The Materiality of Innovation: Formats and Dimensions of the *Etymologiae* of Isidore of Seville in the Early Middle Ages

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Since the advent of the material turn in historical disciplines in the 1990s, the medieval book has become a subject of renewed interest that has propelled it beyond the limited orbit of paleographers, codicologists, and art historians.[1] It is now less common to treat the medieval manuscript as a mere physical vessel for the abstract text, which, once this text is extracted, can be relegated to a footnote. Even historians are becoming attuned to the fact that the manuscript is an object worthy of study in its own right and a valuable source of information about medieval

economy, society, and cultural life.[2] Yet there is still much to be done in this line of research, especially in the arena of the quantitative study of the codex, which was masterfully inaugurated in the twentieth century by Eric Turner, Johan Peter Gumbert, Carla Bozzolo, and Ezio Ornato, and continued in recent decades by Marilena Maniaci.[3] This chapter was inspired by the work of these and other scholars, employing the quantitative approach to examining the material properties of the early medieval manuscripts transmitting the *Etymologiae* of Isidore of Seville.

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2   See, for example, Lars B. Mortensen, "Change of Style and Content as an Aspect of the Copying Process. A Recent Trend in the Study of Medieval Latin Historiography," in *Bilan et perspectives des études médiévales en Europe. Actes du premier Congrès européen d'études médiévales (Spoleto, 27–29 mai 1993),* ed. Jacqueline Hamesse, Textes et Études du Moyen Age 3 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1995), 265–76, and Walter Pohl, "History in Fragments: Montecassino's Politics of Memory," *Early Medieval Europe* 10, no. 3 (2001): 343–74.

3   See Eric Turner, *The Typology of the Early Codex,* Haney Foundation Series 18 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977); Johan P. Gumbert, "The Sizes of Manuscripts. Some Statistics and Notes," in *Festschrift Wytze Hellinga* (Amsterdam: Nico Israel, 1980), 277–88; Carla Bozzolo and Ezio Ornato, *Pour une histoire du livre manuscrit au Moyen Âge: Trois essays de codicologie quantitative,* Equipe de recherche sur l'humanisme français, Textes et études 2 (Paris: CNRS, 1980); Johan P. Gumbert, "Sizes and Formats," in *Ancient and Medieval Book Materials and Techniques,* ed. Marilena Maniaci and Paola F. Munafò, Studi e Testi 357 (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1993), vol. 1, 227–63; Ezio Ornato et al., *La face cachée du livre médiéval: l'histoire du livre vue par Ezio Ornato, ses amis et ses collègues* (Rome: Viella, 1997); Marilena Maniaci, "Costruzione e gestione dello spazio scritto fra Oriente e Occidente: principi generali e soluzioni specifiche," in *Scrivere e leggere nell'alto Medioevo,* Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto Medioevo 59 (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 2012), 473–512; and Ezio Ornato, "The Application of Quantitative Methods to the History of the Book," in *The Oxford Handbook of Latin Palaeography,* ed. Frank T. Coulson and Robert G. Babcock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 651–68. An updated bibliography of quantitative codicology can be found in Marilena Maniaci, *Archeologia del manoscritto: metodi, problemi, bibliografia recente* (Rome: Viella, 2002), 179–266.

The Corpus

Early medieval manuscript corpora are, in general, unsuitable for quantitative analysis due to their limited state of preservation. However, as more than 500 pre-1000 CE codices and fragments containing the text of the *Etymologiae* have been identified in recent years, the corpus presented below has the necessary size for quantitative approach. This being said, it still presents certain challenges due to its limited intrinsic diversity, gaps, and fuzzy data. Certain kinds of quantitative analyses cannot be carried out on this corpus. Some of the conclusions presented below need to be accepted as preliminary and in need of further corroboration by qualitative methods or by a collection of additional quantitative data (e.g., on the thickness of parchment and ruling patterns).

The following analysis is based on a corpus of 434 manuscripts representing all known substantially preserved codices transmitting material from the *Etymologiae* surviving from before the early eleventh century as of 2021.[4] The core central to the analysis performed in this article is a smaller set constituted by a set of 95 manuscripts representing all of the manuscripts transmitting the text of the *Etymologiae* integrally, that is, as an encyclopedia in multiple books (22% of the corpus). As needed, it is supplemented by two other sets of items: a) manuscripts, mostly florilegia and miscellanies, transmitting anonymous

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4   This corpus is a subset of the larger corpus of 477 manuscripts representing all known codices transmitting material from the *Etymologiae* predating the early eleventh century that was assembled in the framework of the *Innovating Knowledge* project by October 2021, when the last revisions were made to this article. Since then 30 manuscripts, including substantially preserved codices have been discovered. The corpus used in this article omits 31 significantly cropped fragments of the *Etymologiae,* the material properties of which cannot be reconstructed, and 12 manuscripts, in which material from the *Etymologiae* appears as a secondary addition. It consists of 408 wholly or well-preserved manuscripts and 25 fragments, whose pages are wholly preserved.

excerpts from the *Etymologiae*[5] (142 manuscripts, 33% of the corpus), and b) manuscripts transmitting medium-length selections from the *Etymologiae* that do not represent the encyclopedic text nor can be considered excerpts (189 manuscripts, 44% of the corpus).[6]

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5 I define an excerpt as those instances of the transmission of material from the *Etymologiae* that a) are relatively short (i.e., at most several consecutive chapters of the *Etymologiae*); b) are clearly derived from the *Etymologiae* (i.e., rather than from a compendium or collection of some sort); c) do not alter the function of the material significantly; and d) appear in a manuscript context that reinforces their status as a selection from a larger source (i.e., in miscellanies, florilegia, compendia, handbooks, etc.). For miscellanies, see George Rigg, "The Manuscript Miscellany," in *The Oxford Handbook of Latin Palaeography,* ed. Frank T. Coulson and Robert G. Babcock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 879–83; and Anna Dorofeeva, "Reading Early Medieval Miscellanies," in *Scribes and the Presentation of Texts (from Antiquity to c. 1550),* ed. Barbara A. Shailor et al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2021), 334–60.

6 Compare with Carmen Codoñer Merino, "Transmisión y recepción de las Etimologías," in *Estudios de latín medieval hispánico. Actas del V Congreso Internacional de Latín Medieval Hispánico,* ed. José Martínez Gázquez, Óscar Luis de la Cruz Palma, and Cándida Ferrero Hernández (Florence: SISMEL Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2011), 5. This category includes eight manuscripts containing what may be described as an epitome of the *Etymologiae.* Some are discussed in Codoñer Merino, "Transmisión y recepción de las Etimologías," 14–18, and Carmen Cardelle de Hartmann, "Uso y reception de las *Etymologiae* de Isidoro," in *Wisigothica. After M. C. Díaz y Díaz,* ed. Carmen Codoñer Merino and Paulo Farmhouse Alberto, mediEVI 3 (Florence: SISMEL Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2014), 477–502, at 490–92. It also contains fifty-five manuscripts that transmit a selection from the *Etymologiae* that has been reordered and recontextualized into a novel thematic collection. For example, a legalistic collection entitled *De legibus divinis sive humanis* compiled from Books II, V, and XVII of the *Etymologiae* survives in seven manuscripts from the corpus; see Ernest-Joseph Tardif, "Un abrégé juridique des *Étymologies* d'Isidore de Séville," in *Mélanges Julien Havet* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1895), 659–81. Whole books or book sections of the *Etymologiae* were transmitted as autonomous anonymous works, for example the first section of Book V, *De legibus* (*On Laws)* in the context of the study of law; see Tardif, "Un abrégé juridique des *Étymologies* d'Isidore de Séville," 660, and Cardelle de Hartmann, "Uso y reception de las *Etymologiae* de Isidoro," 485. Even some of the chapters could have been transmitted separately as self-standing works, as happened to two chapters from Book VIII enumerating various Jewish

For this study, two types of quantified information about the 434 manuscripts in the corpus have been examined: a) metadata about the manuscripts, including the place and date of origin, script, and type;[7] and b) information about their material properties, including the number of folia, page height and width, writing block height and width, and the number of lines and columns per page.[8] The physical measurements of the manuscripts were taken in person when possible and otherwise taken from available catalogues.[9] Since the information about manuscripts provided by manuscript catalogues is sometimes incomplete, the corpus records the number of columns of 99% of manuscripts (430 items), page dimensions of 98.5% of manuscripts (427 items), the number of lines of 96% of manuscripts (417 items), and the writing block dimensions of 81% of manuscripts

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and Christian heresies that also circulated as an anti-heretical treatise; see Codoñer Merino, "Transmisión y recepción de las *Etimologías,*" 7–8.

7 The date and place of origin have been assigned based on manuscript catalogues, especially Elias A. Lowe, *Codices Latini Antiquiores: A Palaeographical Guide to Latin Manuscripts Prior to the Ninth Century,* 12 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934–1966), and Bernhard Bischoff, *Katalog der festländischen Handschriften des neunten Jahrhunderts (mit Ausnahme der wisigotischen),* Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für die Herausgabe der mittelalterlichen Bibliothekskataloge Deutschlands und der Schweiz, 4 vols. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998–2017). The type is expressed using 18 categories (with the number of assigned items): only *Etymologiae* (95), miscellany (57), grammatical collection (43), collection of canon law (32), collection of secular law (31), pastoral collection (29), computistic collection (27), theological or patristic collection (25), medical collection (16), glossary (13), mathematical collection (13), music collection (7), scientific collection (7), a collection of works on the trivium (7), Bible (6), historiographical collection (5), exegetical collection (4), and classical text (4). Ten items were not assigned to any category because of a lack of information about their content. Detailed information about the sources of the manuscript metadata and the categorization criteria are available at the website of the *Innovating Knowledge* project, https://innovatingknowledge.nl.

8 A manuscript may consist of leaves with variable dimensions and with a variable format (i.e., writing window and number of lines). For the purpose of this study, I used the minimum size of the page dimensions and writing window dimensions and an average number of lines per page.

