

Eight Guidelines on Book Preservation from 1527

'How One Should Preserve All Books to Last Eternally.'

The present article analyses and makes available one of the earliest known texts on book preservation. The text in manuscript The Hague, KB 133 F 2 dates back to 1527 and contains eight guidelines on how to preserve books. These guidelines give us a unique insight into the way people in the later Middle Ages thought about handling books and the risks involved. An analysis of the contents of these age-old guidelines in light of modern book preservation indicates that the causes of deterioration and degradation identified back then still hold true today. In addition, this set of medieval instructions can be seen as one of the earliest foundations of our present-day regulations on access, handling and storage.

Acht Leitlinien zum Umgang mit Büchern aus dem Jahre 1527: "Wie man alle Bücher bewahren soll, um sie ewiglich zu erhalten."

Der vorliegende Beitrag analysiert und erschließt einen der ältesten bekannten Texte zur Bucherhaltung. Der Text im Manuskript Den Haag, KB 133 F 2 aus dem Jahr 1527 enthält acht Leitlinien, die uns einen einzigartigen Einblick in die Art, wie Menschen im Spätmittelalter über den Umgang mit Büchern und die damit verbundenen Risiken dachten, geben. Eine Inhaltsanalyse dieser uralten Vorschriften im Lichte der modernen Bestandserhaltung zeigt, daß die damals beschriebenen Ursachen für Gefährdung und Zerfall auch heute noch gelten. Darüber hinaus kann diese Sammlung mittelalterlicher Anweisungen als eines der frühesten Fundamente unserer heutigen Bestimmungen betreffend Zugang, Handhabung und Aufbewahrung gesehen werden.

'Gashed gatherings, boded bindings and faltering flyleaves, alongside picture perfect parchment.' The current state of medieval manuscripts, either good or bad, reflects the manner in which these objects have been kept and used over the centuries. Nowadays, the concern over the preservation of books leads to ever stricter regulations on access, handling and storage. But what about the Middle Ages? Did medieval book users set any rules on how to treat these objects?

Some medieval evidence suggests a concern over the durability of books and the material that was used in their construction. In 1231, for example, Frederick II of Sicily forbade the use of paper for documents having legal authority '*quoniam incipiebat vetustate consumi*' (because it was beginning to show signs of age) and decreed that parchment was to be used instead (Clemens and Graham 2007: 6). Similarly, Johannes Trithemius in his 'De Laude Scriptorum' (1492-1494) values parchment over paper on account of its durability: 'Writing—if it is on parchment—will be capable of lasting a thousand years; but printing—since the material is paper—how long will that last?' (Batts 1977: 20/21) Along with natural degradation caused by aging of the material, vandalism was considered a threat to the permanence of books. This consideration is evident in colophons found in various manuscripts, which urge the reader to treat the book well, often accompanied by a curse for those who fail to do so (Newton 1996; Hogenelst and Van Oostrom 1995: 42/43).

In his 'Philobiblon', Richard de Bury (1287-1345) laments the ill treatment of books by snotty youths, who, rather than wipe their noses, stain their books. De Bury also states that the problem of the decaying nature of books requires a solution: 'For as the bodies of books, seeing that they are formed of a combination of contrary elements, undergo a continual dissolution of their structure, so by the forethought of the clergy a remedy should be found.' (De Bury: ch. 16) One of the remedies De Bury

proposes is replacing old books by means of copying; evidently, the modern approach of producing preservation copies in order to safeguard original documents has its roots far back in history.

For medieval equivalents of present-day regulations on access and risk control, we need to turn to the monastic library. Most monasteries appointed a so-called *armarius*, a librarian *avant la lettre*, who was responsible for managing the books (Clark 1902: 57). Even though the stereotypical image of a monastic library is that of a library with its books 'chained up', monastic books could be lent out, as is evident by Hugh Loher's 'In Usum Bibliothecarii' (1538). This practical guide for monastic librarians prescribes a wide range of elaborate safeguards to ensure the timely return of lent books, including the use of registers and pre-written chirographs [1]. The monastic librarians were not only in charge of regulating access to books, but were also instructed to make sure that books would not be returned in a damaged state. According to the rules of the Augustine convent of Mary Magdalene in Hoorn, the appointed *costerinne* (usherette) was supposed to make sure that the lent books 'would not be spoiled or lost' [2]. A similar responsibility was prescribed to the *bewaerster der boeken* (keeper of books) of the Bethlehem convent near Hoorn (Meinsma 1903: 115). According to the *consuetudines* (rules of custom) of the St. Paul's house for the Brethren of the Common Life in Gouda, the *armarius* was also supposed to take into account the dangers posed by bookworms and dust [3]. Other monasteries add dirt, and damage caused by humidity and/or fire to the list of threats in their instructions (Clark 1902: 61; De Meyer and De Smet 1951: 55, 63). The instructions remain silent, however, on how these dangers were supposed to be minimised.

Guidelines on handling books can be found in bibliophilic texts. For example, De Bury's 'Philobiblon' advises its readers to refrain from eating and drinking whilst reading and reminds them to always close their books after use. Trithemius' 'De Laude

Scriptorum' features a chapter headed 'on the care of cleanliness of books', in which he notes that: '[T]he discipline of monks is easily deduced from their libraries and their interests can be soon learned from their books.' Trithemius encourages the monks to keep their books in immaculate condition, as this will reflect their respect for the religious texts these books contain. Trithemius gives some practical guidelines, including the proper arrangement of books on bookshelves, but does not go into much detail, stating: 'But why do we dwell on the care of books with many words? Those who love books doubtlessly treasure and keep them even without a word from us.' (Batts 1977: 37-39)

This last statement of Trithemius neatly sums up our overview. Medieval book owners would have been aware of the dangers their books could be exposed to and would have known, in most cases, how to handle their books appropriately. Contemporary, written evidence of these measures, however, is scarce.

