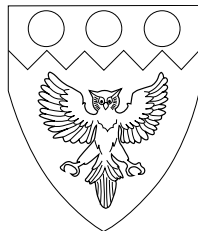

Manuscript and e-text sources from northern Europe

Anna de Byxe

Anna Troy
owly3@yahoo.se



Medieval manuscripts from the different Nordic countries are not always as easy to find. This is due to various factors; national borders changing, the destruction of medieval manuscripts, the cost of digitization and the fact that book production was never at such a high level as on the Continent. But there are some gems and hopefully this presentation will help more people discover them.

For more background information about Scandinavian (especially Swedish and Icelandic) archives and libraries. I recommend the CARA session articles from the University of Arizona [4]. Web URLs go to the English version of a site if such has been found.

Collections

The Danish Royal Library [7] (Denmark)

The largest collection of e-manuscripts in Scandinavia can be found on the website of the Danish Royal Library. The three, pre-16th century sections, are the “Codices Laitini Hauniensis” which contains Latin texts from the 7th until the 16th century, the “Fragmenta Latina Hauniensia” which contains 3350 fragments of various texts and the section “Middle Ages and Renaissance” which seems to be everything else.

When looking at the manuscripts another window opens and you are met by an introduction on the first page. The photos of the manuscript pages are quite clear and you are able to see the manuscript pages in two different grades of magnification. More decorated versals are provided with a close-up.

The manuscripts of Lund University [12] (Sweden)

Of its 67 volumes the Manuscript Department of Lund University has to date digitized 64. The manuscripts are dated between the 10th—16th century and come from all over Europe. The digitization is fairly simple, you see a list of thumbnails which become a photo when clicked on, there is no magnification. Both an abbreviated and a detailed description with a bibliography are available for each manuscript.

Medieval parchment fragments at the Bergen University Library [14] (Norway)

FRAGMENT, as the project is called, is an interesting little collection of various manuscript fragments. It's divided into three sections, "Latin fragments at the Bergen University Library", "Old Norse fragments at the Bergen University Library" and "Latin fragments at the Bergen State Archives". Each set of fragments are given a detailed description and you are able to get a close-up of the photos.

Árni Magnússon Collection [1] (Iceland/Denmark)

Árni Magnússon (1663–1730) was an Icelandic professor who worked at Copenhagen University (the capital of not only Denmark but Norway and Iceland as well) and he was also an avid collector of Icelandic manuscripts. This huge collection (the largest in Europe) later became the property of the Arnamagnaen Foundation at Copenhagen University. In 1971 manuscripts of national significance to Iceland were returned and the rest were kept in Copenhagen. Unfortunately, none seem to be fully digitized, though 13 examples from the Copenhagen collection can be seen online at <http://arnamagnaensk.ku.dk/haandskriftssamlingen/eks>.

Each book has a photo of an example page with information in Danish. Especially the Codex Runicus is worth a look. It's from the oldest known version of the Skane book of Laws and although it was written around 1300 it's written completely in runes! More information about where various Icelandic manuscripts can be found at [3].

Single manuscripts

Codex Gigas—The Devil's Bible [6] (Sweden)

Measuring 89cm tall and 49cm wide (35"×19.5") the Codex Gigas is probably the largest surviving medieval manuscript in Europe. It derives its name not only from a vague legend that tells how the devil helped finish the book, but also from a huge picture of the devil seemingly pressed within the book on page f.290r. It's thought to have been made in Bohemia though its exact age and origin is unknown. The earliest known dating is 1295 which is due to the fact a note was found telling how the monks of Podlažice pawned it to the monastery at Sedlec. It was brought to Sweden during the 30 Years War (beginning of the 17th century) as loot from Prague and is currently on display in the National Library of Sweden (Kungliga biblioteket).

The Codex is composed not only of the Bible but several other books as well. Apart from the Old and New Testament it contains "The Antiquities" and "The Jewish War" by the first century author Flavius Josephus, an Encyclopedia by the Spanish sixth century author Isidor, a collection of medical texts, the "Chronicle of Bohemia" by Cosmas of Prague (who lived

during the 11th–12th centuries) as well as a few other shorter texts, in conclusion a whole library in one book.

The National Library has been very thorough when it comes to describing this book and it's well worth clicking on each link in the left-hand column to find all the sub-pages of information. The online version of the codex has been divided into folders according to text and each page can be magnified as well as be converted into a form that is printable.

Codex Argenteus—The Silver Bible [5] (Sweden)

The most extensive remaining Gothic language document is the Codex Argenteus. The website doesn't state why it's called that but it's written in silver and gold on purple parchment as well as having a cover made out of chased silver so one can guess. The Codex was written in Ravenna in the 520s and contains the Gothic version of the four gospels as written by Bishop Ulfilas (Wulfila) 300 years earlier. Of the original 336 leaves only 188 remain.

It too was a part of the loot from Bohemia but was given to Uppsala University in 1669 by Magnus Gabriel de la Gardie (he also commissioned the silver cover) and is now on exhibit in the Carolina Rediviva Library Museum.

As for the digitization of the manuscript there is only a link to the e-text version of the book "Codex Argenteus Upsaliensis" from 1927. It has two color pictures as well as photos in black-and-white and is a study of the codex.

French book of hours [11] (Norway)

This book of hours was digitized by the University of Bergen. Unfortunately the description is only in Norwegian but it's very easy to use. According to the description it was made in the North of France sometime during the 1470s. Although you can set the page magnification as high as 200%, the photo resolution just becomes grainier and it's clearest at 100%.

