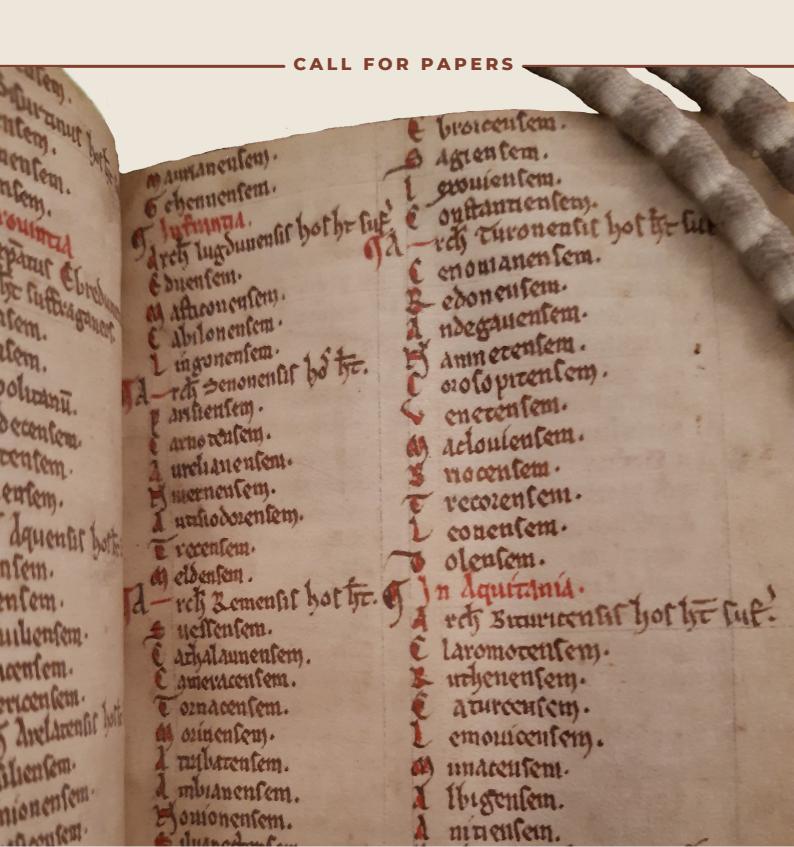# LISTING THE WORLD BEFORE THE AGE OF PRINT

CALL FOR PAPERS

We all have lists of things to do. We also have playlists, shopping lists and lists of pros and cons (not to mention lists of publications). Whether we make them on paper or with an app, lists are central to our lives. They help us make sense of the world around us, keep track of the order of things and sometimes create a whole new order altogether. Lists were just as central to the lives and experiences of medieval people. If anything, the practice of enumeration was even more common in the Middle Ages, when lists fulfilled functions which are now served by other tools sitting at the intersection of written and visual culture, such as maps and databases. Some of the most famous medieval sources were produced in the form of lists: annals and inventories, for example, but also land surveys and catalogues of saints.

Anthropologists have long emphasised the power of lists. As one of the most enduring devices for human thought and communication, lists are seen as key instruments for both cognitive and social transformation. Literary scholars have taken this suggestion to heart. They have demonstrated that the study of lists can tell us much about the evolution of genres and conventions, and about how writers questioned established categories and worldviews. More recently, a large project run by French scholars has also put lists on the agenda of medieval historians and shown that list-making is a promising angle to study many facets of our period: from the development of more sophisticated ways of organising society to the emergence of new modes of thinking about the relations between the individual and society itself.

This series of panels hopes to push this agenda further. We are especially interested in the agency of lists as both material objects and cultural artefacts – in their ability to create new relationships, not just transcribing existing ones, and formulate new knowledge rather than simply compile it. In essence, we propose to consider list-making not just as a system for describing the world, but as a way to actively change it. Examples might include the use and manipulation of lists in supporting political claims and ambitions, challenging existing hierarchies and social orders, flattening diversity and marginalising groups, influencing people's views and opinions, and both shaping and recording crises.

If you would like to get involved, please get in touch by emailing both organisers with a 200-word abstract and a short bio by 31 August 2023.

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