

Research Incentive Fund Report

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Many, many thanks again for the generous support that I received from InULA, which helped to make my participation in this workshop possible. It was an amazing experience!

The workshop, [Montefiascone Conservation Project Program](#), was originally conceived in order to save the virtually derelict library of the Seminario Barbarigo in Montefiascone, Italy. While that work is still ongoing, we were delighted to see that most of the bound materials have been properly treated, conserved and relocated to a dry, humidity controlled environment. Most interestingly, we were shown two codices (texts) that are of very special value: one was a manuscript, written in Greek, which is believed to have been the exemplar and prototype for the Greek font created by a very early printer, while the other had two large chunks taken out of it, one along the front edge and the other through the middle of the book. The damage was incurred when Napoleon's troops entered the village and, in an effort to protect themselves, the seminarians placed books up against the windows and walls. You can still see where the musket balls ripped right through it! It was also my first introduction to a "white library," which evidently is very common in the southern Mediterranean region. The bindings are all made of a smooth, white vellum which is quite striking on the shelves.

After morning lectures from about 9-12 a.m., which included the history, geography, chemistry, and iconography of the colors, we then spent the afternoons studying the colors (made from rocks, minerals, metals, insects and plants) that were processed to produce those used by artists throughout the medieval era. We ground up, boiled, distilled and decanted pigments made from a variety of organic and inorganic substances and then were able to create color palettes demonstrating how the colors interact with various diluents and binders. The chemical interactions are very interesting. For example, I discovered that the blue and green ceiling colors we noticed on a visit to the cathedral at Assisi are due to the original lapis lazuli paint pigments absorbing an additional molecule of water from centuries of exhalations of visitors as well as environmental changes in humidity. When this occurs, the lapis changes from lapis to malachite, thus changing the color to green. How amazing is that!

Again, my thanks and deep appreciation. I have been able to talk about what I learned with both of the ILS classes I teach in the Fall, History of the Book to 1450 and the Introduction to Manuscripts course. There is nothing that can replace the hands-on experience with the actual materials.