

The Biology of the Book: Future prospects for biology as a handmaiden to conservation

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The team at York has been exploring the potential for biological analysis to contribute to the study of the conservation of manuscripts. Parchment is a once living tissue, and the biological components of this tissue and the organisms that live in and on the surface of this material report the use history of the document and potential pathways to degradation. How suitable are techniques drawn from the biology lab to analyse parchment and predict future pathways of decay? Can these tools highlight new strategies for conservation and what do they add to the biography of the object?

This paper reports on progress to date and considers the potential for future study.