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[Accueil](#) > From my diary

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## FROM MY DIARY

A twitter discussion led me to update [my post on an ancient Latin inscription, once visible on the casing stones of the Great Pyramid in Giza](#). The inscription was recorded by a medieval pilgrim, Wilhelm von Boldensele.

As part of this, I searched for manuscripts of von Boldensele's work. I found a nice list, indicating the libraries that held the manuscripts. But what I wanted to know was whether the ms. was online, and if so where. A visit to the website of each library was an exercise in frustration. The websites has been designed by clerks who would never use them, and functioned simply as corporate advertising. I tried the first couple in the list, and was forced to give up. The stress was incredible.

I can only imagine that other scholars get just as annoyed. The best way to find manuscripts that I have encountered is simply a Google search for the shelfmark. Sometimes it works!

One manuscript was listed as belonging to the Philipps collection. This was a massive collection of books assembled in the 19th century by a bibliomaniac, and which was still being sold twenty years ago. Many of the manuscripts are in Berlin, I knew. But I couldn't find any of the Philipps manuscripts on the useless Berlin library website. Going to google, it led me to a Worldcat entry that showed that the one I wanted was actually in the University of Minnesota! So far well and good; but again, the idea that a scholar might come to the university website to consult a manuscript had plainly occurred to nobody when that website was designed. Who on earth reads all the smooth empty verbiage on these sites? For what purpose would you ever read it?

I gave up in the end. Oh well. On to other things. It was only an idle thought.

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