9 I personally remeasured a little over 120 items, or approximately a quarter of the corpus.

(350 items). Moreover, the place of production of 25 items and the script of 12 manuscripts cannot be determined. Complete information about their material properties is available for 347 items (80% of the corpus), while complete information about all properties is available for 330 items (76% of the corpus).

Since only substantially preserved manuscripts were selected for this corpus, it is assumed that they have not been significantly damaged or materially altered since the time of their production, except for the loss of folia and a certain degree of trimming.[10] We can therefore, use them to examine the decision-making of early medieval manuscript producers as far as the page and writing block dimensions, the number of lines, and page layout are concerned. It is also important to emphasize that the corpus represents material *surviving* from the early Middle Ages, rather than produced and circulated in this period. It is very likely that material properties, which are the subject of this article, affected the survival rate of early medieval manuscripts, distorting some of the observations presented here.[11] It should, for example, be assumed that large-format, high-grade and immobile books tend to survive at higher rates than small, low-grade and portable books, and that the corpus therefore privileges the former over the latter.[12] Due to the uneven patterns of survival of material from different regions, furthermore, the majority of the manuscripts in the corpus examined come from

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10   At least 54 manuscripts (12%) can be shown to have been trimmed. However, as Bozzolo and Ornato have shown, trimming rarely decreased the page dimensions by more than 1 cm and this can therefore be discounted here; see Bozzolo and Ornato, *Pour une histoire du livre manuscrit au Moyen Âge,* 245–47. At least 52 manuscripts from the corpus are currently missing folia.

11   This can be shown from the comparison of substantially preserved manuscripts of the *Etymologiae* and fragments, see Evina Steinová, "The Oldest Manuscript Tradition of the *Etymologiae*," *Visigothic Symposia* 4 (2020): 114–15.

12   See Bozzolo and Ornato, *Pour une histoire du livre manuscrit au Moyen Âge,* 73–74, and George D. Greenia, "The bigger the book: On oversize medieval manuscripts," *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire* 83 (2005): 723–46.

the Carolingian environment (314 items).[13] This means that more definitive conclusions can be reached only about Carolingian material, although, as will be shown below, useful observations can also be made about other cultural milieux.

Many of the observations and conclusions about the material properties of the surviving early medieval manuscripts transmitting the *Etymologiae* are not particular to this text but extend to early medieval manuscripts in general. For example, observations about manuscripts transmitting excerpts and non-encyclopedic *Etymologiae* are likely valid for any manuscripts transmitting excerpts and medieval appropriations of notable works, while some of the conclusions about the encyclopedic manuscripts of the *Etymologiae* can be also extended to other long authoritative works circulating one work per codex. When examining the surviving early medieval manuscript witnesses of the *Etymologiae*, then, this chapter often offers insights that go beyond a single textual tradition. Because of the exceptional number of surviving witnesses, the *Etymologiae* represent a useful corpus for the examination of the material properties of the early medieval Western codex. It would be useful to build other text-specific manuscript corpora of similar size to compare and contrast them in order to better discern to what extent particular material properties are general to the early medieval codex, and which may represent developments particular to specific textual traditions.

The *Etymologiae* as a Codex

The *Etymologiae,* a vast encyclopedia covering subjects from grammar, medicine, law, and ecclesiastical hierarchies to pa-

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13 To be more precise, the items in the corpus are copied in the following scripts (with the number of items assigned): Caroline minuscule (300), late Caroline minuscule, that is, developing towards the Gothic script (34), pre-Caroline minuscules (21), Visigothic minuscule (16), Italian minuscules and cursives (12), Beneventan minuscule (11), various Insular scripts, such as Anglo-Saxon majuscule and minuscule, and Irish minuscule (10), early Caroline minuscule (10), and uncial (1). Three items copied in minuscule have not been assigned to any more specific category.

gan gods, precious stones, human pastimes, and footwear, was Isidore's final and most ambitious work.[14] The Sevillan bishop had been working on his masterwork for several decades when he died in 636 without putting a final version into circulation.[15] Unlike some of the late-antique luminaries, he did not leave behind instructions on how his work was meant to be copied or disseminated.[16] We can, nevertheless, get indirect insight into

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14 Some of the most important scholarly works on Isidore of Seville and the *Etymologiae* include Jacques Fontaine*, Isidore de Séville et la culture classique dans l'Espagne wisigothique,* 2nd edn. (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1983); Mark E. Amsler, *Etymology and Grammatical Discourse in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 1989); Carmen Codoñer Merino, *Introducción al Libro X de las "Etymologiae": su lugar dentro de esta obra, su valor como diccionario* (Logroño: Fundación San Millán de la Cogolla, 2002); and Manuel C. Díaz y Díaz, "Introdución," in *San Isidoro de Sevilla. Etimologías: edicion bilingüe,* ed. José Oroz Reta and Manuel-A. Marcos Casquero (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 2004), 1–2. Two recently published collected volumes devoted to Isidore are Andrew Fear and Jamie Wood, eds., *Isidore of Seville and His Reception in the Early Middle Ages: Transmitting and Transforming Knowledge,* Late Antique and Early Medieval Iberia 2 (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016), and Andrew Fear and Jamie Wood, eds., *A Companion to Isidore of Seville,* Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition 87 (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

15 There are many problems with the early transmission of this text. See Walter Porzig, "Die Rezensionen der *Etymologiae*," *Hermes* 72, no. 2 (1937): 162–66; Marc Reydellet, "La diffusion des Origines," *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire* 78, no. 2 (1966): 386–88; and more recently Carmen Codoñer Merino, José Carlos Martín Iglesias, and María Adelaida Andrés Sanz, "Isidorus Hispalensis Ep.," in *La trasmissione dei testi latini del medioevo/Medieval Texts and Their Transmission,* Mediaeval Latin Texts and Their Transmission, vol. 2, ed. Paulo Chiesa and Lucia Castaldi (Florence: sismel Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2005), 281–84; and Díaz y Díaz, "Introdución."

16 Notable examples of authors that provide instruction on how their works should be disseminated include Augustine and Cassiodorus; see Emanuela Colombi, "Assetto librario ed elementi paratestuali nei manoscritti tardoantichi e carolingi del 'De civitate dei'di Agostino: alcune riflessioni," *Segno e testo* 11 (2013): 183–272, and Patrizia Stoppacci, "Cassiodorus Senator. *Expositio Psalmorum*," in *La trasmissione dei testi latini del medioevo,* Mediaeval Latin Texts and Their Transmission, vol. 2, ed. Paolo Chiesa and Lucia Castaldi (Florence: sismel Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2005), 143–59. All that remains of Isidore's voice is a short dedication to king Sisebut that is found in most manuscripts of the *Etymologiae*: "En tibi, sicut pol-

his thought through the *Renotatio librorum domini Isidori* of Isidore's junior colleague and friend, Braulio of Zaragoza, in which he refers to the publication of the *Etymologiae* as follows:[17]

> [Isidore produced] an enormous codex of the *Etymologies,* structured by him by means of *tituli* rather than books, which, since he wrote it on my request, and although he left it incomplete, I divided into twenty books.[18]

This short description suggests that Isidore intended to publish a work whose main structural feature were *tituli* (of which there are more than 750 in the text) rather than books, as was noted by scholars,[19] that it was physically embodied in a single *volumen* (rather than in multiple *volumina*), and that this codex was exceptionally large. The two latter properties reflect a particular material choice. They suggest a work that could serve as a majestic gift for a king, symbolic in its size and unifying quality, but as a result also confined to a limited readership, impracti-

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licitus sum, misi opus de origine quarundam rerum ex veteris lectionis recordatione collectum atque ita in quibusdam locis adnotatum, sicut extat conscriptum stilo maiorum"; edited in Wallace M. Lindsay, *Etymologiarum sive Originum libri XX* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911), vol. 1, 10. The problems surrounding this dedication are discussed already in Wallace M. Lindsay, "The Editing of Isidore's *Etymologiae,*" *The Classical Quarterly* 5, no. 1 (1911): 51.

17 On Braulio's role as the first editor of the *Etymologiae,* see Jacques Elfassi, "Isidore of Seville and the *Etymologies,*" in *A Companion to Isidore of Seville,* ed. Andrew Fear and Jamie Wood (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 245–49.

18 José Carlos Martín Iglesias, ed., *Scripta de vita Isidori Hispalensis episcopi,* Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 113в (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 203: "Etymologiarum codicem nimiae magnitudinis distinctum ab eo titulis, non libris, quem, quia rogatu meo fecit, quamuis inperfectum ipse reliquerit, ego in uiginti libros diuisi." The translation is my own.

19 Lindsay, "The Editing of Isidore's *Etymologiae,*" 50; more recently Carmen Cardelle de Hartmann, "Wissensorganisation und Wissensvermittlung im ersten Teil von Isidors *Etymologiae* (Bücher I–X)," in *Exzerpieren — Kompilieren — Tradieren: Transformationen des Wissens zwischen Spätantike und Frühmittelalter,* ed. Stephan Dusil, Gerald Schwedler, and Raphael Schwitter, Millenium-Studien 64 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 89; and Elfassi, "Isidore of Seville and the *Etymologies,*" 254.

cal to use, and endowed with low portability.[20] Isidore crafted a grandiose encyclopedia for the learned Visigothic elite, rather than a textbook for schools or a practical aid for the clergy and lay population.[21]

Despite its vagueness, the description of the *Etymologiae* as a codex serves as a useful benchmark for assessing the material properties of the manuscripts of this text in the following centuries. We can dub manuscripts innovative or conservative based on whether they remained large format and single-volume or whether they acquired new traits. Thus, Braulio acted as an innovator when he divided the *Etymologiae* into twenty books and enriched them with a preface in the form of the letter exchange between himself and Isidore, and lists of *capitula* derived from Isidore's *tituli* preceding individual books or book sections. Moreover, we can judge his innovations to be particularly successful, as we find them in all but few surviving early medieval encyclopedic copies of the *Etymologiae*.[22] However, he presumably did not deviate from Isidore's formula of a large format and single volume.

