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FREE! DATABASE OF MANUSCRIPTS CONTAINING LATIN SAINT'S LIVES - AT THE BOLLANDISTS

I've been looking for manuscripts of the "Life" of St Nicholas by John the Deacon. In the process I have just come across something very useful.

This is the "Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina Online" (although it doesn't contain the BHL info) or Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina manuscripta (BHLms) database. And ... it is free! You have to enter your name and email address, but then you can do what you want.

It's hosted at the [Société des Bollandistes](#). Look under "[online resources](#)". The direct URL is [here](#). Click on [Recherche](#), enter your name and email address (why?) and then you are in.

I clicked on "[Trouver](#) un texte hagiographique d'après son numéro *BHL*", and entered 6104, which is the BHL number for the first part of John the Deacon's *Life*. This led to a page on the text, and then

Liste des manuscrits transmettant ce texte, décrits dans les [catalogues](#) des Bollandistes: par [fonds](#) ou par [siècle](#).

Clicking on "fonds" - i.e. the libraries that hold the manuscripts - gave me a list ordered by library. "[siècle](#)" gave me an even more useful list, in date order, thereby allowing me to concentrate on the earliest mss. What I got was this:

BHLms - Liste de mss (Siècl... x

UCL Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina Manuscripta

Liste des témoins du texte "*BHL* 6104" (Tri par siècle)

121 témoin(s) repéré(s) dans les [catalogues](#) publiés par les Bollandistes.

Pour identifier le(s) catalogue(s) utilisé(s), cliquez sur le fonds concerné (nouvelle fenêtre).

Pour dresser la liste des autres textes hagiographiques copiés à la même époque dans un manuscrit, cliquez sur les feuillets (folios) de ce manuscrit (nouvelle fenêtre).

Pour la lecture du tableau: [Conventions](#) (datation et matière) - [Liste](#) des sigles (fonds de manuscrits).

T. post q.	T. ante q.	Ville	Fonds	Cote	Folios	Matière
901	1000	Chartres	BM	068 (27 1/B)	132r-138v	M
901	1000	Orléans	BM	342 (290)	001-046	M
901	1000	Milano	BA	P. 113 Sup.	006v-020r	M
901	1000	Benevento	BC	codex VI	197v-208v	M
901	1000	Paris	BNF	lat. 00989	054r-095r	M
976	1025	Roma	Vallicell.	codex A. 9.	233v-238v	M
976	1025	Rouen	BP	U 055	146-157v	M
1001	1100	Angers	BM	0802	088v-099	M
1001	1100	Vaticano	ArchCapS.Pietro	A. 5 (Alias D)	181-191	M
1001	1100	Milano	BA	E. 022 Inf.	017v-024v	M
1001	1100	Torino	BN	F. II. 10	269r-283r	M
1001	1100	Torino	BN	F. IV. 24	068r-068v?	M
1001	1100	Roma	Vallicell.	III	006-013v	M

Screen grab of the oldest manuscripts of John the deacon's "Life of St Nicholas"

Note the statement at the top: 121 manuscripts counted in the catalogues published by the Bollandists. That too is useful information.

The links do not lead to online manuscripts. So it's Google time.

Googling for "Chartres manuscripts" led me to a web page. From this I learned that the Americans bombed Chartres in the war and destroyed half of its manuscripts, and cooked the rest. But some survive. A full list is [here](#). It turned out that the Bollandist "Ms. 68" now has the shelfmark ms.27, and ... appears in the list of destroyed manuscripts. So no luck, then. The link to the catalogue info for it is [here](#).

Googling for "Orleans manuscripts", the next item, brought up a website alright: the "[Aurelia - Bibliotheque numerique d'Orleans](#)". I entered "342" in the search, and, among other cruft, got a picture of a manuscript cover and "Views de saints et Sermons", 342, Xe, XIe, et XII siecles". That looked OK, so I clicked on it and got ... catalogue stuff. A bit more experimenting and I found you have to click on the *image* itself. There are facilities to download the manuscript, but unfortunately someone - a paperpusher, one fears - has limited it to 4 pages at a time.

The *Life* is supposedly at the start, but the very first page that one sees is damaged. There are several references to St Nicholas tho. It looks as if the cover was removed at some point, and the parchment is worn by being coverless for some period. Turning the page reveals pen trials; turning again reveals a modern list of contents, and then the first page of the text (click to enlarge):

**Incipit prologus Iohannis subdiaconi
in vita sancti nicholai gloriosi
antistitis mirae urbis**

Sicut omnis materies si a bene perito
artifice confuestrueta fuerit. non
solum deformitatis. verum etiam irrupti-
damptia patitur. ita scripturarum series. si a
indocto. praeputa verbositate ordiata fuerit.
pion a uenustate capiti sermopis. facundia. sed etiam
ab intellectu corruet. Alacritudine. Quod ego
iohannis indignus diaconus. seruus sancti laquearii.
multum deuotus tibi meo sepius merogantia fiat
athanasi. rusticitatis obstaculo opposeba. Sed cum
mihi crebris precibus. illud apostolicum inge-
reret. caritas omnia vincit. tandem aliquando
assepsi prebui. ut propter deuotionem quam te
erga sanctissimum dei famulum puellolavon a proge-
nitombus habere gaudebas. patienter iura.
atque miracula que per te deus gessit. latius
explicare sermopibus. Verum quia se omne perier.
liberalissimos magis tros inefficacis. et sermopis

The note at the top of the page - “Monasterii sancti Benedicti Floriacensi” - tells us that prior to the French revolution the ms. belonged to the Benedictine abbey of Fleury. So here is yet another manuscript online, although it took a fair bit of clicking to get it.

The Bollandist list of manuscripts is inevitably incomplete. I know of other manuscripts of this particular Latin text, thanks to the entry in the *Clavis Scriptorum Latinorum Medii Aevi: Italiae* volume, which has an entry for John the Deacon / John of Naples, and which was the source that led me to the BHL Online. But it's still an invaluable resource.

Recommended.
