

## EDITORIAL

### SVMMA Editorial Board

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SVMMA's issue number 6 comes at a critical time for the organization of education and research in the thematic areas of the journal; at least within the institution with which SVMMA has closer links: the University of Barcelona.

Indeed, the UB is undergoing a process of restructuring of departments and faculties whose reasons are not always obvious (beyond saving money through the merger of administrative structures). This is certainly not the place to discuss these issues, but we believe it is the duty of the editorial board to inform readers about the processes underway to give them an accurate idea of the framework in which the people making the journal will soon work—even though we still can not anticipate in detail the organizational structure that will be eventually adopted.

The mergers of departments and faculties seem to indicate a return to the unification of the Humanities and the recovery of what had been the old School of Arts. This could present a good opportunity for the Institute for Research on Medieval Cultures (IRCVM) to strengthen the ties between the kindred disciplines that, from different viewpoints, aim to study the medieval world. In our opinion, this interdisciplinary approach, which lies at the basis of the IRCVM, is positive because it has enabled us to recover a bond that should have never been broken.

Moreover, the dimensions of the new departments, in terms of teaching staff, areas, and sections of knowledge, could generate some depersonalization and reduce the visibility of the medieval specificity, especially given the disappearance of the Department of Medieval History, Palaeography, and Diplomatics which will become a section subsumed under the large Department of History and Archaeology.

Fortunately, the Institute for Research on Medieval Cultures will allow us to maintain an autonomous structure within the University of Barcelona that reflects the weight of the research and studies specialized in the Middle Ages. Along with the Master's and PhD programmes in Medieval Cultures, we will be able to give visibility to this field of knowledge shared by all members of the IRCVM.

We hope that the doubts about the changes this merger will entail for our teaching and research may be solved as we settle into the new structure of the University of Barcelona.

Maybe because of this uncertainty about the immediate future (a future, however, that under no circumstances should jeopardize the continuity of the journal), the contents of this issue of SVMMA seem to respond to a need to “keep our feet on the ground” and focus on tangible things such as Romanesque mural paintings and the production of wood for construction. Overall, the entire issue is oriented towards material history much more than to the characteristic topics of the history of ideas.

Another example of this approach is the article on an exquisite Andalusian casket produced during the Caliphate period and now kept in the Cathedral of Girona after a hiatus of almost ten centuries without documentary proof of its existence nor proof of the road it took from its place of origin to Catalonia.

Here and in all other articles, readers will find definitely interesting information that will furnish them with a more detailed idea of what life was like in the Middle Ages in general, and in medieval Catalonia in particular. In turn, this information can motivate other researchers to contribute the results of their research to the process of building an increasingly broad and comprehensive image of the medieval past.