The same formula seems to have been maintained by many Visigothic copyists, who continued to produce copies of the *Etymologiae* notable for their size. The surviving Visigothic manuscripts transmitting Isidore's text tend to be larger than manuscripts surviving from other regions, having an average taille (page height + page width) of 585 mm (23.03 in.), or almost 12 cm (4.72 in.) more than the average of the corpus (466 mm [18.35 in.]).[23] The surviving Visigothic manuscripts transmitting the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* are even larger, with an

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20 Compare with Cardelle de Hartmann, "Uso y reception de las *Etymologiae* de Isidoro," 482.

21 See Cardelle de Hartmann, "Wissensorganisation und Wissensvermittlung," 99–100.

22 See Porzig, "Die Rezensionen der *Etymologiae*," 166–67.

23 Throughout this chapter, taille is used to represent the page dimensions, because it proved to be more adequate for the purposes of this study than other possible methods of representation (e.g., page surface or diagonal). The taille has been devised in Bozzolo and Ornato, *Pour une histoire du livre manuscrit au Moyen Âge,* 217. For a critique of taille and a comparison

average taille of 630 mm (24.8 in.), or almost 9 cm more than the average of the corpus (542 mm [21.34 in.]). Four of the six codices in the corpus with tailles above 700 mm were likewise copied in Visigothic minuscule.[24] Furthermore, all but one unusual Visigothic manuscript transmitting the entire *Etymologiae* are single-volume copies.[25] It should also be noted that all but this outlier are laid out in two columns, a potential hint that the seventh-century layout of Isidore's encyclopedia was in two or even three columns per page.[26] Overall, it can be said that the *Etymologiae* was treated more conservatively in the Visigothic region than elsewhere, perhaps as a sign of reverence for its author, and that Visigothic manuscripts preserved for a long time archaic features that were disappearing elsewhere.

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with its alternatives, see Johan Peter Gumbert, "Livre grand, livre petit: un problème de taille," *Gazette du livre médiéval* 38 (2001): 55–58.

24 These are: El Escorial, Monasterio San Lorenzo, MS D.I.1 (c. 994, San Millán de la Cogolla, 755 mm); El Escorial, Monasterio San Lorenzo, MS D.I.2 (c. 974–76, Albelda, 780 mm); El Escorial, Monasterio San Lorenzo, MS P.I.7 (9th c., ex., northern Spain, 710 mm); and El Escorial, Monasterio San Lorenzo, MS &.I.14 (9th century, med., Spain, 880 mm). The dating of the Visigothic manuscripts in this article is based on the work of Ainoa Castro Correa, "Online Catalogue of Visigothic Script Codices," at: http://www.litteravisigothica.com/visigothic-script-topics/codicology.

25 The anomalous El Escorial, Monasterio San Lorenzo, MS &.I.14 (9th century, med., Spain) is divided into two volumes and laid out in three columns per page. It is the only Visigothic codex containing additional texts attached to Isidore's encyclopedia, and due to its truly gigantic dimensions (515 × 365 mm [20.28 × 21.1 in.]), an outlier eluding a comparison. This manuscript is discussed in Bernhard Bischoff, "Die europäische Verbreitung der Werke Isidors von Sevilla," in *Isidoriana: colección de estudios sobre Isidore de Sevilla,* ed. Manuel C. Díaz y Díaz (León: Centro de estudios San Isidoro, 1961), 320.

26 Compare with Bischoff, "Die europäische Verbreitung der Werke Isidors von Sevilla," 326, and Franck Cinato, "Que nous apprennent les écritures des plus anciens témoins du *Liber Glossarum* sur l'archétype?," *Dossiers d'HEL* 10 (2016): 121. The oldest Latin manuscripts tend to be laid out in two or more columns; see Elias A. Lowe, "Some Facts about Our Oldest Latin Manuscripts," in *Palaeographical Papers,* ed. Ludwig Bieler (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), vol. 1, 201–2. Maniaci shows that long lines gradually came to predominate in Western books in the early Middle Ages. See Maniaci, "Costruzione e gestione dello spazio scritto," 495.

The Material Evolution of the Encyclopedic *Etymologiae*

The 95 surviving manuscripts of encyclopedic *Etymologiae* represent a homogeneous sub-population that can be defined by a set of shared traits: the attribution to Isidore, the title *Etymologiae,* presentation of Isidore's text in a specific order and integrally, division into books, a preface constituted by letters exchanged between Isidore and Braulio, and paratextual elements such as lists of *capitula* preceding individual books or book sections and chapter *tituli* and numbers.[27] It is the only format of the *Etymologiae* that acquired a high-end feel, attracting ornamentation, illuminated initials, and similar decorative features.[28] As they continued to transmit Isidore's work integrally as an encyclopedia, they clearly represented the more conservative line of transmission of his text. Nevertheless, they became an important locus of change, as is evidenced by textual and material variety among the surviving manuscripts. Thus, while Braulio divided the *Etymologiae* into twenty books, we also encounter alternative divisions of the text.[29] Many codices of the encyclopedic text

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27 At the end of the eighth century, a general list of *libri* was added at the beginning of the text and became absorbed into the encyclopedic format. See Veronika von Büren, "La place du manuscrit Ambr. L 99 sup. dans la transmission des *Étymologies* d'Isidore de Séville," in *Nuove ricerche su codici in scrittura latina dell'Ambrosiana,* ed. Mirella Ferrari and Marco Navoni (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2007), 25–44.

28 The surviving luxurious copies of the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* include Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, MS Dep. Breslau 16 (9th century, ⅔, Tuscany or Umbria); Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS II 4856 (8th century, ex., Corbie); Einsiedeln, Stiftsbibliothek, MS 167 (10th century, Einsiedeln); Madrid, Real Academia de la Historia, MS 25 (c. 946, San Millán de la Cogolla); St. Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 231–232 (880–890, St. Gall); and several of the El Escorial manuscripts.

29 Tours, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 844 (9th century, ½, Tours); Chartres, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 16 (11th century, unknown); and Krakow, Biblioteka Jagiellońska, MS 484 (10th/11th century, unknown) are divided into 17 books. Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS Voss. Lat. F 74 (9th century, ¾, Fulda and Ferrières) is divided into 21 books; Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Vat. lat. 7803 (9th century, med., northern Italy) is divided into 25 books; and Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, MS Ham. 689 (11th century, northern Italy) is divided into 29 books.

remained laid out in two columns, but we also see manuscripts of the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* copied in long lines.[30]

The most significant innovations of the encyclopedic line of transmission concerned its size. The extra-Iberian manuscripts are no longer as large as those copied in Visigothic minuscule but belong for the most part to Bozzolo and Ornato's *moyen-grands* category (491–670 mm [19.33–26.38 in.]).[31] Their average taille is 534 mm (21.02 in.) (t. 4.1), that is, they are on average 5 cm (1.97 in.) smaller than Visigothic manuscripts in the corpus and almost 10 cm (3.94 in.) smaller than a Visigothic codex of the encyclopedic text. Nevertheless, they are still on average more than 5 cm (1.97 in.) larger than the average Western manuscripts copied between the fourth and the tenth centuries recorded by Maniaci (480 mm [18.9 in.]),[32] and more than 3 cm (1.18 in.) larger than the ninth- and tenth-century codices studied by Bozzolo and Ornato (500 mm [19.69 in.]).[33]

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30 The average number of blocks per page of the manuscripts of encyclopedic *Etymologiae* is approximately 1.5, meaning that the number of manuscripts laid out in two columns and long lines is even. Indeed, among the 94 manuscripts, whose layout is known, there are 47 manuscripts copied in long lines, 46 manuscripts laid out in two columns, and one manuscript copied in three columns. The manuscripts copied in long lines slightly prevail prior to 800 (1.44) and in the tenth century (1.46).

31 To be more precise, 66 manuscripts, or about two-thirds, are *moyen-grands* according to Bozzolo and Ornato's classification, 25 manuscripts are *petit-moyens* (321–490 mm [12.64–19.29 in.]), and two Visigothic copies are *grands* (above 670 mm [26.38 in.]). For two manuscripts, I lack dimensions that would enable me to calculate their taille.

32 Maniaci's average taille for all medieval manuscripts is 492 mm (19.37 in.) or about 4 cm (1.57 in.) less than the average taille of an early medieval non-Visigothic codex of encyclopedic *Etymologiae;* see Maniaci, "Costruzione e gestione dello spazio scritto," 484.

33 See Bozzolo and Ornato, *Pour une histoire du livre manuscrit au Moyen Âge,* 265.

Taille range	No. of manuscripts	No. of manuscripts (excl. Visigothic)
< 400 mm (15.75 in.)	2	2
400–450 mm (15.75–17.72 in.)	9	9
451–500 mm (17.72–19.67 in.)	16	15
501–550 mm (19.67–21.65 in.)	24	22
551–600 mm (21.65–23.62 in.)	23	23
601–650 mm (23.62–25.59 in.)	14	11
651–700 mm (25.59–27.56 in.)	3	3
> 700 mm (27.56 in.)	2	0

Table 4.1. The distribution of the surviving early medieval manuscripts transmitting the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* based on their page tailles. Included are 93 manuscripts whose page dimensions are known.

