



In Principio

Incipit Index of Latin Texts

Over one million *incipits* covering Latin literature
from its origins to the Renaissance

In collaboration with:

- › the Institut de Recherche et d'Histoire des Textes
- › the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library
- › the Bibliothèque nationale de France

ONLINE



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In Principio

**ONLINE**

Incipit Index of Latin Texts

An invaluable research tool for all those scholars and libraries interested in the writers, texts and manuscripts of Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance.

- 】 Over one million records from three major institutions and libraries, supplemented with a growing number of individual collections
- 】 Approximately 25,000 new entries each year
- 】 Updates once a year for the CD-ROM and twice a year for ONLINE, each spring and autumn
- 】 Search screen that is identical for online and the CD-ROM publications
- 】 A search screen providing guidance by offering ten search fields that enable precise searching
- 】 Multilingual search interface (English, French, German)

By publishing *In Principio*, most of the *incipits* from the major manuscript resources of Europe are accessible electronically.

In comparison to other *incipit* collections, *In Principio* is distinguished by its wide-ranging, “generalist” character. Chronologically, it covers all Latin texts that have been transmitted in manuscript since the origins of Latin literature up to about 1600 when the manuscript is replaced by the printed text. *In Principio* thus covers ancient, patristic, medieval, and humanist Latin literature.

In addition, all literary genres are included: the liberal arts and theology, history and poetry, medicine and liturgy, civil law and canon law, the exact and occult sciences, summas and sermons, glossaries and correspondence, cooking recipes and cursing formulas, large treatises and small, isolated sentences. All literary texts in the broadest sense have their place in *In Principio*.



Comment made by user:

‘The intellectual significance of the proposed project is undeniable with the context of humanities-based research focusing on medieval manuscripts. For textual editors, ready to access to, and identification of, manuscripts is essential, and having manuscript *incipits* available in electronic form will greatly improve research efforts.’

The utility of collections of *incipits*

» Those who are interested in the writers, texts and manuscripts of Antiquity and the Middle Ages know how difficult it is to identify a particular work encountered by chance in a manuscript, or, when studying or publishing a particular text, to make an inventory of all the manuscripts in which it appears. These difficulties arise primarily from the manner in which literary works circulated prior to the invention of printing. Before Gutenberg, the text had a life of its own, independent of its author, and was modified from copy to copy. It is not only the text

that changed; titles might vary and authorial attributions could shift. There was a tendency to 'lend only to the rich', and Ovid, St Augustine and St Bernard found themselves credited with a host of apocrypha. The *incipit* or first words of a work thus remain the surest means of designating it unambiguously. In a sense, the *incipit*, by virtue of its invariability, is the identity card of the text. Standing apart from the diversity of attributions and titles, the *incipit* guarantees the presence of a particular text.

The collections of *incipits*

The collection of *incipits* at the Institut de Recherche et d'Histoire des Textes (Paris)

» Since its foundation in 1937, the Institut de Recherche et d'Histoire des Textes had compiled several card files of *incipits* using a wide range of sources including direct descriptions of manuscripts, library catalogues, collections of texts and specialized bibliography. The oldest, most voluminous and most frequently consulted of these card files covers the whole of Latin literature from its origins to the Renaissance and at present contains some 500,000 entries.

The collection of *incipits* at the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library (Collegeville, MN, USA)

» Since its founding in 1965, the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library (HMML) has sent teams of researchers and technicians to film more than 25 million pages from nearly 90,000 volumes in libraries and archives throughout Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. Today, HMML represents one of the largest and most comprehensive archives of medieval and Renaissance sources in the world. Over the past 30 years, the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library has assembled a card file of more than 500,000 Latin *incipits*, making this the largest collection in the United States and one of the largest collections in the world. With a concentration of manuscripts from Austria, Germany, Spain, Portugal and Malta, HMML's records have proved to be geographically and topically complementary to those of IRHT.



Comment made by user:

'*In Principio* is valuable to all of the humanities
in as much as it identifies the texts of music, agronomy,
astrology and astronomy, naval warfare and weapons, falconry and herbs.
It is a universal finding aid for all learning.'

Academic partners

» Institut de Recherche et d'Histoire
des Textes,
Section latine,
40, avenue d'Iéna,
F-75116 Paris

» Hill Museum & Manuscript
Library,
P.O. Box 7300,
Bush Center,
Saint John's University,
Collegeville,
MN 56321-7300

» Bibliothèque nationale de France,
Département des manuscrits
(Catalogue latin),
58, rue de Richelieu,
F-75084 Paris Cedex 02

The collection of *incipits* of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Manuscrits (Paris)

» The file-catalogue of *incipits* from the Latin catalogue has been built up over many years from a vast array of bibliographical sources in order to assist the work of the cataloguers of the *Fonds latin*. It also contains a large number of *incipits* drawn directly from the Latin manuscripts in the department's own hands. While this cannot be said to have been done systematically – except for a project in the 1950s to identify *incipits* from the *Supplément latin* collection – it does reflect the specific interests of the librarians. The entire card-catalogue from the BnF is available (150,000 *incipits*).