This article calls attention to a rare text containing concrete, practical rules on book handling from 1527. The text stands out from the other medieval sources on the preservation of books discussed above for at least three reasons: it is written in the vernacular; it is aimed at a lay, and possibly juvenile, audience; and it includes not only guidelines on access and handling, but also on storage.

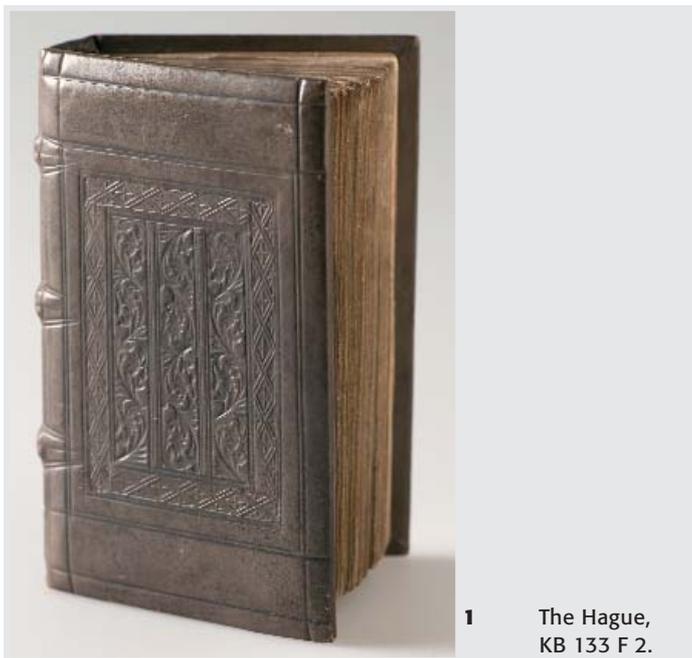
The text is found in manuscript KB 133 F 2 from the Koninklijke Bibliotheek in The Hague and is entitled '*Hoemen alle boucken bewaren sal om eewelic te duerene*' (How one should preserve all books to last eternally). The text features eight practical guidelines on the preservation of books, as well as explicit statements on the consequences of ignoring these guidelines. The text has never been fully studied, even though it was noted for the first time fifteen years ago [4]. This article presents a discussion of the text within the context of the manuscript and a description of each individual guideline in light of present-day approaches to book preservation. An edition and translation of the text are added as an appendix.

Manuscript The Hague, KB 133 F 2

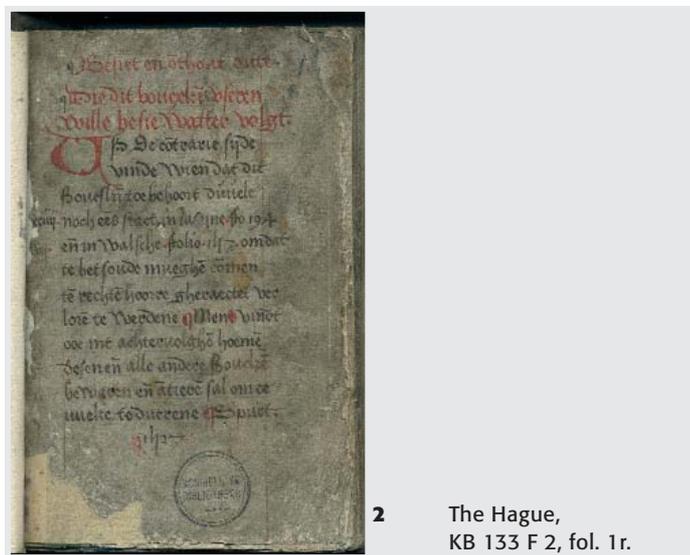
KB 133 F 2 is a miscellany of 120 x 79 mm and contains 180 folia. The main text is written in one hand: a *littera hybrida*, in black ink; rubrication and punctuation, added by the same hand, are in red ink. The manuscript has a blind embossed leather binding dating back to the second half of the nineteenth century, made by the Leiden binder J.A. Loebèr (Fig 1). The Koninklijke Bibliotheek in The Hague bought the manuscript in 1897, as part of the collection of Johannes Acquoy (1829-1896) along with 75 incunabula and 55 other manuscripts. The entire collection was bought by Dr W.G.C. Byvanck, librarian of the Koninklijke Bibliotheek, for 1350 guilders (Leerintveld 1998: 88).

Ownership inscriptions at various locations in the main text allow us to assess the manuscript's provenance. These inscriptions also indicate the great value attached to the manuscript by its owners. Exemplary of the latter is the last line of the ownership inscription at the beginning: 'This book belongs to Margrieten vander Spurt, daughter of Jacop, who lives in Ghendt up Tsant near Sint Lievens or Keyserpoorten. And if she should be tired with this paper, then Janne, her sister, should have it or Anthonijne van den Buere, if Janne refuses it. And if neither of them wants it [the book], then it will belong to her brothers Lieven, Jan or Gheert van der Spurt, all of whom are marshals. If, nevertheless, this book should be sold, *which has cost flesh and blood*, one should share the price with the poor (our emphasis).' [5]

Evidently, the owner of this book was Margriet van der Spurt, an inhabitant of Gent (present-day Belgium). The author of this ownership inscription apparently wanted the book to remain within the family, noting that the book should go from Margriet to either her sister Janne, one Anthonijne van den Burre or one of Margriet's three brothers, all three of whom tended horses (the Middle Dutch term '*maersscalke*' [marshal] only later developed into the military term). The same ownership inscription, in both French and Latin, appears elsewhere in the main text of the manuscript (ff. 109r-109v; fol. 128r). The last lines of the manuscript, another ownership inscription in the same hand as the main text and the other inscriptions, indicate that the



1 The Hague, KB 133 F 2.



2 The Hague, KB 133 F 2, fol. 1r.

manuscript did remain within the family: *Joannae vander Spurt ende haren broeders ofte sisters filii Jacob* (Joannae [Janne] van der Spurt and her brothers or sisters, children of Jacop) are now said to own the manuscript (fol. 180v).

