acquisition>
    <p>Bought from the Rev. <name type="person">W. D. Macray</name>
      on <date when="1863-03-17">March 17, 1863</date>,
      for 1 pound 10s.</p>
  </acquisition>
</history>
```

<additional> information

- <adminInfo> : administrative information
- <surrogates> : information about other surrogates, i.e. photographs, digital images etc.
- <accMat> : accompanying material
- <listBibl> : bibliography

Administrative information

- record history
- availability
- custodial history
- miscellaneous remarks

```
<adminInfo>
  <custodialHist>
    <custEvent type="conservation" notBefore="1961-03" notAfter="1963-02">
      <p>Conserved between March 1961 and February 1963 at Birgitte Dalls
        Konserveringsværksted.</p>
    </custEvent>
    <custEvent type="photography" notBefore="1988-05-01" notAfter="1988-05-30">
      <p>Photographed in May 1988 by AMI/FA.</p>
    </custEvent>
  </custodialHist>
</adminInfo>
```


And finally

A `<msDesc>` can contain `<msPart>`, essentially a nested `<msDesc>`, where originally distinct manuscripts or parts of a manuscripts have been brought together to form a composite manuscript.

```
<msDesc>
  <msIdentifier>
    <settlement>Amiens</settlement>
    <repository>Bibliothèque Municipale</repository>
    <idno>MS 3</idno>
    <msName>Maurdramnus Bible</msName>
  </msIdentifier>
  <!-- other elements here -->
  <msPart>
    <altIdentifier>
      <idno>MS 6</idno>
    </altIdentifier>
  <!-- other information specific to this part here -->
  </msPart>
  <msPart>
    <altIdentifier>
      <idno>MS 7</idno>
    </altIdentifier>
  <!-- other information specific to this part here -->
  </msPart>
  <msPart>
    <altIdentifier>
      <idno>MS 9</idno>
    </altIdentifier>
  <!-- other information specific to this part here -->
  </msPart>
  <!-- other msParts here -->
</msDesc>
```