

## The Virtual Manuscript Room



The Virtual Manuscript Room (VMR) is a collaborative project to bring together digital resources related to manuscript materials (digital images, descriptions and other metadata, transcripts) in an environment which will permit libraries to add images, scholars to add and edit metadata and transcripts online, and users to access material.

The first stages of the Birmingham VMR are now available at <http://vmr.bham.ac.uk> (<http://vmr.bham.ac.uk>). These include digital images of fifty complete manuscripts from the Mingana Collection of Middle Eastern Manuscripts held at Special Collections in the University of Birmingham, as well as images of manuscripts relating to certain projects based at ITSEE, including the Canterbury Tales and Dante's *Commedia* and *Monarchia*. In addition to high-resolution images of each page, viewed through a specially-developed interface, the VMR provides descriptions from the printed catalogue and from Special Collections' own records. Full XML-encoded records mean that every page in the VMR is integrated with the University Library catalogue and accessible through internet search engines.

Current plans for the VMR include the development of a system of ontologies in order to permit the automatic connection of images, transcriptions and other resources, enabling users to draw together ('mash-up') materials seamlessly as required, and the creation of an online transcription facility, leading to the development of a Workspace for Collaborative Editing.

In Birmingham, the VMR is being created at the Institute for Textual Scholarship and Electronic Editing (ITSEE), with funding from the Joint Information Systems Committee and the Arts and Humanities Research Council. Partners in the Virtual Manuscript Room include Professor Peter Robinson at the University of Saskatchewan, the Institute for New Testament Textual Research, Münster, Germany, and the University of Trier, Germany.