

[Latest news](#)
[News archive](#)
[Find an expert](#)
[Statistics and figures](#)
[Contact us](#)

News and Events

Anglo-Saxon treasures revealed by Parker Library website

28 April 2010

One of the most important collections of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts – for centuries kept at Corpus Christi College – has been entirely digitised, making it the first research library to have every page of its collection captured.



The Parker Library was entrusted to the College in 1574 by Matthew Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury under Queen Elizabeth from 1559 until his death in 1575, and one of the primary architects of the English Reformation.

From today, the Library's treasures have been made available online to anyone with access to the Internet at <http://parkerweb.stanford.edu>.

Within newly constructed vaults, the Parker Library holds more than 550 manuscripts including the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, the earliest history written in English, and the sixth-century St Augustine Gospels - used at the enthronement of the Archbishops at Canterbury.

The ninth-century Anglo-Saxon Chronicle is thought to have been commissioned by Alfred the Great as he pushed for greater use of the language through his educational reforms. The Chronicle is the principal and original source of English history during the Dark Ages. There are various versions, but the Parker Chronicle, known as the A-version, is the oldest manuscript surviving. It is a detailed record of events in English history, year by year,

Useful links

[Stanford University](#)
[Cambridge University Library](#)
[Corpus Christi College](#)
[Parker Library on the web](#)
[BBC slideshow of Parker Library](#)

Featured video and audio

[Cambridge Ideas](#)
[More video and audio](#)

Related pages

[Staff newsletter](#)
[Research Horizons magazine](#)
[Reporter](#)
[Information for staff and students](#)

until 892 AD. Additions to the manuscript include events such as the Battle of Hastings.

The St Augustine Gospels may have been brought from Rome by St Augustine in 597 on his first mission to convert the English. In 1982 it took the place of honour between Pope John Paul II and Archbishop Robert Runcie during the first papal visit to England since the Reformation.

Donnelley Fellow Librarian Christopher de Hamel said: "It is the oldest illustrated Latin Gospel Book in existence. It has been in England longer than any other book. The Archbishops of Canterbury still take their oath of office on it. As a symbol of religion, history and literacy, it is one of the most evocative books in Christendom.

"The Library also includes everything from monastic books from the early Dark Ages to autograph letters from Anne Boleyn, Martin Luther, and the bill for burning Cranmer in 1556."

As well as a free website service for the public, a comprehensive licensed access service exists for institutions and experts around the world who wish to study the manuscripts in the greatest possible detail.

Between them, teams from the College, University Library and Stanford University in the US, digitised almost 200,000 separate pages.

John Hatcher, who oversaw the project, said: "The four-year digitisation and research project has been a triumph of collaboration between Corpus Christi, Cambridge University Library and Stanford University in the United States."

Stanford University Library built and hosts the user-friendly, multi-functional Parker Library website. The US institution also provides electronic storage for images used in the web application.

Other jewels of Parker's collection include the Corpus Glossary (MS 144), one of the earliest witnesses to the English language. Written in the first half of the ninth century, the celebrated alphabetical dictionary includes definitions of well over 2,000 words in Anglo-Saxon, including ones still recognisable today, such as herring and hazel. It remains one of the most important surviving records for the origins of the English language.

Elsewhere, anyone with an interest in art history would be well served in studying the pages of the Bury Bible. Dating from c. 1135, it is one of the greatest illuminated manuscripts and among the most famous books in the Parker Library. It is

believed to have been produced by Master Hugo, one of the earliest documented professional artists in England whose works have survived to the present day.

The project, funded by almost \$6m from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, will allow scholars, researchers and anyone interested in Anglo-Saxon, later medieval and Reformation history, theology and literature, to gain almost complete access to one of the world's most important collections. A new reading room has been built under the Library, along with an alarmed vault for the manuscripts. Tours are also to begin later this year.

[Email this article to a friend](#)