Collections from other institutions and individual scholars

» *In Principio* includes *incipits* from those other institutions and individual scholars willing to collaborate. Prof. Dr. Klaus Reinhardt, director of the Cusanus Institute in Trier, assisted by Dr. Tilo Altenburg, has graciously transferred to the database 40,000 records from the valuable *Repertorium Biblicum Medii Aevi* (Matriti, 1950-1980) whose indexes he himself developed with Friedrich Stegmüller. *In Principio* is also grateful to Dr. Thomas Mathiesen, director of the *Thesaurus Musicarum Latinarum*, for allowing to include data from the *Thesaurus*.

Comment made by user:

“*In Principio* is an electronic finding tool
for the humanities.
Publishing a corpus of *incipits* is a fresh contribution to
the body of reference tools for scholarship.”



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Types of research

The *incipit* serves as a link between the text and the manuscript.

The search software enables to answer two main questions about the *incipit*:

- › who is the author and what is the title of the text?
- › which manuscripts contain the text?

In response to the first question, a variable number of identifications may be offered to the researcher. According to the state of scholarship, the text may be attributed to one or several authors or to no-one at all. It may be known under one or several titles or have no title. It may be published or cited under one title and have circulated under another, and so on.

In response to the second question, the user receives a list of manuscripts containing those extant witnesses to the text that have been recorded. The length of the list depends upon the diffusion of the work in question, the disappearance of manuscripts in all genres, the advancement of the cataloguing of collections, and the progress of research.

In fact, the *incipit* is a much more stable element of the text than the title or the name of the author, yet it too may be subject to variations. Strictly speaking, these variations are infinite in number, and in fact, some changes are so completely random and unpredictable that one must never be content with a single search. Fortunately, in practice, most of the variations in the *incipit* can be reduced to two main types: inversion of word order and spelling variants. The search programme resolves most of the difficulties of both of these features. A list of spelling variants is embedded in the search program.

By e.g. searching the word 'hymnus', the user will obtain all the *incipits* containing the variant forms 'hymnus', 'himnus', 'ymnus', 'im-mus', 'hympnus', 'himpnus', 'ympnus', and 'impnus'.

The screenshot shows the 'In Principio' search interface. At the top, there is a header with the text 'INCIPIT INDEX OF LATIN TEXTS' and 'INCIPITAIRE DES TEXTES LATINS'. Below this is a navigation bar with 'Introduction' and 'Search' links. The main search area contains a form with the following fields: 'Incipit' (with a dropdown menu), 'Explicit' (with a dropdown menu), 'Author' (with a dropdown menu), 'Authenticity' (with a dropdown menu and checkboxes for 'dub', 'err', and 'ps'), 'Work' (with a dropdown menu), 'City' (with a dropdown menu), 'Library' (with a dropdown menu), 'Shelf Mark' (with a dropdown menu), 'Date' (with a dropdown menu), and 'Folio' (with a dropdown menu). To the right of the form, there is a section for 'Authentic spelling' with a checkbox and a 'Browse' button. Below the form, there is a 'Clear fields' button and a 'Total number of hits 102' indicator. At the bottom, there is a footer with 'Brepols Publishers NV (212.123.12.34)' and 'Terms and Conditions - 2009 © Brepols Publishers NV - All rights reserved'.

› Search screen of *In Principio*



The screenshot shows the 'In Principio' record view interface. At the top, there is a header with the text 'BREPOLIS' and 'All products'. Below this is a navigation bar with 'Home', 'Search History', 'Help', and 'Logout' links. The main record area contains the following information: 'Record View', 'Search details: and Incipit (Non-authentic): in principio and City: Cambridge', 'Record 11 of 102', 'Incipit: Eusebii Ieronimi Presbiteri Laus qua Iosephum computat inter Aeclesiasticos scriptores... Historiam conscribere disponentibus... In principio creavit deus celum et terram', 'Work: Historia antiquitatis Iudaicae', 'City: CAMBRIDGE', 'Library: Trinity Hall', 'Shelf Mark: 4 (Haenel 3)', 'Date: XII', 'Folio: 1-213', 'Catalog: James, Montague Rhodes, A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of Trinity Hall, Cambridge (Cambridge 1907)', 'Submitted by: HMML', and 'Reference: 1073751'. At the bottom, there is a footer with 'Brepols Publishers NV (212.123.12.34)' and 'Terms and Conditions - 2009 © Brepols Publishers NV - All rights reserved'.

› *In Principio*: View document screen

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