The manuscripts of the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* are also notably larger than other manuscripts transmitting the text of the *Etymologiae* (i.e., those containing both excerpts and non-encyclopedic *Etymologiae*). The average taille of the latter is only 445 mm (17.52 in.), making them on average almost 9 cm (3.54 in.) smaller than manuscripts transmitting the encyclopedic *Etymologiae*. In fact, if we compare the distribution of the tailles of encyclopedic *Etymologiae* and other manuscripts in the corpus, it emerges that they represent two materially specific populations (fig. 4.1).[34] While these two populations overlap — mostly because other manuscripts appear in all size ranges and not because manuscripts of the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* could be smaller than a certain size — the physical size is such a reliable indicator of the integral versus other transmission pattern that page dimensions often allow for assessing whether a substan-

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34 At the same time, there are little to no differences in size between manuscripts transmitting non-encyclopedic *Etymologiae* and excerpts of this text.
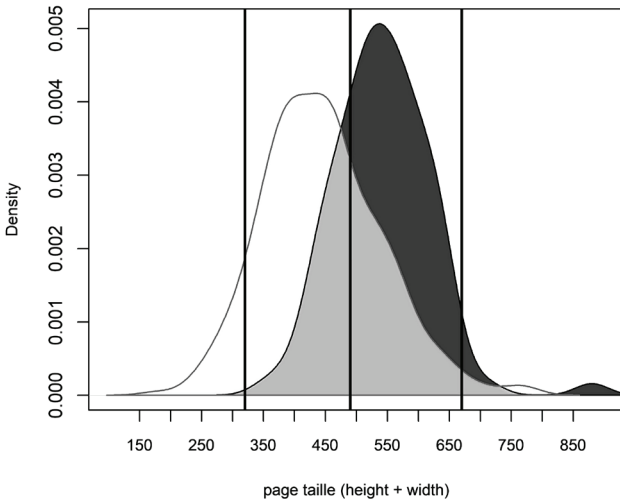
Fig. 4.1. The distribution of page tailles of the surviving early medieval manuscripts transmitting the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* (black, 93 manuscripts) and other manuscripts (white, 330 manuscripts). The y-axis shows the proportion of manuscripts with a given taille in a given sub-population (%). Vertical lines mark Bozzolo and Ornato's typological categories: *petits* (<320 mm [12.6 in.]), *petit-moyens* (320–490 mm [12.6–19.29 in.]), *moyen-grands* (491–670 mm [19.33–26.38 in.]), and *grands* (>670 mm [26.38 in.]). This density graph was plotted with R.

tially damaged fragment of the *Etymologiae* is a remnant of a manuscript of the encyclopedic type or not.[35]

The main reason for chiseling down the *codex nimiae magnitudinis* was surely to make Isidore's voluminous encyclopedia easier to use. As the utility of Isidore's knowledge corpus became obvious, and its fame grew, the demand for copies that had

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35 In this fashion, 29 of the 59 early medieval fragments containing the text of the *Etymologiae* can be recognized as remnants of manuscripts transmitting the encyclopedic *Etymologiae,* while 15 fragments are due to their small dimensions clearly remnants of other formats.

more manageable dimensions must have increased, especially in areas where the *Etymologiae* may have been a principal source of knowledge on many topics (such as Ireland).[36] Many early medieval *scriptoria,* moreover, may not have been able to afford to produce lavish or large-format books.[37] Before the Carolingian period, in particular, book-copyists may have been keen to make the *Etymologiae* as sober and economic as possible. There is no reason to seek a single location where this material development originated, as it was undoubtedly driven by practical concerns common to a large proportion of early medieval users, such as limited resources.[38]

At more than 1,200,000 characters (give or take few hundred thousand characters depending on the used script and punctuation system), the text of the complete *Etymologiae* has a textual

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36 See Michael W. Herren, "Storehouses of Learning: Encyclopaedias and Other Reference Works in Ireland and Pre-Bedan Anglo-Saxon England," in *Practice in Learning: The Transfer of Encyclopaedic Knowledge in the Early Middle Ages,* ed. Rolf Bremmer and Kees Dekker, Mediaevalia Groningana 16 (Paris: Peeters, 2010), 9–10; more recently, Marina Smyth, "Isidorian Texts in Seventh-Century Ireland," in *Isidore of Seville and His Reception in the Early Middle Ages,* ed. Andrew Fear and Jamie Wood (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016), 111–30; and Martin J. Ryan, "Isidore amongst the Islands: The Reception and Use of Isidore of Seville in Britain and Ireland in the Early Middle Ages," in *A Companion to Isidore of Seville,* ed. Andrew Fear and Jamie Wood, Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition 87 (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 424–56.

37 See Greenia, "The Bigger the Book," 727–28; David Ganz, "Book Production in the Carolingian Empire and the Spread of Caroline Minuscule," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History,* vol. II. c. 700–900, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 801; and Armando Petrucci, "Dal libro unitario al libro miscellaneo," in *Scrivere e leggere nell'Italia medievale/Writers and Readers in Medieval Italy,* trans. Charles M. Radding (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 17.

38 Nevertheless, even in the absence of surviving complete manuscripts the Insular world, it is tempting to connect some of this development with the reception of the *Etymologiae* in the Insular world and Insular influence on the Continent before the Carolingian period due to the limits of the Insular book production in its earliest phases; see T. Julian Brown, "The Oldest Irish Manuscripts and their Late Antique Background," in *Irland und Europa. Die Kirche im Frühmittelalter,* ed. Próinséas Ní Chatháin and Michael Richter (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1984), 311–27.

mass that imposed significant constraints on the early medieval scribes who wanted to reproduce this text integrally.[39] Above all, due to the technological limits of early medieval book production, it was not possible to downsize the text beyond a certain limit.[40] Even if the text could be squeezed down somewhat, it could not happen without compromising other aspects of the manuscript. The constraints that the early medieval scribes faced can be expressed as a formula in which the total number of leaves, the size of these leaves, the size and disposition of the writing block, the number of lines per page, the writing module, and additional properties together must accommodate the total textual mass of the copied text. If one variable, such as the page dimensions, was altered, others had to be adjusted to render the book functional. The corpus examined here contains many traces of experimentation with the formatting and layout of Isidore's text that reflect attempts at adjustments of the manuscripts' size.[41]

One avenue that the early medieval copyists explored was to increase the number of lines per page or make the writing module smaller. This seems to have been the strategy of the makers of Cambridge, University Library, MS Add. 5948 (8th century, ex., France), a single leaf remaining of a manuscript with a taille of only 460 mm copied in 45 lines measuring only 4.5 mm, and

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39 For the discussion of the textual mass and its importance as the "third dimension of the book," see Denis Muzerelle and Ezio Ornato, "The Third Dimension of the Book: Codicological Aspects of Multi-Textuality," in *Trends in Statistical Codicology,* ed. Marilena Maniaci, Studies in Manuscript Cultures 19 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), 377–412.

40 To produce lower-medium-sized manuscripts containing the entire *Etymologiae* was possible only from the thirteenth century onwards thanks to the new technology of parchment production which decreased the thickness of the parchment; see Chiara Ruzzier, "The Miniaturisation of Bible Manuscripts in the 13th Century: A Comparative Study," in *Form and Function in the Late Medieval Bible,* ed. Laura Light and Eyal Poleg, Library of the Written Word 27 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 105–25. Compare with Johan Peter Gumbert, "The Bearable Lightness of Parchment," *Gazette du livre médiéval* 59 (2012): 70–71.

41 The following overview can be compared with Ruzzier, "The Miniaturisation," 118.

of Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, MS Ham. 689 (11th century, northern Italy) with pages with a taille of 475 mm copied in 46 long lines measuring only 5 mm. By contrast, the average line height of an early medieval encyclopedic copy of the *Etymologiae* is closer to 8 mm,[42] and the average number of lines closer to 33 lines. Yet, to increase the number of lines per page and make the writing module smaller meant to render the manuscript less readable. Perhaps for this reason, only a few scribes followed this path.

Another solution was to sacrifice part of the margin to make the writing block larger. Maniaci estimated that in the manuscripts from the fourth to tenth centuries, the writing window covers on average 57.6% of a manuscript page.[43] This average is similar to the average for the 83 manuscripts of the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* from the corpus whose page dimensions and writing window dimensions are known (58.5%). However, seventeen manuscripts have a writing block covering more than 65% of the page, and in four manuscripts, it covers more than 70% of the page. Among these four manuscripts with an exceptionally large writing block is one with unusually small pages, Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, MS L 99 sup. (8th c., ⅔, Bobbio), a partial copy containing only Books I–X with a taille of 430 mm (16.93 in.). Another manuscript with a writing block of over 70%, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS lat. 17159 (9th century, St. Claude?), is among the largest in the corpus (having a taille of 630 mm [24.8 in.]) but also the thinnest, squeezing the entire *Etymologiae* into only 94 folia.[44] It seems that this strategy was also

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42 The corpus does not contain consistent information on the line height. This estimate is based on the measurement of manuscripts I examined in person.

43 See Maniaci, "Costruzione e gestione dello spazio scritto," 500.

44 The two remaining manuscripts with small margins, London, British Library, MS Add. 34389 (fol. 20) (9th century, ¼, eastern France), and London, British Library, MS Egerton 267 (fol. 76) (9th century, ⅔, eastern France), are fragments and therefore more cannot be said about the kind of manuscripts they come from.

pursued to some extent, but not too often, perhaps because too large a writing window was not seen as desirable or practical.[45]

Some leeway could have also been gained by using a highly abbreviated, ligature-rich script, as in Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, MS Guelf. 64 Weiss (8th c., Bobbio?) and Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS lat. 5763 (mid-8th c., northern Italy), which were copied in a highly abbreviated cursive script.[46] The taille of the former is 484 mm (19.06 in.), while the taille of the latter is 448 mm (17.64 in.). However, this option was also far from ideal. Too many abbreviations, ligatures, and the use of cursive script often made the text disfigured beyond readability, a problem that is endemic to the early Carolingian copies of the *Etymologiae*.

By far the most successful strategy that enabled the production of smaller copies of the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* was to increase the number of folia. This in turn entailed splitting a manuscript into two or more volumes, as sewing in too many small leaves compromised the binding and made the book difficult to open and use. A peculiar example of how badly a manuscript could be disfigured if not split is Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS lat. 14085 (third quarter of the 9th c., Corbie), a partial one-volume copy of the *Etymologiae* consisting today of Books II–X and XVI–XX. Its 232 surviving leaves have a taille of only 408 mm [16.06 in.] (245 × 163 mm [9.65 × 6.42 in.]), making it the smallest surviving manuscript of the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* copied in Caroline minuscule, but

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45 Compare with Ruzzier, "The Miniaturisation," 120. It can be added that manuscripts of the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* copied as a single volume tend to have smaller external margins than other manuscripts, including those of encyclopedic *Etymologiae* in multiple volumes (their writing block covers between 57.5% and 61% of the page on average, depending on the page height, while in other manuscripts, the writing blocks appear in the range of 45.5–58% depending on the page height). This is probably due to the fact that they are more often laid out in two columns than these other manuscripts and the intercolumn takes up some of the white space reserved for the margins.

