

Italian Paleography Website Project “Documenting Art and Architecture”

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Documenting Art and Architecture: An Overview

Documentary evidence is essential for understanding the art and architecture of the medieval and Renaissance world. Inventories and account books often reveal how space was used and can define what materials and objects were collected and necessary for various projects or activities. Letters are revelatory about relationships between individual patrons and artists and about how materials functioned in the production of works of art. Artist’s contracts can provide incredible details about the conception behind the work of art. The handwriting of the documents can tell us about the date of the manuscript and the social and economic status of the writer or scribe, therefore providing essential evidence for the context of the document.

The Assignment

In pairs you will examine **five manuscripts** on the Italian paleography website and discuss their related questions, taking notes on the most interesting aspects of each manuscript. These manuscripts and their questions are listed below. Note that some of the manuscripts include transcriptions and entries with further information and others do not. We will discuss these manuscripts in detail in class.

> The Sanvito Agreement, 1466

https://italian-paleography.library.utoronto.ca/islandora/object/italianpaleography%3AIP_319

[Los Angeles, *The Getty Research Institute*, MS 900255]

- How would you define this manuscript?
- What is represented in the image?
- After reading the transcription of the document, what can you state about the content of the document?
- Who do you think wrote up the document? Why?

> The Alberighi account books, 1501-1542

https://italian-paleography.library.utoronto.ca/islandora/object/italianpaleography%3AIP_025

[Chicago, Newberry VAULT Case MS 110]

https://italian-paleography.library.utoronto.ca/islandora/object/italianpaleography%3AIP_321

[Berkeley, University of California, Bancroft Library, BANC MS UCB 54]

- Note that there are two different but related manuscripts to examine here, one at the Newberry and the other at the library at the University of California, Berkeley. How do you think they relate to one another?
- How are the pages used? Why do you think there is blank space on the page?
- What is the purpose of these manuscripts?
- Scroll to the second page of the Newberry manuscript. Why do you think some sections have a line going through them?
- Check out the binding of these manuscripts? What does it tell you about the documents?
- Why include these pages in a pedagogical guide related to art and architecture?

> Michelangelo inventory, 1529-1530

https://italian-paleography.library.utoronto.ca/islandora/object/italianpaleography%3AIP_320
[Los Angeles, Getty Research Institute MS 860787]

- How does this document compare to the Alberighi account book you were just studying?
- How many different hands do you see in this manuscript?
- There is no transcription available for this manuscript online, can you try to transcribe the first lines of the document? Why is it so difficult to read?

> Michelangelo letter, 1545

https://italian-paleography.library.utoronto.ca/islandora/object/italianpaleography%3AIP_030
[Chicago, Newberry Library, VAULT Case Wing MS ZW 535.B943]

*Please listen to this wonderful 18-minute podcast about this letter before responding below
<https://www.newberry.org/shelf-life>

- What is the purpose of this letter?
- How should we define this handwriting?
- Why is the style of Michelangelo's handwriting significant for understanding Michelangelo as an artist?
- Why does Bill Wallace think this is an authentic Michelangelo letter?

> Cellini letter, 1565

https://italian-paleography.library.utoronto.ca/islandora/object/italianpaleography%3AIP_036
[Chicago, Newberry Library, VAULT Case MS 5A56/]

- How does this letter compare to the Michelangelo letter?
- What style of script is it in? Is it easier or harder to read?
- What is the purpose of this letter?
- For many years, it was believed that this letter was a fake. Why do you think this is? Did Cellini write this letter?