Other inscriptions provide more information about the date and scribe of the manuscript. Three inscriptions date the manuscript to 1527 [6]. Even though the scribe responsible for the main text and rubrication is not mentioned by name, it is clear that he or she had a personal connection to the Van der Spurt family. The frequent ownership inscriptions are written in the scribe's hand and form part of the main text; moreover, cross-references to these inscriptions are included in the table of contents of the manuscript. It is possible that Margriet van der Spurt was personally responsible for copying the texts in this manuscript: her name occurs frequently and the text *'Hoemen alle boucken bewaren sal om eewelic te duerene'* is signed with *'Spurt Margr'* (fol. 6v).

The contents of KB 133 F 2 could be termed devotional (various hymns, prayers and biblical texts), but the book was probably used as an educational treatise for children (Polhout 2006: 29-31). Various included texts have a didactic nature, such as a text entitled *'eenen gheestelicken A.B.C.'* (a spiritual A.B.C. [7]), while others focus on the ways in which children should treat their parents. The latter is illustrated by texts with running headers like *'in quade kinderen sal niemant verblijden'* (evil children will not make anyone happy) and *'vader ende moeder moet men in alder noot bijstaen'* (one must help one's father and mother in every need [8]). Did Margriet van der Spurt compose this miscellany in order to educate her brothers and sisters, or were the texts meant for Margriet herself? In the latter case, Margriet would still have been a child and the scribe may have been one of her parents.

The text *'Hoemen alle boucken bewaren sal om eewelic te duerene'* immediately follows the first ownership inscription and is the first stand-alone text of the manuscript. This prominent place within the manuscript indicates that, within the first half of the sixteenth century, the proper care of books was a vital part of the Van der Spurt children's education.

Eight Guidelines

The eight guidelines on the preservation of books are written on ff. 2r-4v. In the remainder of the article, they are cited and analysed individually.

1. Keep dry and free from dust.

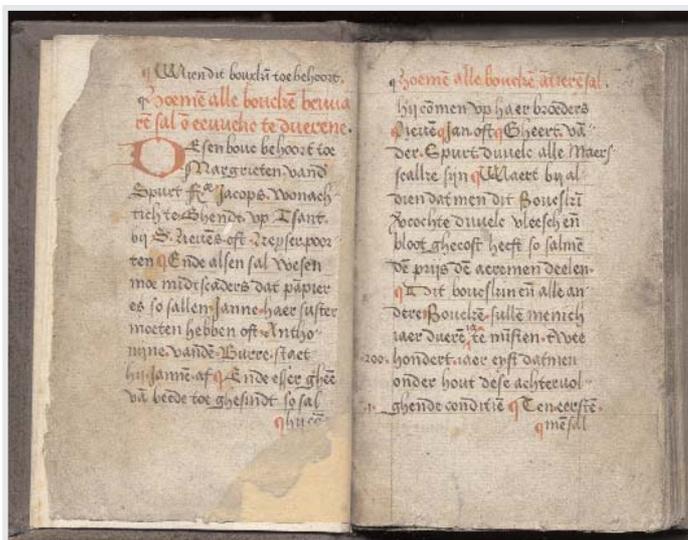
'Ten eersten, men sal dit boucskin ende al andere boucken diemen bewaren wilt om eewelic te duerene, weerse sijn van pampiere, fransijne oft parkemente, altoos bauwen liggbene daert alder droochst es ende gheen ghestoff en comt oft en valt.' (First, one should always keep this book and all other books that one wants to preserve to last eternally, whether they are of paper, 'fransijne' or parchment, lying where it is driest and where no dust comes or falls.) (Fig 3: fol. 2r; Fig 4: fol. 2v)

The recognition of the need for dry and clean storage conditions appears to be of all times. Nowadays, archives, libraries and museums establish strict standards for relative humidity levels and cleaning frequency in their repositories, with a preference for dry conditions. Similarly, this first medieval guideline strongly recommends to keep books *'liggbene daert alder droochst es'* (lying where it is driest) and, further on in the text, the author points out the danger of wet hands and other forms of water damage.

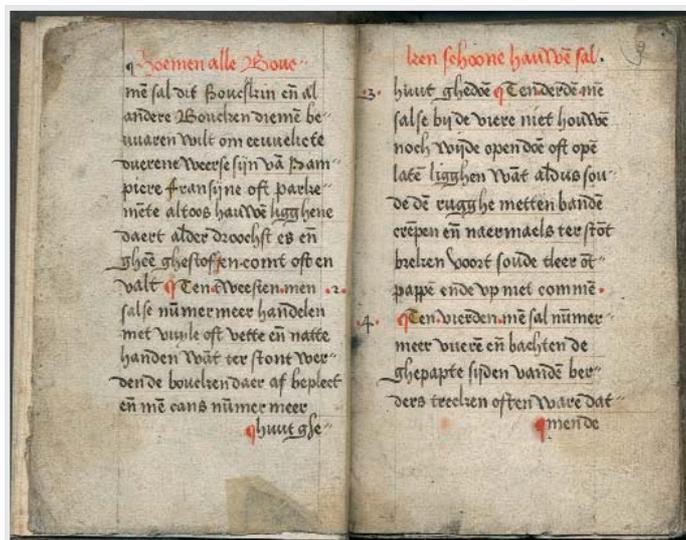
The advice to choose a storeroom where *'gheen ghestoff en comt oft en valt'* (no dust comes or falls) also corresponds with present-day practice. Dust on books has a hygroscopic effect and may increase the risk of biological damage from mould or insects (Brokerhof et al 2007). Dust particles can also cause mechanical and chemical deterioration leading to damage to the edges and the binding of a book. Proper sanitation in the depots should, therefore, never be ignored. Something, apparently, they were already aware of five hundred years ago; this first medieval preservation rule has not lost its topicality yet.