46 See Lindsay, "The Editing of Isidore *Etymologiae*," 45, and Bischoff, "Die europäische Verbreitung der Werke Isidors von Sevilla," 322.

also a book impossible to keep open because of how tightly it is currently bound. It had presumably originally been a copy in two or more volumes that was bound into one codex in the seventeenth or eighteenth century.

To increase the number of leaves, then, entailed segmenting the twenty books of the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* into multiple volumes. Indeed, partition of the twenty books of the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* into two volumes of ten books became a particularly successful innovation, as is evidenced by the twenty surviving and identifiable two-volume copies of Isidore's encyclopedia.[47] The corpus may also preserve traces of a segmentation sequence constituted by four volumes of five books as certain manuscripts transmit only Books I–V (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, MS Clm 6275 and Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Vat. lat. 5763), Books VI–X (Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek, MS M.p.th.f. 143 and Cambridge, Trinity College, MS B.15.33), or Books XVI–XX (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS lat. 13028).[48] Two manuscripts transmitting Books I–VI (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS lat. 7670 and Vercelli, Biblioteca Capitolare, MS CCII [29]) and Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS lat. 14085, mentioned earlier, which transmits Books II–X and XVI–XX, are perhaps related to this sequence as well. Three manuscripts represent other selections from the twenty books of the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* that are either not related to any sequence or sole remnants of alternative segmentation sequences.[49]

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47 In addition, up to seven substantially preserved fragments included in the corpus, which contain only the contents of Books I–X or XI–XX, are perhaps remnants of two-volume copies of the encyclopedic *Etymologiae.*

48 Most of these manuscript date to the second half of the eighth or the first half of the ninth century. They come from all early medieval regions apart from Spain.

49 El Escorial, Monasterio San Lorenzo, MS P.I.6 (9th century, med., southern Spain) contains only Books I–XII, St. Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 233 (c. 800, St. Gall) contains only Books VI–VIII and XII–XV, and Turin, Biblioteca Universitaria, MS D.III.19 (10th/11th century, area of Milan) contains only Books I–XVI.

As shown in table 4.2, the manner of segmentation correlates with the physical dimensions of manuscripts. Single-volume manuscripts are on average larger than manuscripts of two-volume encyclopedic *Etymologiae,* and those are on average larger than manuscripts representing segmentation into smaller parts. In the end, manuscripts belonging to the last category are on average approximately 6.5–10 cm (2.60–3.94 in.) smaller than manuscripts of the single-volume encyclopedic *Etymologiae.* The six smallest manuscripts of the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* in the corpus are all two-volume or multi-volume copies.[50] While these differences in size are not only due to the choice of a segmentation strategy — as they also correlate with the region of production and the choice of script — they suggest that dividing the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* into multiple volumes was the most viable strategy for mitigating problems arising from the textual mass of the *Etymologiae,*[51] even though segmentation also carried its own dangers, most notably loss of one (or more) volumes.[52]

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50 The smallest copy of the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* is Vercelli, Biblioteca Capitolare, MS CCII (29) (9th century, in., Nonantola), containing only Books I–VI and having a taille of only 355 mm (13.98 in.).

51 Prof. Ornato suggested to me that the splitting of the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* into multiple volumes may have likewise been motivated by the desire to make them more readable, as they are also characterized by having fewer lines per page and smaller "black space" than single-volume copies. However, the number of lines per page is related to the page height (i.e., the smaller the page, the fewer the maximum number of lines that can be fitted on it). By plotting the average number of lines per page against the page height, it can be shown that smaller manuscripts do not have an unusually small number of lines per page (i.e., they are not written in a larger module). Rather, the writing module was kept consistently the same as the pages decreased in size.

52 It is clear that this was a substantial danger from the fact that all but five copies of the two-volume *Etymologiae* are now orphans, as are all copies representing alternative segmentation. The history of Schaffhausen, Stadtbibliothek, MS Min. 42 (9th century, ½, Mainz, Books I–X), is also illustrative. Originally, it had perhaps formed a pair with Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS lat. 7587 (9th century, ¾, Mainz, Books XI–XX) or the lost Wiesbaden, Landesbibliothek, MS 242 (9th century, ½, Mainz, Books XI–XX), but already in the second half of the ninth century, the

Manner of segmentation	Average taille	Average taille (excl. Visigothic)
one volume	565 mm (22.24 in., 56 mss.)	562 mm (22.13 in., 50 mss.)
all integral copies	542 mm (21.34 in., 93 mss.)	534 mm (21.02 in., 85 mss.)
two volumes	517 mm (20.35 in., 20 mss.)	498 mm (19.60 in., 19 mss.)
other segmentation	463 mm (18.23 in., 10 mss.)	445 mm (17.52 in., 9 mss.)

Table 4.2. The average page taille of the surviving early medieval copies of the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* based on the manner of their segmentation.

As some of the earliest surviving copies of the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* from the second half of the eighth century are of the multi-volume type, it is clear that this strategy was pursued well before the Carolingian period.[53] Splitting is, in fact, more

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sequence was broken up and the Schaffhausen codex was sent to St. Gall. St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 236 (9th century, ¾, St. Gall, Books XI–XX) seems to have been produced to complement it there; see Evina Steinová, "Two Carolingian Redactions of the *Etymologiae* from St. Gallen," *Mittellateinisches Jahrbuch* 56, no. 2 (2021): 322–23. However, this did not prevent the Schaffhausen codex from being separated from its sibling again and sent to the newly founded monastery at Schaffhausen in the early eleventh century, which acquired another manuscript, Schaffhausen, Stadtbibliothek, MS Min. 43 (10th/11th century, Reichenau, Books XI–XX), to complement it.

53 The oldest of them are Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Vat. lat. 5763 (8th century, med., northern Italy, Books I–V); and Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, MS L 99 sup. (8th century, ⅔, Bobbio, Books I–X). The latter manuscript shows traces of descending from an insular exemplar and has been seen for a long time as reflecting the insular line of transmission of the encyclopedic *Etymologiae;* see Bischoff, "Die europäische Verbreitung der Werke Isidors von Sevilla," 323; and Reydellet, "La diffusion des *Origines*," 433–36. Other eighth-century copies of the two-volume encyclopedic *Etymologiae* include Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS II 4856 (8th century, ex., Corbie, Books I–X); Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, MS Aug. Perg. 57 (8th century, ⅔, northern

Century of production	Average taille, encyclopedic format	Average taille, other formats	Difference between the tailles
8th century	479 mm [18.86 in.] (9 mss.)	413 mm [16.26 in.] (12 mss.)	66 mm [2.6 in.]
9th century	541 mm [21.3 in.] (55 mss.)	435 mm [17.13 in] (209 mss.)	106 mm [4.33 in.]
10th–early 11th century	538 mm [21.18 in] (18 mss.)	461 mm [18.15 in.] (87 mss.)	77 mm [3.03 in.]

Table 4.3. A comparison of the average page tailles of the surviving early medieval manuscripts transmitting the *Etymologiae* by century and format. The averages in column "Average taille, encyclopedic format" do not include manuscripts in Visigothic minuscule due to their abnormally large size. If they were included, the average taille for the eighth century would remain unchanged, but it would increase to 550 mm (21.65 in.) for the ninth century and to 545 mm (21.46 in.) for the tenth and the beginning of the eleventh century.

common among pre-Carolingian copies of the encyclopedic *Etymologiae,* while a single-volume codex is a more typical Carolingian representative. Indeed, the corpus shows that those manuscripts of the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* that survive from the eighth century tend to be on the smaller side and display traces of experimentation that suggest efforts at making them small and economic, including alternative modes of segmentation, a preference for long lines and less ornamentation. The ninth-century manuscripts of the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* seem to break with this earlier trend and revert to being larger, single-volume, laid out in two columns, and embellished with decorative features. The relative growth of the page dimensions of the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* in the ninth century is clear from a comparison with manuscripts from other centuries, and with other manuscripts from the corpus (t. 4.3).

Italy, Books XIII–XX); Modena, Biblioteca Capitolare, MS O.I.17 (760–778, northern Italy, Books I–IX); and Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS lat. 13028 (8th century, ⅔, northern France, Books XVI–XX + IV).

As table 4.3 shows, the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* grew by almost 6.5 cm (2.56 in.) between the eighth and the ninth centuries only to get somewhat smaller again in the following centuries. No similar pattern of reduction and growth can be observed among other manuscripts transmitting the *Etymologiae,* which grew slightly each century in line with a general trend observed by Maniaci.[54] As a result, the difference between an average manuscript of the encyclopedic and non-encyclopedic *Etymologiae* reached 10.6 cm (4.33 in.) in the ninth century, while both earlier and later it was closer to 7 cm (2.76 in.).

Furthermore, in the eighth century the difference between a one-volume copy of the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* and a copy representing a different pattern of segmentation was minimal — the average taille of the former is 482 mm (18.98 in.) and of the latter 481 mm (18.94 in.). However, in the ninth century, a single-volume copy has an average taille of 541 mm (21.30 in.), while copies reflecting different segmentation patterns have an average taille of 491 mm (19.33 in.).[55] They are, thus, both noticeably smaller than single-volume copies and substantially similar to the surviving eighth-century manuscripts of the encyclopedic *Etymologiae.* The multi-volume copies of encyclopedic *Etymologiae,* it seems, reflect a continuation of the trend that reached its peak before the Carolingian period, while the Carolingian single-volume copies of the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* repre-

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54 See Maniaci, "Costruzione e gestione dello spazio scritto," 484.

