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Habsburg cousins in Brussels and Vienna during the Netherlandish wars, as well as on the rebels' relations with Protestant allies inside the empire, but there are also fields well beyond political history to explore. We know, for example, that a large number of immigrants came to the Dutch Republic from the German-speaking lands in the seventeenth century, but that social group still awaits its historian.

Of course, the most famous German in the sixteenth-century Netherlands was Prince William of Orange, the region's leading noble and leader of the rebellion against Habsburg rule. Not long ago the Instituut voor Nederlandse Geschiedenis in The Hague (www.inghist.nl) completed the heroic task of collecting and digitizing the vast correspondence of William of Orange. One hopes that some equally intrepid historian will, sometime in the coming decades, exploit this extraordinarily helpful database and produce a proper scholarly biography of William, the lack of which has long been a conspicuous lacuna in the historical literature. Perhaps this most important figure will finally get the biographical treatment he deserves.

Not every source can be digitized, to be sure, and there is still an enormous amount of archival material in the Low Countries to be studied. Notarial archives, to name just one example, crowd the shelves of many a Dutch municipal archive. Usually the volumes are organized alphabetically by the notary's clients' names, so sifting through them can be a dauntingly tedious task. Still, with enough application one can unearth in them potential gold mines of data, especially as regards social history. Notarial archives remain among the most underexploited primary sources for this period.

Speculation on future historical research, however, remains merely speculation. What one might hope or expect to appear in the scholarly literature in the coming decades is of course not necessarily what will happen. All told, interpreting the past is a much more satisfying (and safer) occupation than predicting the future. There is little doubt, however, that the early modern Netherlands, in countless ways a Europe in miniature, will continue to provide more than enough fodder for historians for many, many years to come. ☞

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**Most Excellent and Curious Hands: The Future of Paleography
and Related Arts in Early Modern Studies**

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There is a special magic to working in an archive of early modern materials. To hold the letters of Alice Chaucer, Duchess of Suffolk, in one's hands, decode her curious abbreviations, and observe that this formidable dame, whom the Pastons called "the Old Lady" in mixed admiration and caution, signed her household correspondence simply "Alyce," is to engage with the culture and the concerns of the pre-Tudor aristocracy in a way that no print edition allows. (Of course, such an

encounter takes place in Bodley's Modern Papers Reading Room, which adds a certain postmodern level of irony to the encounter.) To read the duchess' letters, however, one must be able to decipher secretary hand, understand its many abbreviations, and know how to handle these frail pieces of paper. Four years, fourteen years, forty years from now, how many scholars will be able to experience these texts firsthand? My future-spective is one of mixed concern and hope as I reflect on this question.

The ability to read (and write) diverse "excellent and curious hands," as Martin Billingsley described them in 1618, attracted great interest in the early modern period. The first English printed handwriting manual was *A booke containing diuers sortes of hands*, an English recension of the 1550 French *Le thresor d'escriture*, translated by Jean de Beuchesne and John Baildon, in 1570. It capitalized on a popular wave of continental models, such as those by Giovannantonio Tagliente, Ludovico Vincentino degli Arrighi, Giovan Francesco Cresci, the Spaniard Francisco Lucas, and Gerardus Mercator. Peter Bales, John Davies, and Richard Mulcaster also produced notable manuals for reading the various styles of English hands; by 1618, Billingsley, in *The Pens Excellencie*, could claim that being able to read and write a variety of hands "give[s] a comely lustre to a perfect pattern" and encouraged this instruction for the benefit of both women and men.

But few scholars today can meet that standard. It is hard to find the financial support to travel to the great repositories of sixteenth-century texts, and even harder to acquire the expertise to work with these materials "in the raw." Training in paleography, codicology, and diplomatics, once a given in the education of Renaissance scholars, has become a luxury item offered only at those large universities that can maintain a textual specialist on the faculty—and as these teachers retire, few of them are being replaced. An informal survey on several electronic discussion boards this summer indicated that few recent PhDs in premodern studies had received any formal training in working with manuscript materials, or even training in how to critique the editorial practices of the texts they were working with; they knew that they shouldn't assume that these editions were entirely accurate, but few had any idea by what criteria they could determine whether the edition represented a reliable edition of the texts they were studying. A number of recent PhDs in sixteenth-century fields admitted that they, like Shakespeare, had "small Latin and less Greek" to read early texts; again, as classicists retire, their universities are not replacing them, to the detriment of their students. As one new professor remarked in an e-mail, "Theoretically I know that there's a big difference between working with a translation of a Renaissance text—even a contemporary one—and being able to understand and appreciate the original material that Sidney or Spenser could read with ease. But I have to proceed as if there is no difference." That e-mail in many ways sums up the worries that inform my future-spective: are we training and accepting a generation of scholars and scholarship that begins from such weak foundations?