2. No dirty, fatty or wet hands.

'Ten tweesten, men salse nummermeer handelen met vuijle oft vette ende natte handen, want ter stont werden de



3 The Hague, KB 133 F 2, ff. 1v-2r.



4 The Hague, KB 133 F 2, ff. 2v-3r.

boucken daer af beplect ende men cans nummermeer huut ghedoen.' (Second, one should never handle them with dirty or fatty and wet hands, because immediately the books will be stained and one is never able to get this out.) (Fig 4: ff. 2v-3r)

Just as the compiler of this medieval guideline, the present-day conservator still experiences the great persistency of certain stains: '*men cans nummermeer huut ghedoen*' (one is never able to get this out). In 2007, the Dutch Association of Conservators (Restauratoren Nederland) devoted a symposium in the Koninklijke Bibliotheek to the removal of stains by means of aqueous treatments, which proved that most of the existing methods still have serious shortcomings [9]. Avoidance of staining lies at the heart of the medieval rule and current regulations still hold that prevention is better than cure.

Stains are typically considered disturbing and book and paper conservators are often called upon to clean the affected objects. Presently, however, some people argue that, in certain cases, a stain or discolouration may constitute a meaningful feature of a document, and therefore had better not be removed. An example of stains with a book historical value is a printer's so-called 'ink fingers' which have been left in some manuscripts: these black smears and fingerprints may serve as clues that the respective manuscript was the printer's copy (Leerintveld 2002). Another interesting approach to stains has recently been presented by Kathryn Rudy. After determining which pages were most heavily stained, she used this information to study patterns of use in medieval manuscripts. In addition to impressions left by thumbs and fingers, she was also able to identify traces left behind by wet lips and a greasy nose on a church missal page, which, apparently, had been repeatedly kissed by a priest (Rudy 2010).

3. Keep away from heat and do not leave wide open.

'Ten derden, men salse bij de viere niet houwen, noch wijde open doen oft open laten ligghen, want aldus soude den rugghe metten banden crempen ende naermaels ter stont breken, voort soude leer ontpappen ende up niet commen.' (Third, one should not keep them near the fire, nor open them wide or leave them lying open, because this would make the spine shrink with the cords and would make them break immediately afterwards, and then the leather would detach and come to nothing.) (Fig 4: fol. 3r)

Heat may cause shrinkage effects on the *rugghe* (book spine) and the *banden* (cords). As a result, the construction of the book can be damaged in such a way that it breaks to pieces when opened. Even though we no longer need an open fire to keep us warm and provide light in our libraries, we still consider temperature control a primary requirement in collection care today: high temperatures induce physical deformations and speed up the chemical aging processes.

Evidently, in 1527 one was aware of the fact that opening books (too) widely causes tension in the book spine, which may lead to damage. The risk of damage is highest if the spine is glued onto the book block, as was often the case in medieval books. The medieval guideline also discourages leaving a book lying open for a long time. A lengthy opened position of a book

may have the same impact as the short action of opening a book (too) widely. Another possible danger of leaving your book in this position can be illustrated by the story of a cat, which urinated over the pages of a manuscript, which had been left open during the night. A testimony to this peculiar story is found in a manuscript in the Historisches Archiv in Cologne. On fol. 68r of this manuscript, the scribe left part of the page open due to a stain and drew a picture of a cat, accompanied by the following text:

'Hic non defectus est, sed cattus minxit desuper nocte quadam. Confundatur pessimus cattus qui minxit super librum ostum in nocte Daventrie, et consimiliter omnes alii propter illum. Et cavendum valde ne permittantur libri aperti per noctem uni cattie venire possunt.' (Here is nothing missing, but a cat urinated on this during a certain night. Cursed be the pesty cat that urinated over this book during the night in Deventer and because of it many others [other cats] also. And beware well not to leave open books at night where cats can come.) [10]

Finally, the rule mentions one further consequence of shrinkage and tension due to careless opening: the leather applied as book cover could *ontpappen* (detach) and *up niet commen* (come to nothing). The condition of leather bound books is an important issue in current conservation practice. Damage to leather bookbinding is a serious and frequently occurring problem and the development of adequate conservation materials and methods is still ongoing. Even though this rule from the Middle Ages addresses the issue of damaged leather bindings, it is an empirical fact of present-day book conservators that the leather of medieval bookbindings is in a better condition than that of more modern bindings, especially those of the nineteenth century.

4. Do not tear off pastedowns.

'Ten vierden, men sal nummermeer vueren ende bachten de ghepapte sijden vanden berders trecken, often ware dat men de boucken bederven wilde, want als die gheraken af te gaene, so sal den bouc ter stont ontbinden ende commen up niet.' (Fourth, one shall never pull the pasted sides from the boards, at the front or back side, unless one wants to spoil the books, because when these are removed, then the book will disintegrate immediately and come to nothing.) (Fig 4: fol. 3r; Fig 5: fol. 3v)

Evidently, the *ghepapte sijden* (pasted sides) on the *berders* (boards), the so-called pastedowns, were so popular that they were sometimes removed. Pastedowns occasionally originated from another manuscript (*membra disjecta*) and had been used again by the bookbinder. Motives to tear pastedowns off may derive from the contents of the *membra disjecta* or their material, usually parchment.