55 These averages exclude Visigothic manuscripts. If included, the average for ninth-century single-volume manuscripts would be 565 mm (22.24 in.) and 515 mm (20.28 in.) for ninth-century manuscripts following other patterns of segmentation. There is no substantial difference in the average tailles of ninth-century single-volume manuscripts copied in Caroline minuscule (524 mm [20.63 in.]) and in scripts other than Caroline and Visigothic minuscules (529 mm [20.83 in.]). However, there is an evident difference in the average tailles of ninth-century multi-volume manuscripts. The ninth-century multi-volume copies of the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* in Caroline minuscule have an average taille of 504 mm (19.84 in.), while the three manuscripts of this type copied in scripts other than the Caroline and the Visigothic minuscules, all produced around 800, have an average taille of 413 mm (16.26 in.).

sent a new stage in the material evolution of the *Etymologiae*. In the end, no surviving single-volume manuscript of the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* copied in Caroline minuscule has a taille smaller than 480 mm (18.9 in.), which represents an increase of 3 cm (1.18 in.) from the minimum of 450 mm reached in the pre-Carolingian period.[56]

After the Visigothic manuscripts with their average taille of 585 mm (23.03 in.), these Carolingian single-volume manuscripts come second as far as their page dimensions are concerned. However, their material similarities are not a consequence of a similar evolution. The Visigothic manuscripts of the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* seem to owe their large dimensions and other physical properties to a high degree of conservativism, stemming presumably from the reverence for tradition, Isidore's status in the Visigothic environment, and other ideological concerns.[57] The size of the Carolingian manuscripts, on the other hand, is a response to novel trends, rather than an indication of a return to older ideas. Perhaps the most important of these was the Caroline minuscule, which allowed fewer ligatures and abbreviations than earlier scripts and thus placed a new constraint on copyists' efforts to keep a codex of the *Etymologiae* small.[58] The growth of the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* should also be situated within broader developments in Carolingian book culture, such as the standardization and refinement of many aspects of book-production and an imposition

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56 Interestingly, the Carolingian manuscript with the smallest page taille, Zofingen, Stadtbibliothek, MS Pa 32 (9th century, ⅔, 480 mm [18.90 in.]), is a highly innovative copy of the *Etymologiae* representing a new Carolingian redaction of Isidore's encyclopedia; see Steinová, "Two Carolingian Redactions of the *Etymologiae* from St. Gallen," 306–21.

57 As Prof. Ornato pointed out to me, if Visigothic manuscripts transmitting the *Etymologiae* are unusually large, this is not because they had to be, as there are manuscripts from the Iberian Peninsula with dimensions similar to the extra-Iberian manuscripts. Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional, MS Vitr. 14-3 (9th century, Spain) has, for example, a taille of only 517 mm (20.35 in.) and El Escorial, Monasterio San Lorenzo, MS T.II.24 (10th century, med., southern Spain) has a taille of only 500 mm (19.67 in.).

58 Compare with Ganz, "Book Production," 789.

of stricter standards of book-copying. It may also indicate the growth of the wealth of *scriptoria,* which could more easily engage in ambitious book-copying projects and afford to produce even large-format manuscripts. The pressure to make the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* small, portable, and down-to-earth never vanished, as some of the manuscripts from the Carolingian environment continue to demonstrate, but it is overshadowed in the surviving manuscript evidence by a new kind of the encyclopedic *Etymologiae:* large, single-volume, perhaps even luxurious manuscripts that possessed many new features, including running titles that made them more searchable, layouts made cleaner and easier to navigate thanks to a clever deployment of colored initials and white spaces, as well as information sorted as lists, tables, and diagrams.[59] It can be, finally, noted that the return to single-volume and large-format encyclopedic *Etymologiae* coincided with the significant increase in the production of non-encyclopedic formats in the Carolingian period, which is perhaps not incidental.

The Materiality of Non-Canonical Formats of the *Etymologiae*

In contrast to the encyclopedic *Etymologiae,* the non-encyclopedic *Etymologiae* are a heterogeneous category including many different kinds of manuscripts as long as they transmit material from Isidore's encyclopedia otherwise than just as an excerpt. If we exclude the most anomalous and unique codices, such as one or two Visigothic giants and the four Bibles that acquired prefaces taken from the *Etymologiae,* manuscripts belonging to this category, nevertheless, share many traits that distinguish them from the encyclopedic *Etymologiae.* They transmit material from the *Etymologiae* anonymously or attribute it to

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59 For example, the overview of metrical feet in *Etym*. Bk. I, chap. 17 became a table; the overview of symbols for weights in *Etym*. Bk. XVI, chap. 27 became a list with the symbols inserted, akin to bullet points, in the margin; and a T-O map was added to Book XIV.

someone else other than Isidore; or, if they do attribute it to the Sevillan bishop, they do so under a new title as a separate work. Paratextual elements original to the encyclopedic *Etymologiae*, including the *tituli* and numbering of capitula, are often missing in these manuscripts. Material from the *Etymologiae* is regularly juxtaposed to or combined with material from other texts, presupposing new uses. For the most part, manuscripts of non-encyclopedic *Etymologiae* are neither encyclopedias nor high-grade objects, nor were they always intended as library books. Most importantly, even if some of the manuscripts of non-encyclopedic *Etymologiae* — such as the eighteen items of this type that are classified as miscellanies — represent isolated instances of the appropriation of Isidore's text that defy comparison with other codices, many fit recognizable patterns that reveal the existence of several well-established non-encyclopedic transmission formats. These can be compared with the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* due to their textual, material, and functional homogeneity.

There is, for example, a non-encyclopedic format that I shall call the *Ars Isidori* using a name under which it appears in several early medieval manuscripts, a grammatical treatise that corresponds in content fully or to a significant extent to the first book of the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* (*De grammatica*).[60] It appears in early medieval grammatical compendia, explicitly evoking the teaching of grammar as a context of use.[61] The corpus preserves twenty-five early medieval manuscripts that transmit this entity.[62] Another type of an established non-encyclopedic for-

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60 The existence of the *Ars Isidori* is acknowledged in Maximilianus Manitius, *Geschichte der lateinischen Literatur des Mittelalters* (Munich: Beck, 1911), vol. 1, 67. I am currently preparing an article about this non-encyclopedic transmission format of the *Etymologiae*.

61 For grammatical compendia, see Paolo de Paolis, "I codici miscellanei grammaticali altomedievali. Caratteristiche, funzione, destinazione," *Segno e testo* 2 (2004): 183–212, and Elizabeth Archibald, "Methods and Meaning of Basic Education in Carolingian Europe" (PhD Diss., Yale University, 2010). See also her essay in this volume.

62 In addition, a cluster of grammatical treatises including the *Ars Isidori* were copied into one manuscript of the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* (Berlin,

mat of the *Etymologiae* appears in Carolingian pastoral collections and handbooks for priests from the beginning of the ninth century onwards.[63] This type of early medieval book connected with the education of Carolingian clergy commonly features material from Books VI–IX, dealing with God, saints, the Bible, the Church, and the sacraments.[64] In many manuscripts of this type we find this material in the form of excerpt collections woven together from snippets of the *Etymologiae,* and sometimes also others of Isidore's works, and frequently having the form of *interrogationes* and *responsiones* (questions and answers).[65] Al-

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Staatsbibliothek, MS lat. fol. 641, 9th century, med., northern Italy), and six fragments containing material from the first book of the *Etymologiae,* given their small dimensions, represent remnants of non-encyclopedic *Etymologiae* and thus perhaps of manuscripts transmitting the *Ars Isidori.* Manuscripts transmitting this text were mostly copied in Caroline minuscule and date to the ninth century, although the oldest witnesses come from the last decades of the eighth century and one, preserved in Regensburg, is copied in Irish half-uncial.

63 For this type of manuscript, see especially Susan Keefe, *Water and the Word: Baptism and the Education of the Clergy in the Carolingian Empire,* Publications in Mediaeval Studies, 2 vols. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), and Carine van Rhijn, "Manuscripts for Local Priests and the Carolingian Reforms," in *Men in the Middle. Local Priests in Early Medieval Europe,* ed. Carine van Rhijn and Steffen Patzold (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 177–98. Quite a few of the surviving manuscripts of this type transmitting the material from the *Etymologiae* can be dated to the first quarter or the first half of the ninth century. Among the earliest are Albi, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 38bis (9th century, ¼, southern France); Bern, Burgerbibliothek, MS 225 (fols. 88–103) (9th century, ¼, western France); Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, MS Aug. Perg. 18 (9th century, ¼, Reichenau); and Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS lat. 2175 (9th century, in., SW Germany).

64 See Keefe, *Water and the Word,* vol. 1, 22–27, and Carine van Rhijn, "Royal Politics in Small Worlds. Local Priests and the Implementation of Carolingian Correctio," in *Kleine Welten. Ländliche Gesellschaften im Karolingerreich,* ed. Thomas Kohl, Steffen Patzold, and Bernhard Zeller, Vorträge und Forschungen 87 (Ostfildern: Thorbecke, 2019), 9–10.

65 To name but a few, the *Collectio Sangermanensis,* the core of which is constituted by a set of questions and answers taken from the *Etymologiae,* survives fully or partially in seven manuscripts from the corpus. It has been edited in Michael Stadelmaier, *Die Collectio Sangermanensis XXI titulorum: eine systematische Kanonessammlung der frühen Karolingerzeit,*

Taille range	Encyclopedic *Etymologiae* (93 mss.)	*Ars Isidori* (25 mss.)	Pastoral excerpt collections (34 mss.)
< 350 mm (13.82 in.)	0	6	7
351–400 mm (13.82–15.75 in.)	2	5	7
401–450 mm (15.75–17.72 in.)	9	3	10
451–500 mm (17.72–19.67 in.)	16	10	4
501–550 mm (19.67–21.65 in.)	24	1	4
551–600 mm (21.65–23.62 in.)	23	0	1
601–650 mm (23.62–25.59 in.)	14	0	0
651–700 mm (25.59–27.56 in.)	3	0	1
> 700 mm (27.56 in.)	2	0	0

Table 4.4. The distribution of the surviving early medieval manuscripts transmitting the encyclopedic *Etymologiae,* the *Ars Isidori* and the pastoral excerpt collections based on their page tailles.

