What is FacsimileFinder.com?

- Commercial website for selling medieval ms. facsimiles
- Structured as a catalog, built with scholars and libraries in mind
- Consolidate all useful information on facsimiles:
  - Historical information on the original manuscript
  - Bibliographic info on the facsimile
  - Pricing

... and then librarians started to use Facsimile Finder in a creative and unexpected way!
So, what is Facsimile Finder for Libraries?

Facsimile Finder for Libraries is a database of all medieval manuscript facsimiles available in a university library. The database connects seamlessly to the library’s catalog to help patrons discover the manuscript facsimile holdings.
What Makes it Unique?

- Manuscript Feature Search
- Keyword Search
- Brief Historical Background of Manuscripts
- High Quality Facsimile Images and Videos
- Facsimile Edition Bibliographic Description
- Connects Directly to Library Catalog
Keyword Search

- **Trinity Apocalypse**
  - Cambridge, Library of the Trinity College, MS.R.16.2

- **Hours of Mary of Burgundy**
  - Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Codex Vindobonensis 1857

- **Petrarca Queriniano**
  - Brescia, Biblioteca Queriniana, INC. G V 15
High Quality Facsimile Images

The Jubilee Bull of Boniface VIII - Antiquorum Habet Fida Relatio

Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Caps. I, fasc. 1, n. 8

Facsimile Edition
Historical Background of Manuscripts

One of the most extraordinary documents in the history of books and one of the unique monuments to book art in general was originally in the possession of Philip the Good, duke of Burgundy (1419-1467). This curious codex is a combination of a panel diptych and a book, in one and the same object. Contemporary panel paintings and miniatures show Philip in prayer before an open book but also before an open diptych. The little book altar enabled Philip to have a devotional object at hand whenever he needed it which was especially designed for his convenience.

A Testimony to a Prince's Piety

The princes of the Late Middle Ages usually possessed two or three main residences but were absent for quite some time every year. If they wanted to exert their rulership they had to move from residence to residence and regularly tour even the most remote corners of their land.

This mobility proved to be very important for the dukes of Burgundy as their realm was still young and their rulership needed to be imposed in all parts of the country. However, this also was a very tiresome task as Burgundy consisted of a number of areas which were not geographically related.

So the ruler often had to cross a foreign land, especially the kingdom of France, to reach certain parts of his realm. During these journeys, the duke did of course not want to do without prayers. Day after day, year after year, Philip the Good made his devotions before this magnificent unique work of art during his travels.

**MANUSCRIPT BOOK DESCRIPTION**

Alternate Titles | Buchaltärchen Philipps des Guten
--- | ---
Origin | Mid 15th century – France
Theme | Private Devotional Books
Style | Gothic
Language | Latin
Patron | Philip the Good, duke of Burgundy
Buchaltärchen Philipps des Guten

Lucerne or Munich: Faksimile Verlag, 1991

Commentary (French, German) by Mazal, Otto; Thoss, Dagmar

Limited Edition: 980 copies

Full-size color reproduction of the entire original document, Book Altar of Philip the Good: the facsimile attempts to replicate the look-and-feel and physical features of the original document; pages are trimmed according to the original format, the binding might not be consistent with the current document binding.

On more than 200 pages, the scientific bilingual commentary to this facsimile edition guides one through the world of the book altar and its owner.

Binding

The wooden panels of the binding, held by sturdy hinges, are bound in brown kidskin leather and decorated with blind embossing. The diptych was hand-gilt.
Connects Directly to Library Catalog

Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Codex 1800

Book Altar of Philip the Good
Facsimile Edition
Both are described as facsimiles in library catalog records.
Case Study: Building a Test Site for the University of Pittsburgh

What we started with was a spreadsheet created by graduate Art History student Alison McCann about 4 years ago

- The limited access spreadsheet is used regularly by student researchers and faculty to find facsimiles in the collection.
- The spreadsheet has been used by Archival Scholars for research purposes (Claudia Haines, Kenneth Wahrenberger).
- Giovanni was given access to our spreadsheet and built a Facsimile Finder for Libraries test site for us.
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First Step: Facsimile Edition Analysis Surveys

- Pitt’s spreadsheet had a lot of older facsimiles, as well as facsimiles that did not have enough descriptive cataloging for Giovanni’s team to be able to tell what kind of facsimiles they were.
- A facsimile edition analysis survey designed by Giovanni’s team was filled out for each of these.
- The majority of these surveys were filled out by Kiana’s Archival Scholar this semester, Kenneth Wahrenberger, whose research focused on facsimiles as reproductions and how interacting with reproductions might change the experience of viewers.
- The surveys aided Kenneth and Kiana in becoming more familiar with facsimile edition types, and helped Giovanni’s team learn more about our holdings and decide which items were actual facsimiles and worthy of the database.
General Look and Feel of the Facsimile

What is the general look-and-feel of the facsimile? *

- It attempts to replicate the look and feel of the original document
- It looks like a regular book

Full vs. Partial vs. Unabridged Facsimiles

Facsimiles may reproduce:
1) the entirety of a document (manuscript, scroll, etc.) as it is today (even if it's a fragment of a manuscript);
2) the entirety of a document as it was in the past; today the document is split in 2 or more fragments kept in the same or different locations, and the facsimile reconstructs the unabridged status of the document, as it was in the past;
3) just a portion of a document as it is today (partial reproduction, i.e. just some folios).

