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.

‘Gashed gatherings, bodged 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 ‘quia numeri 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 alongside picture perfect parchment. ‘In Usum Bibliothecarii’ (1538). This practical guide for monastic librarians prescribes a wide range of elaborate safeguards 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 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 bewerster 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: ‘The 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 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 (Leenintveld 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 Buure 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
manuscript did remain within the family: ‘Joannae vander Spurt ende haren broeders ofte susters filii Jacob’ (Joanna [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 niement verblij-\text{den}’ (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 bouckin ende al andere boucken diemen bewaren wilt om eewelic te duerene, weere sijn van pampiere, fransijne oft parkemente, altoos hauwen ligghene daert alder droochst es ende gheen ghestoff en comt oft en vall.’ (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 ‘ligghene 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 vall’ (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 worden de
3. Keep away from heat and do not leave wide open.

‘Ten derden, men salse bij de viere niet bouwen, noch wijde open doen of open laten liggen, want aldus soude den rugge metten banden crempen ende naermaels ter stont breken, voort soude tleer 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 noce Daventrie, et consimiliter omnes alii propter illum. Et cavendum valde ne permittantur libri aperti per noctem uni cattle venire possunt.’ (Here is nothing missing, but a cat urinated on this during a certain night. Curshed 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 baechten de ghepate sjiden vanden benders trekken, often ware dat men de boucken bederven wilde, want als die gheraken af te gaene, so sal den bouc ter stont onthinden 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 ghepate sjiden (pasted sides) on the benders (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 onthinden 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
5. Prevent mould.

Ten Vsten, men moet de boucken soe wachten datse niet buit en slaen oft beszemelen. Want dan werdense ter stont vort ende duergheten van de motten, ofte de stoffe duereet haer selven. Dit ghebuert altoos als de boucken zijn tzwinters gebonden oft quallicken gedroocht, oft alsmense handelt met natten banden 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 dureet 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-val text, the use of wet hands is directly comprehensible. The notion that moisture-induced damage could lead to mould growth within a single day.

6. Do not rip out a page or gathering.

‘Ten Vsten, men beboerter geen blaren ofte quaternen buit te scuerene oft te treckene, want alser een beghinit te faelgierene dander volgen.’ (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 beghinit te faelgierene dander volgen’ (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 plaese stael mannekens, wijfkins, sotgen, sottinnekins oft evenebe taeerjinge maken oft scriven, want het stael so vuylic als een bouc alsoe besabbert ende bemasschter 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, straightway, 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 heeren 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: ‘Gheene onkundigen lueden 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
Almost five hundred years ago, the scribe added a moral at the end of his eight lines: a mirror informs us whether 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 segghe nae de plume siemen wat vueghel dat es ende en eens cleercs boucken siemen 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 normalise some features. We have retained the Middle Dutch spelling, but normalised the letters i, j, u when they represent a vowel and v, w and w when they represent a consonant. Abbreviations have been expanded, without justifications. 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

Translation

1r Die dit boucskin useren wille besie watter volgt.

Whoever wants to use this book, look at what follows.

Up de contrarie sijde vinde wien dat dit boucskin toe-behoort, dwelc noch eens staet in Latijne folio 194 ende in Walsche folio 157, omdat te bet soude mueschen men ten rechten hoorae, gheraectet verloren te werdene. Men vindt ooc int achtervolghen hoeren desen ende alle andere boucken bewaren ende antieren sal om eewelic te duerene. Spurt. 1527.

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.

1v Hoemen alle boucken bewaren sal om eewelic te duerene.

How one should preserve all books to last eternally.

Desen bouc behoort toe Margrieten vander Spurt filiae Jacops, wonachtich te Ghendt up Tsant bij Sint Lievens oft Keyserpoorten. Ende olsen sal wesen meo middscoders dat pampier, es so sallen Janne haer suster moeten hebben oft Anthonijne vanden Buere, staet hij Jannen af. Ende esser gheen van beede toe

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.

2r ghesindt, so sal hij commen up haer broeders Lieven, Jan oft Gheert van der Spurt dewelc alle maers-scalke sijn. Waert bij alden datmen dit boucskin ver-cochte, dwelc vleesch ende bloot ghecost heeft, so sal men den prijs den aerenemen deelen. Dit boucskin ende alle anderen boucken sul-len menich jaer dueren, ja te minsten twee hundert jaer, eyst datmen onder hout dese achtervolghende conditien.

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, yet at least two hundred years, if one shall uphold the following conditions.

2v Ten eersten, men sal dit boucskin ende al andere boucken diemen bewaren wilt om eewelic te duerene, weeser sijn van pampiere, fransijne oft parkemente, altoos haussen liggheene doet alder droochst es ende gheen ghestoff en comt oft en velt.

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.

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

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.

Ten derden, men sal bij de vieire niet houwen, noch wijde open doen oft open laten ligghen, want aldus soude den rugge meten banden crempen ende naemels ter stont breken, voort soude leere ontpoppen ende up niet commen.

Third, one should never 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.

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

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.

Ten vsten, men moet de boucken soe wachen datse niet huut en sloen oft be-scemmelen. Want dan wende ter stont vort ende duergheten van de moten, ofte de stroffe dueret haer selven. Dit ghebuert altoos als de boucken sijn twinters ghedraocht en oft ghedraocht, oft alsmense handelt met natten handen ende int wacke draecht oft legt.

Fifth, one should protect the books so that they do not get mildewed or mousy. 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.
6r

Heleghe Gheest heeft laten hebben. Niettemin lof ende heere te sprekene, Hij yet anders cuenen ghegeven ende ne den Pater Noster, die ontanghelicst es dan alleerbequaemst ende devotere ende die God vindtmen gheen betere, sen ofte ghesegghen, en ende meditatien diemen alle de bedijnghen, scriftuwarachtich datmen onder zijn. 

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men wel wat cleerc dat es. 

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dat ons sielkin niet alleene behoeren wij te bewarene haghen, hoe vele te meer behoeren wij te bewaren 

ouderen schoene ende suvere te houdene daer met dat wij altemet de werelt beheghen, hoe vele te meer behoeren wij te bewarene 

5v

en soude altoos een ghe-
men soelte niet geheespen oft ten gaet al up den Pater Noster.

6v

Het is openbaer ende warachtich datmen onder alle de bedijnghen, scriften, contemplaten, oratien ende meditatien diemen soude mueghen ghepeyren sen ofte ghesegghen, en vindtmen gheen betere, vruhbareghere, saleghere, devotere ende die God alder bequaemst ende ontanghelicst es dan alleene den Pater Noster, die Hij ons ghegeven ende geheele heeft. Want hadde Hij yet anders cuenen ghevinden om Hem meerdere lof ende heere te spreken, Hij souldt ons achtergeh- 

lotten 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.

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.


[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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