Freiburger Beiträge zur mittelalterlichen Geschichte 16 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2004). The *Collectio Unde,* another set of questions and answers taken from the *Etymologiae* whose name I took from the *unde* with which the questions are introduced, survives in ten complete early medieval manuscripts and one fragment. It is discussed in Michael Gorman, "The Carolingian Miscellany of Exegetical Texts in Albi 39 and Paris Lat. 2175," *Scriptorium* 51 (1997): 336–54. The collection *Interrogationes et responsiones de diversis causis* survives in eight manuscripts. It is described in María Adelaida Andrés Sanz, "Una reelaboración de textos isidorianos en forma de interrogationes et responsiones," *Helmantica: Revista de filología clásica y hebrea* 57, no. 172 (2006): 29–48. The collection *De catholica ecclesia et eius minisitris et de baptismatis officio,* survives in at least thirteen manuscripts; see Michael Andrieu, *Les ordines romani du haut*

together, the corpus includes thirty-four manuscripts that can either be classified as pastoral collections or be connected with pastoral care due to the texts they contain (exegesis, excerpts from patristic authors, expositions of the Creed, the baptism, the mass, etc.).

A common trait of manuscripts transmitting the *Ars Isidori* and the catechetical excerpt collections is their small size (t. 4.4). The average taille of manuscripts that transmit the first book of the *Etymologiae* turned *ars grammatica* is 413 mm (16.38 in.), while pastoral collections built from the material from Isidore's encyclopedia have an average taille of 419 mm (16.5 in.). If, moreover, two exceptionally large outliers are excluded from among the manuscripts transmitting pastoral excerpt collections, their average taille drops to 406 mm (15.98 in.).[66] The tailles of these two types of non-encyclopedic *Etymologiae* are, thus, 12–13 cm (5.12 in.) less than the average taille of an early medieval codex of the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* (542 mm [21.34 in.]) and almost 15–16 cm (6.3 in.) less than the average taille of a Carolingian single-volume copy of the *Etymologiae* (572 mm [22.52 in.]). Furthermore, only one manuscript of *ars Isidori* and six codices containing pastoral excerpt collections (or four excluding the outliers) have a taille above 500 mm (19.59 in.), which is true for 66 of the 95 surviving early medieval copies of the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* (70%) and thirty-four out of the thirty-six single-volume copies produced in Caroline minuscule (94%). By contrast, eleven manuscripts transmitting the *Ars Isidori* and fourteen codices containing the pastoral excerpt collection compiled from the *Etymologiae* have a taille below 400 mm (15.75 in.), which is true for only two surviving early medieval copies of the encyclopedic *Etymologiae,* both of

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Moyen Âge, vol. 1, Spicilegium sacrum Lovaniense 11 (Leuven: Spicilegium sacrum Lovaniense, 1931), 338 and 479–80.

66 These are Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, MS Aug. Perg. 18 (9th century, ¼, Reichenau) with a taille of 695 mm (27.36 in.), and Montecassino, Archivio dell'Abbazia, MS 205 (11th century, southern Italy) with a taille of 565 mm (22.24 in.).
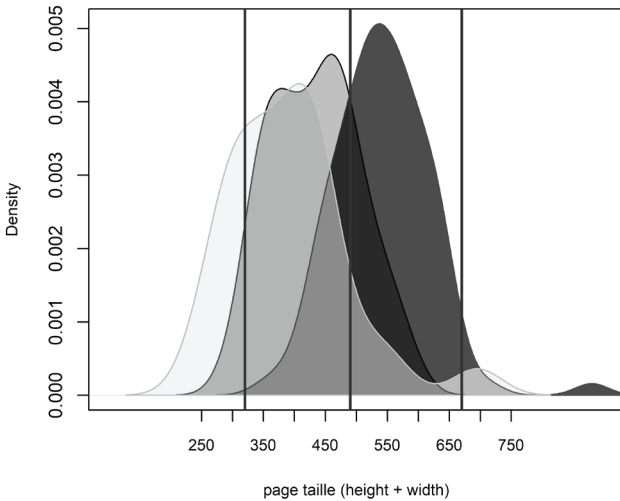
Fig. 4.2. The distribution of page tailles of the surviving early medieval manuscripts transmitting the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* (dark grey, ninety-five manuscripts), the non-encyclopedic *Etymologiae* in grammatical compendia (grey, forty-three manuscripts), and the non-encyclopedic *Etymologiae* in pastoral collections (light grey, twenty-nine manuscripts). The vertical lines mark the borders of Bozzolo and Ornato's typological categories: *petits* (<320 mm [12.6 in.]), *petit-moyens* (320–490 mm [12.6–19.29 in.]), *moyen-grands* (491–670 mm [19.33–26.38 in.]), and *grands* (>670 mm [26.38 in.]). This density graph was plotted with R.

a multi-volume kind.[67] Manuscripts transmitting both types of non-encyclopedic *Etymologiae* belong mostly to Bozzolo and Ornato's *petit-moyens* category (320–490 mm [12.6–19.3 in.]) rather than to the *moyen-grands* (491–670 mm [19.33–26.38 in.]) like the majority of the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* (fig. 4.2).

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67 It should, moreover, be observed that the 43 manuscripts from the corpus that can be classified as grammatical compendia, a category including the 25 manuscripts of the *Ars Isidori* as well as other manuscripts containing smaller bits of the *Etymologiae,* have an average taille of 433 mm (16.93 in.).

The two types of non-encyclopedic *Etymologiae* we just compared to the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* also circulated in the early Middle Ages in the humblest but also perhaps the most common material format available, namely as unbound small *libelli*.[68] Given the extremely low survival rate of such booklets, it is a miracle that the corpus preserves six of them: five of the *Ars Isidori* and one of a catechetical excerpt collection.[69] The practically-focused design is immediately apparent from the fact that five of the six *libelli* have a taille in the range of 300–350 mm (11.81–13.79 in.), making them among the smallest surviving early medieval manuscripts transmitting the *Etymologiae*.[70] These *libelli* are all that survives of what once may have been a sizable but highly perishable population of handbooks used in education and clerical instruction.[71] Materially, they repre-

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68 On *libelli,* see Pamela Robinson, "The 'Booklet': A Self-contained Unit in Composite Manuscripts," in *Codicologica* 3: *Essais typologiques,* ed. A. Gruys and J.P. Gumbert (Leiden: Brill, 1980), 46–69; Patrick Andrist, Paul Canart, and Marilena Maniaci, *La syntaxe du codex: essai de codicologie structurale,* Bibliologia 34 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 15–17; and Pascale Bourgain, "The Circulation of Texts in Manuscript Culture," in *The Medieval Manuscript Book: Cultural Approaches,* ed. Michael Robert Johnston and Michael Van Dussen, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 94 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 144.

69 The four grammatical booklets are Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS Voss. Lat. O 41 (9th century, ¼, NE France); London, British Library, MS Harley 2713 (fols. 1–34) (9th century, ¼, NE France); Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius 25 (fols. 134–151) (9th century, Murbach); Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS lat. 11278 (9th century, ½, southern France or Italy?); and Trier, Bibliothek des Bischöflichen Priesterseminars, MS 100 (fols. 1–16) (9th century, ¾, northern France). The catechetical booklet is St. Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 879 (9th century, ⅔, Lyon). Perhaps also to be counted among these *libelli* is St. Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 876, bound together from originally separate booklets; see De Paolis, "Un manuale scolastico da Corbie," 82.

70 The exception is the Junius manuscript with a taille of 498 mm (19.60 in.). Its size and other features suggest that it may represent quires removed from a manuscript of the encyclopedic *Etymologiae,* to be circulated separately as a *libellus.*

71 See Keefe, *Water and the Word,* vol. 1, 16, and Cardelle de Hartmann, "Uso y reception de las *Etymologiae* de Isidoro," 489. As Keefe notes, the early medieval pastoral *libelli* were produced from model books that served as

sent the extreme opposite of the codex *nimiae magnitudinis* assembled by Isidore, making it possible for the contents of the *Etymologiae* to reach a substantially broader audience than the encyclopedic format.

However, not all non-encyclopedic formats are notable for their small dimensions. For example, certain collections of canon law acquired chapter 16 of Book VI of the *Etymologiae* (*De canonibus conciliorum,* "On the accepted councils") as a preface in the Carolingian environment.[72] The average taille of the eleven surviving manuscripts of canon law with this preface is 537 mm (21.14 in.), that is, it resembles the average taille of extra-Iberian encyclopedic *Etymologiae* (534 mm [21.02 in.]) rather than the average tailles of grammatical compendia and pastoral collections containing material from Isidore's encyclopedia (413 mm [16.38 in.] and 419 mm [16.5 in.], respectively). The six manuscripts of the Bible included in the corpus, because they feature excerpts from the *Etymologiae,* have an even larger average taille of 556 mm (21.89 in.). As these two examples make clear, the physical size of manuscripts transmitting the non-encyclopedic *Etymologiae* did not depend on whether they transmit material from Isidore's encyclopedia but rather on the purpose they served and audiences to which they catered. Canon law collections and Bibles transmitting the material from the *Etymologiae* are large-format because they are canon law collections and Bibles, which tend to be among the larger early medieval books,[73] just as grammatical compendia and pastoral collections transmitting non-encyclopedic formats of the *Etymologiae* are

exemplars for their copying. As in the case of bishops' and priests' books, some of the surviving early medieval grammatical compendia are clearly such model books. In one rare case, we possess both the model book (Bern, Burgerbibliothek, MS 207, 9th century, ½, Fleury), and a teacher's book containing an *Ars Isidori* copied from it (Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS Voss. Lat. Q 86, 9th century, med., Fleury).

72 See Friedrich Maassen, *Geschichte der Quellen und der Literatur des Canonischen Rechts im Abendlande* I: *Die Rechtssammlungen bis zur Mitte des 9. Jahrhunderts* (Graz: Leuschner & Lubensky, 1870), 352.