FACSIMILE WITH SINGLE SHELFMARK: it's the replica of a document as it is today (it may be the entire reproduction, or just a portion of the document).

FACSIMILE WITH MORE SHELFMARKS: the typical case of facsimile collecting more fragments is the replica of a manuscript that, once a single codex, is now split among more libraries (e.g. The Lorsch Gospels, now split among the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana and the Biblioteca Documentaria Batthyaneum. The facsimile reunites the two fragments as they originally were an individual manuscript).

Is the facsimile edition a Full or a Partial or an Unabridged reproduction of the original manuscript? *

- FULL: The facsimile is a full reproduction of the original manuscript
- PARTIAL: The facsimile is a partial reproduction of the original manuscript
- UNABRIDGED: The facsimile is a reproduction of a codex that was once an individual document, but it is now split in several fragments kept in one or more locations.
Faculty and Student Feedback

- After the test site was launched, Kiana met with key stakeholders including Pitt’s Head of Special Collections and Archives Jeanann Haas, Music Librarian Jim Cassaro, Head of the Frick Fine Arts Library Kate Joranson, and Medieval and Renaissance Studies Librarian Clare Withers to gather feedback on long term implications and questions, and to discuss vital faculty contacts.
- Kiana reached out to faculty and students across Pitt’s campus to gather feedback.
- Questions asked:
  - Do you find the website helpful (concept, specific features, etc)? Why?
  - In what ways can you envision yourself and students using this site? How can the site facilitate teaching and research?
“For our class session, where they were already working with specific facsimiles in small groups, it was really helpful to be able to point them toward a resource that wasn't Google where they could find a solid introduction to the material. The scope and length of the descriptions were perfect for the kind of basic research work they were doing, and it was a somewhat unexpected bonus that they could compare the items they were looking at with others from the same genre, date, etc. Nearly all of the groups used it as the basis for their presentations.

I'm also considering having them (or perhaps another class, in the future) do some more intensive searching, so as to identify materials they might want to work with later on – it's helpful to have something that actually provides student-friendly context for the materials!

All in all, I think it's a really useful infrastructure for the facsimile collection. Thanks for giving us access!”
“It would be useful for teaching to know what we have here. This would be helpful for my Christians, Muslims, and Jews in the Middle Ages class. One thing that is really helpful with this [database] is that it enables the student to more clearly see the date of the manuscript as opposed to the date of the publication of the facsimile which is something that Pittcat is not great with (or at least not very consistent with).”
Anonymous - Art History PhD Student

“I can see this website being incredibly useful for both teaching and my own research. The project addresses a huge issue in the study of medieval and early modern books, being able to locate and browse the holdings of a collection easily. I have encountered many frustrating library websites, and it can be difficult to know if the result on the screen in front of you is actually representative of the holdings.

In contrast, the design of this website is user friendly and intuitive. It reminds me of online shopping. The like button is helpful for collecting together examples for later review. I really appreciate the use of images alongside the most basic information about the objects, which declutters the page and supports faster browsing. While they have to choose a single view here, it is so much easier to recognize an object you are looking for now that you can see it alongside its name and location from the scrolling page. The filters are helpful and actually attend to the sort of constraints I would want to place on a search (such as collection location or time period produced).”
“I could imagine using this site in research or for teaching. Seeing the codex as an object in the first key image is wonderful, and I hope photos like this remain highly visible.

Even in my own research, this website would allow me to feel more confident about my understanding of various collections' holdings. It would be an engaging way to better familiarize myself with the content of different institutions and better grasp the type of materials that exist broadly. This website would ultimately make collections more accessible to scholars (and perhaps even the public) by leveraging our ready familiarity with online features.”
“If I remember correctly the previous way of finding facsimiles was just to look at that old excel spreadsheet, right? This is way better. I would certainly use this for teaching, as it’s nice to be able to pull up a curated spread of manuscripts. Being able to search by category and time period makes this a lot easier to do!”
Continuing This Work

- Putting out a working version of Facsimile Finder for Libraries for the University of Pittsburgh
- Data Dictionary
- Photographing facsimiles currently without photographs
- Better library catalog records
- Publication of an academic library paper discussing our collaborative work
Thank You