Of course, many generations of early modern scholars have proceeded this way, trusting to the small subset of well-trained paleographers and textual critics to produce and critique the texts that the majority used. True, indeed—and

acceptable enough in a scholarly climate where textual studies are healthy and well-respected. But academia has undergone a sea change in the past generation, and the lure of paleography has paled by contrast to the excitement of critical theory, gender studies, and other valuable new approaches to texts. At a conference last summer, a well-known Renaissance scholar summed up the new approach as “Those who can, theorize; those who can’t, edit,” and that’s an even more worrisome attitude if we’re to continue producing well-trained textual scholars in the early modern field. If paleography lacks scholarly respectability, how many new practitioners will take up the art?

At the same time, there are glimmers of hope for the future. Several notable research institutes continue to deliver external training in Renaissance and early modern paleography and codicology. Among these are the Rare Book School at the University of Virginia, which offers at least three or four courses annually in working with early modern textual materials, in Charlottesville and at satellite locations in New York, Baltimore, and Washington, DC. With scholarship support for a number of students, these short courses provide an excellent beginning for the scholar interested in learning how to work with primary manuscript materials. For those scholars unable to travel, the Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies (ACMRS) provides two online courses in paleography. One features Bernard Muir’s *Ductus*, a computer program designed to teach recognition and transcription of three dozen kinds of script from 200 to 1500 CE. The other is a one-credit video course in medieval and Renaissance paleography that builds on the *Ductus* foundation. A well-motivated student could gain enough experience from programs like these to begin work in many major collections of early modern manuscripts.

For those scholars who wish to explore Renaissance paleography more deeply, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation’s Mellon Summer Institutes in Vernacular Paleography provide intensive practical training in reading late medieval and Renaissance manuscripts in European vernacular hands: English, French, Italian, and Spanish. These are not workshops for beginners, however; while the institutes emphasize the skills needed for accurate reading and transcription of vernacular texts, they frequently focus on matters of scholarship, codicology, and textual editing as well, and treat historical and diplomatic materials as well as literary texts. Held annually at the Huntington and Newberry Libraries, these institutes are designed for scholars with a serious desire to work with primary materials; participants must have “advanced language skills” to qualify. The Mellon Foundation’s generosity provides stipends for participants, which makes them financially feasible for the advanced graduate students and junior faculty for whom the institutes are designed; in many ways, this is an ideal way to train a new generation of textual scholars.

A similar set of workshops is sponsored by the Folger Shakespeare Library focusing on English manuscripts and paleographic issues. The program focuses on English handwriting of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and introduces its eight participants to a wide range of documents from the manuscript collections

inventories, wills, and deeds. Such a broad focus prepares scholars who wish to work with British early modern materials to use and evaluate texts from a wide spectrum of cultural and societal perspectives, which is consonant with the current direction of early modern studies.

This small grouping of institutes is carrying on the vital work of preparing a new generation of early modern scholars to handle and evaluate manuscript materials with competence and confidence. While they alone cannot ensure the future of textual studies in our field, they can at least help preserve a cadre of scholars ready and willing to deal with what Elizabeth I called the “skrating hands” of sixteenth-century manuscripts—and to carry on a tradition of critical scrutiny and editing that has been one of the hallmarks of our discipline. A future for early modern studies without room for and encouragement of paleographic training will be one fit only for Billingsley’s “Botchers ... of no standing ... void either of Life, Dexterity, or Art itself.” Forty years forward, let us hope that Billingsley’s fears are not realized. ❧

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Early Modern Scandinavia: A Prognostication on a Small Field

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In early modern studies Scandinavia has played a small role. At the same time, the early modern period has been a leading topic of interest among scholars of Scandinavia in the Anglo-American world. If historians in the English-speaking world know of any historian of Sweden, it is most likely the early modernist Michael Roberts. Instructors of undergraduate courses on Scandinavia more easily find reading material in English for the early modern era than for other periods, with the possible exception of the Viking period.

This traditional interest in early modern Scandinavia is evident in the current scholarship. Over the last decade, annual conferences of the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study (SASS) have hosted several panels on early modern Scandinavian history, art, music, and literature. During the same time frame, several high quality dissertations on early modern Scandinavia have been produced in American and British universities. Currently a critical mass of postdoctoral and midcareer scholars exists to continue the work of previous generations.

Another positive long-term trend is the growing participation of Scandinavian-based scholars of early modern Scandinavia in the larger international arena. This increased activity has manifested itself in three ways. First, the study of sixteenth-century Scandinavia has benefited from the strong growth in medieval studies over the last two decades in Scandinavia. In many respects, medievalists have assumed ownership over the sixteenth century—a period that elsewhere they, at best, share with early modernists. Second, Scandinavian scholars have joined