The worrying prognosis that the removal of pastedowns from boards would instantly cause books to '*ontbinden ende commen up niet*' (disintegrate and come to nothing) may appear somewhat exaggerated. It is, however, a valid point. Pastedowns are an integral part of the binding construction, and contribute effectively to its strength. If the pastedowns were removed, the

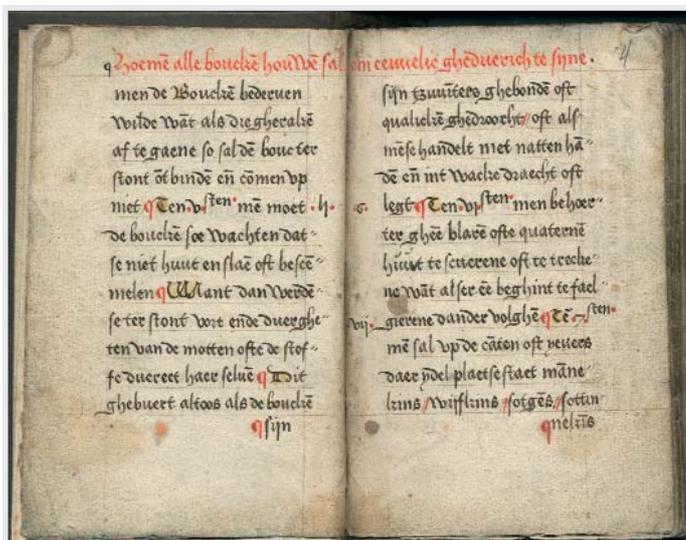
binding structure could be affected and/or become more vulnerable. Alternatively, this fourth guideline appears to warn against a violation of the original appearance of the book. The maintenance of authenticity is a frequently pursued, though not undisputed criterion for conservators and an important theme in the conservation-ethical discussion which has taken place with altering intensity since the 1980s (Schinzel 2004).

5. Prevent mould.

‘Ten Vsten, men moet de boucken soe wachten datse niet buut en slaen oft bescommelen. Want dan werdense ter stont vort ende duergbeten van de motten, ofte de stoffe duereet haer selven. Dit ghebuert altoos als de boucken sijn tzwinters ghebonden oft qualicken ghedroocht, oft als mense handelt met natten handen ende int wacke draecht oft legt.’ (Fifth, one should protect the books so that they do not get mildewed or mouldy. Otherwise they will be eaten through by moths, or the material will eat itself. This always happens if the books are bound in winter or dried inadequately, or if one handles them with wet hands and carries and lays them into moisture). (Fig 5: ff. 3v-4r)

This fifth rule warns against mould and subsequent damage by insects or even the complete decomposition of the book. The latter is vividly described as a process by which *‘de stoffe duereet haer selven’* (the material eats itself). The identification of moisture as the culprit fits in well with present-day insights: water damage causing complete or partial wetness of a book could lead to mould growth within a single day.

Of the various causes of humidity mentioned in the medieval text, the use of wet hands is directly comprehensible. The other causes appear to be connected to the practice of the book-binder. The preparation of the materials and the glueing of the components create a damp condition which—if *‘qualicken ghedroocht’* (inadequately dried)—may have problematic consequences. The notion that moisture-induced damage *altoos* (always) occurred in books which were bound *tzwinters* (in winter time) could be explained by the fact that the process of drying at lower temperatures in winter takes more time and



5 The Hague, KB 133 F 2, ff. 3v-4r.

that contemporary binders were not inclined to take this into account.

Water damage is one of the risks present collection keepers are still often confronted with. Well-known causes include leakages, overflow of outlets, wear of service-pipes and rebuilding activities in combination with heavy rainfall (Wellheiser 2005). In 2007, the Koninklijke Bibliotheek, the National Archives and the former Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage (ICN [11]) organised workshops on the assessment of water-related risks and the development of adequate mitigation strategies, which shows that, today, the prevention of damage by moisture and mould still has a high priority.

6. Do not rip out a page or gathering.

‘Ten Vlsten, men behoerter gheen blaren ofte quaternen buut te scuereene oft te treckene, want alser een beghint te faelgierene dander volghen.’ (Sixth, one should not tear out or rip off pages or gatherings, because if one starts to fall others will follow.) (Fig 5: fol. 4r)

Of course, tearing out a page or quire is fundamentally wrong. Removal of pages may create so much free space in the book block that the whole construction of the book will suffer. If the sewing threads or cords have been torn, pages from adjacent gatherings may also come loose (*‘alser een beghint te faelgierene dander volghen’* [if one starts to fall others will follow]). The threat that damage may expand severely and thus prompt action is necessary has also been noted in Richard de Bury’s *‘Philobiblon’*: ‘Whenever defects are noticed in books, they should be promptly repaired, since nothing spreads more quickly than a tear and a rent which is neglected at the time will have to be repaired afterwards with usury.’ (De Bury: ch. 17)

It goes without saying that ripping off pages from a book is still not tolerated today. Regrettably, examples of this kind of damage are occasionally attested and often derive from wantonness: almost every modern library collection has faced the brutal theft of maps and prints from books made available in the reading room, even if the area had been well monitored. The optimization of security measures is, therefore, a permanent point of attention. The present-day Security Manager and Head of Collection Care could be considered modern equivalents of the armarius and costerinne watching over the medieval monastic library.

7. Do not doodle in the margins.

‘Ten 7sten, men sal up de canten oft yevers daer ydel plaetse staet mannekens, wijfkins, sotgens, sottinnekins oft eeneghe taeterijnghe maken oft scriven, want het staet so vuylic als een bouc alsoe besabbert ende bemasschert es.’ (Seventh, one should [not] make or draw little figures of men, women, male or female fools or any pictures in the margins or elsewhere where there is enough room, because it looks so dirty if a book is spoiled or wasted in this way.) (Fig 5: fol. 4r; Fig 6: fol. 4v)

The seventh guideline prohibits the filling of blank areas of the page with silly drawings or writing, as these would spoil the manuscript. As such, this guideline aims to preserve the outer appearance of the book. A parallel plea against *doodling* can

be found in De Bury's 'Philobiblon': 'But the handling of books is specially to be forbidden to those shameless youths, who as soon as they have learned to form the shapes of letters, straight-way, if they have the opportunity, become unhappy commentators, and wherever they find an extra margin about the text, furnish it with monstrous alphabets, or if any other frivolity strikes their fancy, at once their pen begins to write it.' (De Bury: ch. 18)

Present-day historical research, however, has come to value markings in the margin, in particular the so-called *maniculae* or 'finding aids' (little hands or figures designed to draw attention to a significant passage). Van der Poel, for example, argues that the *maniculae* 'offer a unique opportunity to come into contact with the way a literary work was read centuries ago' (Van der Poel 1985: 505). By analysing the passages marked by finding aids in a Middle Dutch manuscript of the 'Roman de la Rose' (The Hague, KB KA 24), Van der Poel manages to identify the interests of a fourteenth-century reader of the book. Apparently, he was particularly interested in misogynist remarks (Van der Poel 1985: 510/511).

