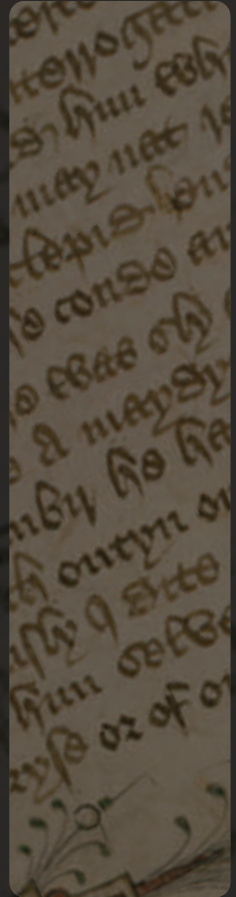


# In the Bigynnyng

Manchester  
Middle English  
Digital Library



In the Bigynnyng: the Manchester  
Middle English Digital Library  
(JISC digitisation programme)

Funded by **JISC**

# In the Beginning

Manchester  
Middle English  
Digital Library

The John Rylands University Library's Middle English manuscripts are of paramount importance to key subject areas, including literature, history, theology, linguistics and art history.

In response to demand for improved access, the Library has received funding from JISC (the Joint Information Systems Committee) to digitise all 41 manuscripts (c.12,000 images) and to make them publicly available via a dedicated project website. This is the cornerstone of a more ambitious project for a Manchester Medieval Digital Library, which will contain manuscripts in other languages and incunabula (books printed before 1501).

The manuscripts include key works of medieval literature, such as the *Canterbury Tales* and John Lydgate's two major poems, the *Troy Book* and *Fall of Princes*. There are also numerous copies of the *New Testament*, translated into English by John Wycliffe, the fourteenth-century radical and church reformer. Other notable works include several copies of the *Brut*, the medieval history of England, mediations of the life of Christ, a legal commonplace book and medical recipes.



Image from John Lydgate's *Troy Book*, showing the death of Patroclus at the hand of Hector. English MS 1 f.78v.



Another highlight is a rare copy of the *Forme of Cury*, a recipe book compiled by the master cook of Richard II. This contains recipes for dishes such as 'blank mang' – a sweet dish of chopped meat, milk, rice, sugar and almonds – and 'custard', an open pie resembling a modern quiche. English MS 7, f.25r.

An exciting element of the project is the virtual reunification of a key manuscript of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, fragments of which have been separated by the Atlantic Ocean for over a century. Leaves located at the John Rylands Library, Manchester, and at the Rosenbach Museum in Philadelphia will be digitally stitched together and viewed on a joint website. English MS 63, f.1v.



[www.manchester.ac.uk/library/inthebigynnyng](http://www.manchester.ac.uk/library/inthebigynnyng)

Digital surrogates of the Rylands Middle English manuscript collection will support teaching and learning, develop new research opportunities, and make these cultural assets accessible to wider audiences.

Viewing manuscripts in the Rylands Medieval Collection



Key elements of the In the Bigynnyng Project are a **public lecture** by Professor Julia Boffey of Queen Mary University, London, at 6pm on Thursday 17th September 2009, and a **major academic conference** on Middle English manuscripts on Friday 18th September. Both events take place in the John Rylands Library.

See the separate leaflet or visit our website for further details of these events.

[www.manchester.ac.uk/library/inthebigynnyng](http://www.manchester.ac.uk/library/inthebigynnyng)

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