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The German Historical Museum  
Multimedia Department

Media and the historical object -  
two case studies in interactive media for museums

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## **The Virtual Library of the German Historical Museum**

### ***The Digital Facsimile***

The German Historical Museum has created the Virtual Library with the intention of giving its visitors a glimpse of the fascinating world of the Middle Ages. Mediaeval books are essential for visualising the intellectual and spiritual life of their epoch. The mediaeval manuscripts of greatest artistic and historical significance lie, however, in the strongrooms of the great libraries. They are so rare, so valuable and fragile, that they are hardly ever exhibited and are never loaned out.

This is why the German Historical Museum has invented the digital facsimile and has set up a Virtual Library, containing eleven valuable manuscripts. Together, the manuscripts contained in it cover a wide range of themes and periods, giving an overview of craft trades, the liturgy, poetry, medicine and law.



The primary principle of the project is to reproduce the original as exactly as possible. Each book is therefore shown at its true size on the monitor screens in the exhibition. There are no buttons or navigational elements to distract from the book, and the pages appear to turn with almost photographic realism. All of a book's pages are shown, including endpapers and blank pages, as well as places where sheets are missing or damaged.

The digital facsimile does not just look like a book; it can also be used like a book. The pages can be turned simply by clicking on them. The book itself is the navigational element.



The biggest impediment to understanding old books is usually their language. In the Middle Ages, texts were composed in Latin, or else (in these parts) in an older version of the German language. Yet in the virtual facsimile, visitors only have to click on the text for a translation bar to appear. This bar covers three lines of the original text at a time, like an old reading glass. The handwritten text fades beneath the bar and a typed, modern, interlinear translation appears in its place. Using the mouse to drag the bar, visitors can read the text right through in translation,

with a choice of German or English. For those who would like to read the original Latin, for example, there is also a transcription of that available.

The successful communication of this attractive, but also difficult, subject was due not least to the combined efforts of the multimedia project teams with hands-on experience of actually exhibiting the originals in Bamberg, Nuremberg, Cologne and Berlin.

For further information or to order a copy see:

Bamberg Apocalypse:  
Machsor Lipsiae  
Codex Egberti  
Aeneis

<http://www.dhm.de/publikationen/XX1406/>  
<http://www.dhm.de/publikationen/XX1429/>  
<http://www.dhm.de/publikationen/XX1424/>  
<http://www.dhm.de/publikationen/XX1325/>

## Jewish Life in Germany from 1914 to 2005 – [www.chotzen.de](http://www.chotzen.de)

### Website and DVD

A joint media project by the German Historical Museum and the Federal Centre for Political Education.



As part of forging closer ties between museums and schools as educational institutions, the German Historical Museum, working in close cooperation with teachers, trainee teachers and experts in teaching history, has developed and evaluated an application about "Jewish Life in Germany from 1914 to 2004".

The DVD and the website offer access to an extensive data pool with over 1,700 images and almost 220 film clips that record the political and cultural background to Jewish life in Germany. In parallel to this, the story of a German family of the Jewish faith is told: the Chotzens, from the Wilmersdorf district of Berlin. By recounting the historical sequence of events in parallel with the biographies of the family members, political developments acquire a personal relevance. The daily life of the Chotzens reflects the political data and facts of the time in its own particular way.

The story of the Chotzen family follows the highs and lows of Jewish-German history, from the First World War right up to today. At a very personal level, it tells of emancipation and integration, of persecution and extermination. However, it also shows the new start made by Jewish culture in Germany, as well as the difficulties of dealing with a shared past.



Special teaching and presentation modules for pupils at primary schools and for age groups I and II can be accessed via the main menu.

In the form of thematic tours, cross-sections are cut through the thicket of information contained in the huge data pool of the time chart. In this module, the seemingly unlimited wealth of stored data and links is complemented by the pedagogically beneficial reduction of subject matter to educational content.

See: [www.chotzen.de](http://www.chotzen.de)

This website contains an english version.

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