Prohibiting the use of margins for inscriptions is remarkable and would not have been appreciated by everyone in the Middle Ages. In scholastic circles, for example, it was normal to leave extra wide margins for readers to make notes or glosses. Even the scribe of manuscript KB 133 F 2, who was also responsible for writing the guidelines on book preservation, made frequent use of the margins. The margins of his table of contents, for example, contain several titles of texts (ff. 170v-171v). More suspiciously, the eighth preservation guideline was also added in the margin.

8. Do not give your books to children.

'Ten 8sten, men sal huut gheenen boucken diemen ter beeren hauwen wilt, de kinderen laten leeren. Want wat in haerlieder handen comt, soe wij sien het blijfter oft het bedeerft.' (Eighth, one should not let children learn from any books that one wants to preserve. Because whatever comes into their

hands, as we see it, it either stays there or it is ruined.) (Fig 6: fol. 4v: margin)

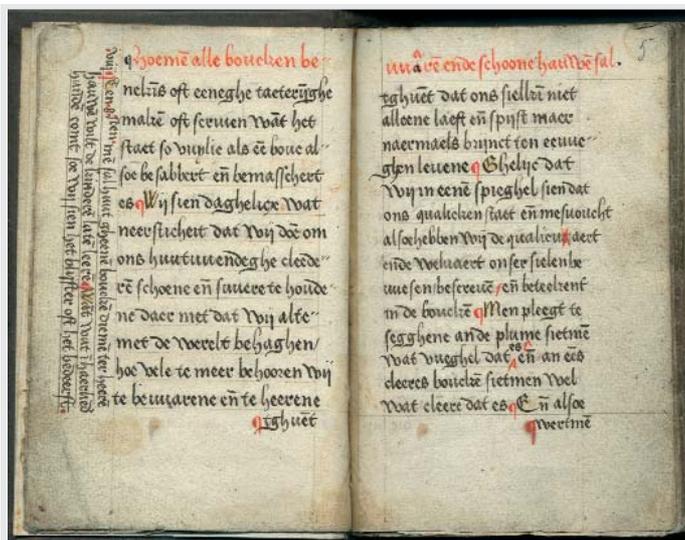
It is hard to think of a clearer warning than this: never give your book to a child, you will either lose it or it will be ruined! Where does this last warning in The Hague, KB 133 F 2 come from and why was it added, at a later stage, in the margin? If the manuscript was indeed meant for Margriet van der Spurt while she was still a child, does the later addition of this rule indicate that she had mistreated the book in any way? Could she be personally responsible for the fact that the original binding of manuscript is now lost? We can only speculate.

Like the last two guidelines, this rule has a parallel in the work of De Bury, who seems less harsh on the risk posed by children: 'Nor let a crying child admire the pictures in the capital letters, lest he soil the parchment with wet fingers; for a child instantly touches whatever he sees' (De Bury: ch. 17). Monastic rules also indicate that it was believed that not everyone should be allowed to make use of books. The rules of the Augustine convent of Mary Magdalene in Hoorn, for example, mention the following precaution: *'Ghenen onkundigen luden sal men boeken linen.'* (One shall not lend out books to ignorant people.) (Meinsma 1903: 115)

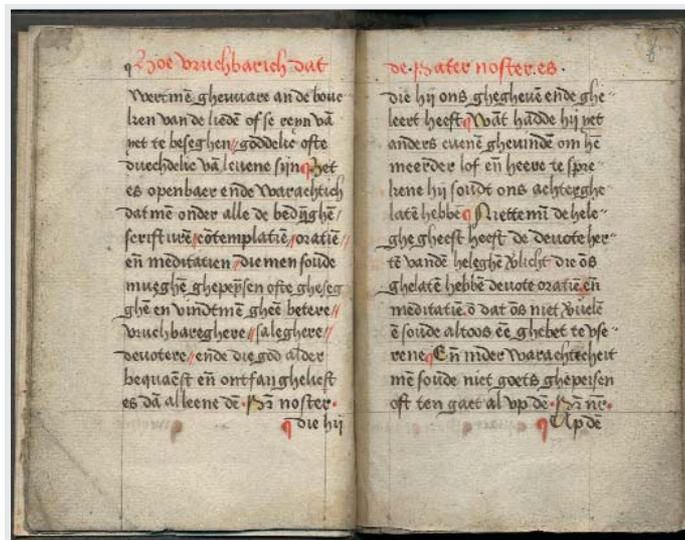
Conclusion

The eight guidelines on book preservation in The Hague, KB 133 F 2 give us a unique insight into the way people in the later Middle Ages thought about preserving books and the risks involved. These guidelines indicate that the causes of deterioration and degradation identified today were already acknowledged back then. In specifying regulations on access, handling and storage, this text marks the onset of the practise of book preservation protocols.