Other websites of interest

Although there is still much to do when it comes to digitizing manuscript in northern Europe there are several interesting sites where the text, if not the pictures of manuscripts have been made available, here are a few choice selections.

MENOTA—The Medieval Nordic Text Archive [13] (Scandinavia)

This is the largest collection of links to Scandinavian medieval text and manuscript sources online. It contains a database of twelve medieval Nordic

texts (approximately 700,000 words) as well as various lexicographic sources and interesting links.

To properly view the texts you should download at least a few of the recommended fonts that are available for free on the site.

Svenskt diplomatariums huvudkartotek över medeltidsbrev [18] and others (Sweden)

I have found the Diplomatariums invaluable when for search for name references, especially the Swedish one. For although the database “Sveriges Medeltida Personnamn” (Swedens Medieval Personal Names) [20] is easier to use, it ends at *Holmger*. So if you want a name after *H* the Diplomatarium is very useful.

It’s a searchable database that contains approximately 11,200 letters written before the year 1540. Instructions in Swedish. The letters are searchable by “Brevnummer” (letter number), “Datering” (date), “Ortnamn” (place name) “Personnamn” (name of person) and “Brevtext” (letter text). The letters are usually transcribed. To see the original wording (if such exists) click on the link “visa brevtext”. When searching for a name I recommend trying various spellings.

For Viking names I recommend the “Nordiskt Runnamnslexikon” [15] which is an excellent collection of names taken directly from various runstones. A 5th edition [16] has now been published as a book and can be ordered via their website.

Diplomatarium Fennicum [8] (Finland)

A simple searchable database that contains the materials of Finlands Medeltidsurkunder (Finlands Medieval Documents) and Abo Domkyrkas Svartbok (the black book of Abo Cathedral) (approximately 7000 letters). Instructions are in Swedish and Finnish. The database is searchable by period, by letter number and by text search. The texts have a Swedish abstract as well as the original text.

Diplomatarium Danicum [9] (Denmark)

Contains the introductory e-text to the actual letters which can be found under the link “Danmarks Riges Breve” (The letters of the kingdom of Denmark). It contains approximately 2000 letters from between the years 1401–1412 and there is a text search function. Instructions are in Danish.

Diplomatarium Islandicum [10] (Iceland)

This can be found in the Internet Archive where various fulltext versions have been made available. If I’ve understood it correctly it contains 725 letters. In the text format you can use word search and there is also a word search function in the flip book format.

The Scaldic Project [19] (Iceland)

This edited database of Icelandic poetry is a collaboration between several different Universities. The most interesting part from a SCA heralds perspective is the section called “Scalds”. It lists the *fullnames* of 396 scalds in alphabetical order and gives a good overview of how Norse bynames were constructed.

MICHAEL—Multilingual Inventory of Cultural Heritage in Europe [17] (Europe)

Lastly I wish to make a special mention of the MICHAEL database. It provides information of digital resources from libraries, archives museums etc. from all over Europe. Many links to various European Manuscripts can be found in it, though the search functions are a bit lacking and I recommend trying several different type of searches for the best results.

References

- [1] Árni Magnússon Collection, <http://www.hi.is/pub/sam/main.html#man>.
- [2] Den Arnamagnæanske samling, <http://arnamagnæansk.ku.dk/haandskriftssamlingen/eks/>.
- [3] The Arni Magnúsen Institute for Icelandic Studies—the manuscripts, http://www.arnastofnun.is/page/a_manuscript_collection.
- [4] CARA session articles, http://www.asu.edu/clas/acmrs/web_pages/online_resources/online_resources_cara.html#Scandinavia.
- [5] Codex Argenteus, <http://www.ub.uu.se/arv/codexeng.cfm>.
- [6] Codex Gigas, <http://www.kb.se/codex-gigas/eng/>.
- [7] The Danish Royal Library, http://www.kb.dk/en/nb/materialer/haandskrifter/HA/e-mss/e_mss.html.
- [8] *Diplomataricum Fennicum*, <http://193.184.161.234/DF/df.php>.
- [9] *Diplomatarium Danicum*, <http://www.diplomatarium.dk/>.
- [10] *Diplomatarium Islandicum: Íslenzkt Fornbréfasafn, sem hefir inni a halda bréf og gjörninga, dóma og máldaga, og arar skrár, er snerta Ísland ea íslenska Menn, 1857–1915*, <http://www.archive.org/details/diplomatariumisl01kaupoft>.

- [11] French book of hours, <http://da2.uib.no/cgi-win/WebBok.exe?slag=lesbok&bokid=bonnebok>.
- [12] The Manuscripts of Lund University, <http://www1.ub.lu.se/extern/apps/laurentius/index.cfm>.
- [13] MENOTA—The Medieval Nordic Text Archive, http://helmer.aksis.uib.no/menota/index_en.page.
- [14] Medieval Parchment fragments at the Bergen University Library, <http://gandalf.aksis.uib.no/mpf/>.
- [15] *Nordiskt Runnamnslexikon*, http://www.sofi.se/GetDoc?meta_id=1017.
- [16] Peterson, Lena. 2007. *Nordiskt Runnamnslexikon*. ISBN: 9789172290402.
- [17] MICHAEL—Multilingual Inventory of Cultural Heritage in Europe, <http://www.michael-culture.org/en/home>.
- [18] Svenskt diplomatariums huvudkartotek över medeltidsbrev, <http://www.statensarkiv.se/default.aspx?id=2453&refid=4045>.
- [19] Scaldic Project, <http://skaldic.arts.usyd.edu.au/db.php?table=home>.
- [20] *Sveriges Medeltida Personnamn*, <http://www2.sofi.se/smp/>.