In the introduction to the list, the scribe remarks that, if his rules were followed, 'this book and all other books' could last eternally 'yes, at least two hundred years'! The fact that, aside from the original binding, the manuscript of the Van der Spurt family from 1527 is still available in the Koninklijke Bibliotheek



6 The Hague, KB 133 F 2, ff. 4v-5r.



7 The Hague, KB 133 F 2, ff. 5v-6r.

All images: Koninklijke Bibliotheek, The Hague.

in The Hague of 2012, proves that the manuscript has far exceeded its expected life span.

Almost five hundred years ago, the scribe added a moral at the end of his eight lines: a mirror informs us whether our clothes are in good condition; likewise, our books tell us the condition of our souls. The present authors fully support this moral and hope that their readers too will bear in mind that (fol. 5r): *‘Men pleegt te segghene an de plume sietmen wat vueghel dat es ende an eens cleercs boucken sietmen wel wat cleerc dat es.’* (They say that one can recognise a bird by its plumage, and one can recognise a clerk by his books.)

Appendix

The Hague, KB 133 F 2, ff. 1r-6r (Figs 2-7)

> *Justification of Editing Method:* The aim of this edition is to provide a usable and legible text; this is why we have decided to normalize some features. We have retained the Middle Dutch spelling, but normalised the letters i,j,u,v and w to modern usage: i or u when they represent a vowel and j, v and w when they represent a consonant. Abbreviations have been expanded, without justification. We have adapted the use of punctuation and capitals to normal usage, as well as added indentation to facilitate the legibility of the text. We have added a translation, which is faithful to the Middle Dutch text, without providing a word-by-word translation.

Edition

- 1r *Die dit boucxkin useren wille besie watter volgt.*
Up de contrarie sijde vinde wien dat dit boucskin toebehoort, dwelc noch eens staet in Latijne folio 194 ende in Walsche folio 157, omdat te bet soude mueghen commen ten rechten hoorre, gheraectet verlorene te werdene. Men vindt ooc int achtervolghen hoemen desen ende alle andere boucken bewaren ende antieren sal om eewelic te duerene. Spurt. 1527.
- 1v *Hoemen alle boucken bewaren sal om eewelic te duerene.*
Desen bouc behoort toe Margrieten vander Spurt filiae Jacops, wonachtich te Ghendt up Tsant bij Sint Lievens oft Keyserpoorten. Ende alsen sal wesen moe midtscaders dat pampier, es so sallen Janne haer suster moeten hebben oft Anthonijne vanden Buere, staet hij Jannen af. Ende esser gheen van beede toe
- 2r *ghesindt, so sal hij commen up haer broeders Lieven, Jan oft Gheert van der*

Translation

Whoever wants to use this book, look at what follows

On the other side, you will find to whom this book belongs, which is stated again in Latin on folio 194 and in French on folio 157, so that it will be returned to its rightful owner, should it gets lost. In the following text, one will also find how one should preserve and handle this and every other book in order for it to last eternally. Spurt. 1527.

How one should preserve all books to last eternally

This book belongs to Margrieten vander Spurt, daughter of Jacop, who lives in Ghendt up Tsant near Sint Lievens or Keyserpoorten. And if she should be tired with this paper, then Janne, her sister, should have it or Anthonijne van den Buere, if Janne refuses it. And if neither of them want it, then it will belong to her brothers Lieven, Jan or Gheert van der Spurt, all of whom are marshals.

Spurt, dwelc alle maerscalke sijn. Waert bij aldiën datmen dit boucskin vercochte, dwelc vleesch ende bloot ghecost heeft, so salmen den prijs den aere men deelen. Dit boucskin ende alle anderen boucken sulmen menich jaer dueren, ja te minsten twee hondert jaer, eyst datmen onder hout dese achtervolghende conditien.

2v *Ten eersten, men sal dit boucskin ende al andere boucken diemen bewaren wilt om eewelic te duerene, weerse sijn van pampiere, fransijne oft parkemete, altoos hauwen ligghene daert alder droochst es ende gheen ghestoff en comt oft en valt.*

Ten tweesten, men salse nummermeer handelen met vuyle oft vette ende natte handen, want ter stont werden de boucken daer af beplect ende men cans nummermeer huut ghedoen.

3r *Ten derden, men salse bij de viere niet houwen, noch wijde open doen oft open laten ligghen, want aldus soude den rugghe metten banden crempen ende naermaels ter stont breken, voort soude tleer ontpappen ende up niet commen.*

Ten vierden, men sal nummermeer vueren ende bachten de ghepapte sijden vanden berders trecken,

3v *often ware dat men de boucken bederven wilde, want als die gheraken af te gaene, so sal den bouc ter stont ontbinden ende commen up niet.*

Ten Vsten, men moet de boucken soe wachten datse niet huut en slaen oft bescemmelen. Want dan werdense ter stont vort ende duergheten van de motten, ofte de stoffe duereet haer selven. Dit ghebuert altoos als de boucken sijn tzwinters ghebonden oft qualicken ghedroocht, oft alsmense handelt met natten handen ende int wacke draecht oft legt.

If, nevertheless, this book should be sold, which has cost flesh and blood, one should share the price with the poor. This book and all other books shall last many years, yes at least two hundred years, if one shall uphold the following conditions.

First, one should always keep this book and all other books that one wants to preserve to last eternally, whether they are of paper, ‘fransijne’ or parchment, lying where it is driest and where no dust comes or falls.

Second, one should never handle them with dirty or fatty and wet hands, because immediately the books will be stained and one is never able to get this out.

Third, one should not keep them near the fire, nor open them wide or leave them lying open, because this would make the spine shrink with the cords and would make them break immediately afterwards, and then the leather would detach and come to nothing.

Fourth, one shall never pull the pasted sides from the boards, at the front or back side, unless one wants to spoil the books, because when these are removed, then the book will disintegrate immediately and come to nothing.

Fifth, one should protect the books so that they do not get mildewed or mouldy. Otherwise they will be eaten through by moths, or the material will eat itself. This always happens if the books are bound in winter or dried wrongly, or if one handles them with wet hands and carries and lays them into moisture.

Ten Vlsten, men behoerter gheen blaren ofte quateren huut te scuere oft te treckene, want alser een beghint te faelgierene dan der volghen.

Ten 7sten, men sal up de canten oft yevers daer ydel plaetse staet mannekens, 4v wijfkins, sotgens, sottinnekens oft eeneghe taeterijnghe maken oft scriven, want het staet so vuylic als een bouc alsoe besabbert ende bemasschert es.

Wij sien daghelix wat neersticheit dat wij doen om ons huutwendeghe cleederen schoene ende suvere te houdene daer met dat wij altemet de werelt behaghen, hoe vele te meer behooren wij te bewarene 5r ende te heerene tghuent dat ons sielkin niet alleene laeft ende spijst, maer naermaels brijnt ten eeweghen levene. Ghelijc dat wij in eenen spiegel sien dat ons qualicken staet ende mesvoucht, alsoe hebben wij de qualicu aert ende welvaert onser sielen bewesen, bescreven ende beteekent in de boucken. Men pleegt te segghene an de plume sietmen wat vueghel dat es ende an eens cleercs boucken sietmen wel wat cleerc dat es. 5v Ende alsoe wertmen gheware an de boucken van de lieden of se reyn van yet te beseghen, goddelic ofte duechdelic van levene sijn.

Het es openbaer ende warachtich datmen onder alle de bedijnghen, scripturen, contemplatien, oratien ende meditatie diemen soude mueghe ghepeynsen ofte ghesegghen, en vindtmen gheen betere, vruchbareghere, saleghere, devotere ende die God alder bequaemst ende ontfanghelicst es dan alleene 6r den Pater Noster, die Hij ons ghegeven ende gheleert heeft. Want hadde Hij yet anders cuenen ghevinden om Hem meerdere lof ende heere te spreken, Hij soudt ons achterghelaten hebben. Niettemin de Heleghe Gheest heeft

Sixth, one should not tear out or rip off pages or gatherings, because if one starts to fall others will follow.

Seventh, one should [not] make or draw little figures of men, women, male or female fools or any pictures in the margins or elsewhere where there is enough room, because it looks so dirty if a book is spoiled or wasted in this way.

Daily we see the efforts we make to keep our external clothing clean and immaculate, with which we please the world; how much more should we preserve and guard that which does not only refresh and feeds our soul, but brings us afterwards to the eternal life. Just as we see in a mirror our horrible state and misery, so do we prove the horrible nature and welfare of our souls, written and signified in the books. They say that one can recognise a bird by its plumage, and one can recognise a clerk by his books. And so it will be revealed by the books of people, whether they are clean, god-fearing or good of living.

It is known and truthful that, among the stipulations, scriptures, contemplations, orations and meditations that one could think of or say, one shall find no better, more fruitful, more blessed, more devoted and more fitting to God and most impressionable than only the Pater Noster, that He gave us and taught us. Because if He could have found anything to give Him more glory and lordship, He would have left it for us. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit has enlightened the devoted hearts of the saints, that left us devoted orations and meditations, so that we

de devote herten vanden heleghe verlicht, die ons ghelaten hebben devote oratien ende meditatie, om dat ons niet vervelen en soude altoos een ghebet te userene. Ende inder warachticheit men soude niet goets ghepeisen oft ten gaet al up den Pater Noster.

would not get bored and would always have a prayer to use. And, in truth, one could not think of anything good, or it goes back to the Pater Noster.

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Endnotes

- [1] Cologne, Historisches Archiv, Kartäusers, RH 12. A partial translation of this text is published in Marks 1974: 29-33. The authors of this article plan to devote a future publication to this text.
- [2] The Hague, KB 73 H 2, ff. 59v-60r: 'int uutlenen noch verderft noch verloren en warden'.
- [3] The Hague, KB 73 G 22, fol. 20r: '[...] et diligenter prospicere, ne in eis tineae vel alia quilibet corruptela infectum quid vel exesum sit' en '[...] ne vel pulvere vel alia quilibet sorde maculentur.' For a description of these consuetudines, see: Lem 1991.
- [4] The text is first mentioned in: Hogenelst and Van Oostrom 1995: 42/43; see also: Oosterman et al 2006: 55/56; Polhout 2006.
- [5] The Hague, KB 133 F 2, ff. 1v-2r: 'Desen bouc behoort toe Margrieten vander Spurt filiae Jacops wonachtich te Ghendt up Tsant bij Sin Lieuens oft keyserpoorten. Ende alsen sal wesen moe midtscaders dat pampiet es so sallen Janne haer suster moeten hebben of Anthonijne vanden Burre staet hij Janne af. Ende Esser ghene van beede toe ghesindt so sal hij comen up haer broeders Lieuen, Jan oft Gheert van der Spurt, dueelc alle Maersscalke sijn. Waert bij aldien datmen dit Boucskin vercochte, dueelc vleesch ende bloot ghecost heeft, so salmen den prijs den aeremen deelen.'
- [6] The Hague, KB 133 F 2, ff. 1r, 109v, 180v. An inscription on fol. 27r dated the manuscript to 1526.
- [7] Similar ABC-texts, combined with devotional texts, are found in other educational manuscripts from the fifteenth century onwards (Rudy 2006).
- [8] The Hague, KB 133 F 2, ff. 153v-155r. Other texts concerned with children's treatment of their parents can be found on ff. 130v-140r, 150r-161r, 178v-180v.
- [9] In the preparation of this meeting samples of coffee-cup-stained paper were distributed among Dutch paper conservators; the results of their trials to remove the coffee stain were presented and discussed at the symposium.
- [10] Köln, Historisches Archiv, G.B. quarto, 249, fol. 68r. The translation was adapted from Schenkeveld-Van der Dussen 1993: 79.
- [11] Presently Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed [RCE]).

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