73 Bibles tend to have large page dimensions; see Bozzolo and Ornato, *Pour une histoire du livre manuscrit au Moyen Âge,* 265.

small in size because this is the general property of early me-
dieval grammatical compendia and pastoral collections. It was
therefore the marriage of the *Etymologiae* with these types of
medieval books that led Isidore's work to inhabit ever smaller
pages.

Crucially, the incorporation of the *Etymologiae* into books
that were by nature small, light, portable, relatively inexpensive
to produce, and practical for certain kinds of uses may have re-
leased some of the pressure that, as we have seen, drove early
medieval scribes to look for ways to make manuscripts of the
encyclopedic *Etymologiae* smaller in size. Indeed, the de-canon-
ization of the *Etymologiae* was, alongside segmentation, another
viable strategy to bring Isidore's work below the minimal thresh-
old taille of 450 mm (17.72 in.) that few encyclopedic copies of the
Etymologiae surpassed in the early Middle Ages. The occasional
surviving pre-Carolingian manuscripts of non-encyclopedic *Et-
ymologiae* demonstrate that this strategy was developed before
the advent of the Carolingian period.[74] Yet, as the dates of the
oldest witnesses of many formats of non-encyclopedic *Etymolo-
giae* suggests, their boom came in the ninth century. The explo-
sion of the *artes Isidori,* Isidorian question-and-answer collec-
tions, and other iterations of the non-encyclopedic *Etymologiae*
that followed in the wake of the Carolingian reform movement
indicate that production of non-encyclopedic *Etymologiae* was
the Carolingian strategy of choice. Segmentation, on the other
hand, seems to have been favored in the pre-Carolingian world,
but to have lost its appeal at the same time as the production of
non-encyclopedic formats gathered pace.

The fact that non-encyclopedic *Etymologiae* were able to fill
niches that the encyclopedic format could not may partially ex-
plain the increase in the size of the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* in
the Carolingian period. The non-encyclopedic *Etymologiae* in

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74 The Irish, in particular, seem to have been pioneers, compiling several
computistic non-encyclopedic formats as a result of their interest in time
reckoning. See Immo Warntjes, "Isidore of Seville and the Formation of
Medieval Computus," in *A Companion to Isidore of Seville,* ed. Andrew
Fear and Jamie Wood (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 25–26.

its many new shapes and context-specific appropriations satisfied the needs of Carolingian users who wished to use Isidore's work as a schoolbook, a pedagogical aid, an instructional manual for priests-in-training, an introduction to specific disciplines, or a technical text on this or that subject. As a result, the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* profiled more clearly as a scholarly library book — that is, a book with one specific use. As two centuries of pressure exerted on the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* were lifted, it began to increase in size again. Paradoxically, this bifurcation of encyclopedic and non-encyclopedic *Etymologiae* may have reinforced the material differentiation of the two branches of transmission and driven them further apart. The more *artes Isidori* and Isidorian catechetical collections circulated in the Carolingian period, the less need there was for the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* to leave their natural habitat in monastic and cathedral libraries.

Who Was Reading the *Etymologiae* in the Early Middle Ages and How?

The trajectories of the material development of the *Etymologiae* in the early Middle Ages leads to the question of the intended and actual audiences of the encyclopedic and non-encyclopedic formats. When we wish to consider the role of users on the material properties of the manuscripts transmitting the *Etymologiae,* we must not forget that it was a two-sided exchange. Scribes and readers determined how a medieval manuscript text looked, but their copying and reading habits were also shaped by the physical format of a text. On the one hand, the material evolution of the *Etymologiae* described above reflects the conditions and intentions of particular social, cultural, and economic milieux. It sketches a story, in which many pre-Carolingian *scriptoria* may have struggled to reproduce the lavishness of Isidore's much-sought-after text or not to invest too much parchment into its production, as well as of the ambition of Carolingian *scriptoria*

to increase the prestige of Isidore's encyclopedia just as his status was rising among Carolingian intellectuals.

On the other hand, however, the material form of a book also exerted influence on users, affecting who had access to certain authors, genres, texts, or constellations of texts, how they were read, and even how users interpreted them. As the hundreds of surviving early medieval manuscripts transmitting non-encyclopedic *Etymologiae* attest, the early Middle Ages, and the Carolingian period in particular, recognized many Isidores besides Isidore the Encyclopedist. Many Carolingian schoolboys (and perhaps also the odd schoolgirl) knew Isidore as a grammarian akin to Donatus, or perhaps their schoolmasters. Many Carolingian clerics-in-training and priests were familiar with Isidore the Catechist akin to the reforming Carolingian bishops, and their seniors. There were also several other Isidores who had little to do with the historical bishop of Seville and his seventh-century oeuvre, but were a fixture of the ninth-century intellectual landscape.[75] Many of the early medieval users of the *Etymologiae* would never encounter Isidore in other guises because their limited education never took them beyond the *Ars Isidori* or a question-and-answer collection serving the bettering of their Christian souls.[76] Thus, the material properties of the surviving early medieval manuscripts of the *Etymologiae* not only reveal a history consisting of downsizing and growth, but

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75 Book IV of the canonical *Etymologiae* (*De medicina,* "On medicine") is, for example, transmitted in Carolingian and later Beneventan medical compendia, sometimes as an epistle of Hippocrates; see Arsenio Ferraces Rodríguez, "Isidoro de Sevilla y los textos de medicina," in *"Isidorus medicus": Isidoro de Sevilla y los textos de medicina,* ed. Arsenio Ferraces Rodríguez, Monografías 113 (A Coruña: Universidade da Coruña, 2005), 11–37. The first two sections of Book III (*De arithmetica* and *De geometria,* known together as *De mathematica*) began to circulate as a preface to Boethius's *Institutio arithmetica* in Carolingian environments by mid-ninth century, perhaps as a result of the introduction of Boethius's works to schools; see John J. Contreni, "The Pursuit of Knowledge in Carolingian Europe," in *The Gentle Voices of Teachers: Aspects of Learning in the Carolingian Age,* ed. Richard Sullivan (Columbus: Ohio University Press, 1995), 124–25.

76 Compare with the description of schools in Contreni, "The Pursuit of Knowledge," 111–14.

also show that medieval users of this text perceived it rather differently both from how its author envisaged it, and from how we have been taught to see it as a consequence of attitudes fostered by nineteenth-century scholarship.[77]

Even though the survival of ninety-five early medieval copies of the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* suggests that several hundred of these encyclopedic manuscripts were produced in the early Middle Ages, these were, for the most part, in-house scholarly copies preserved in monastic and cathedral libraries.[78] It is unclear who exactly had access to these scholarly copies. The few users that can be identified based on their marginalia or literary activity are overwhelmingly highly literate elite users, including well-known scholars.[79] Indeed, we should not assume that anyone beyond the learned few read and used the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* in a manner envisaged by some modern scholars. By contrast, an average user of the non-encyclopedic formats of the *Etymologiae* described above was not an elite intellectual, nor did they necessarily have access to a monastic or cathedral

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77 See most recently John Henderson, *The Medieval World of Isidore of Seville: Truth from Words* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). The author espouses a view that the *Etymologiae* was read in a continuous manner. However, the *Etymlogiae* were meant to be consulted, not read.

78 Many of them have never left the walls of the institutions that produced them, making it clear that they were among the most travel-resistant books in the early Middle Ages; see Steinová, "The Oldest Manuscript Tradition of the *Etymologiae*," 112.

79 Hrabanus Maurus used the *Etymologiae* as a source of several of his works, notably of *De rerum naturis.* Walahfrid Strabo excerpted parts of Book I into his *collectaneum;* see Cardelle de Hartmann, "Uso y reception de las *Etymologiae* de Isidoro," 487–88. Martin of Laon included bits from the *Etymologiae* into his *collectaneum* in Laon, Bibliothèque municipale Suzanne Martinet, MS 468 (9th century, ¾, Laon); see John J. Contreni, *Codex Laudunensis 468: A Ninth-Century Guide to Virgil, Sedulius and the Liberal Arts,* Armarium Codicum Insignium 3 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1984), 17–18. Marginal annotations of Paul the Deacon are preserved in the twelfth-century Rome, Biblioteca Vallicelliana, A 18; see Claudia Villa, "Uno schedario di Paolo Diacono. Festo e Grauso di Ceneda," *Italia medioevale e umanistica* 27 (1984): 56–80. The *Etymologiae* were also annotated by Leo of Vercelli; see Simona Gavinelli, "Leone di Vercelli postillatore di codici," *Aevum* 75 (2001): 233–62.

library. It is true that none of the established non-encyclopedic formats of the *Etymologiae* identified in this chapter survives in numbers comparable to the encyclopedic *Etymologiae*. However, we need to keep in mind that material properties affected the rates of survival of early medieval manuscripts. As many of the most influential non-encyclopedic formats of the *Etymologiae* were small, of modest quality, designed to be portable, and perhaps even unbound, they likely disappeared at substantially higher rates than encyclopedic *Etymologiae*. Indeed, the smaller and more modest they were, the more significant this difference in the number of surviving witnesses may be in comparison with the manuscripts of the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* — the *libelli* discussed above are just one example. For this reason, we must seriously consider the possibility that some of the non-encyclopedic formats rivaled the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* in the extent of their diffusion and importance in the early Middle Ages. The *Ars Isidori* and the various embodiments of Isidore the Catechist, in particular, may have had a transformative effect on the status of Isidore as an author in the Carolingian period.

Paradoxically, while the *Etymologiae* became the encyclopedia of the Carolingian age *par excellence,* it was also regularly treated as an educational text, utilized for teaching on various levels by generations of schoolmasters, reformers, and other education specialists.[80] The more these two distinct domains of uses solidified in the Carolingian period, the more manuscripts embodying them differed materially and the more they reinforced the separation of these domains. Thus, the codices of the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* grew larger, more ornate, and more majestic, reverting to the ideal envisaged for them by Isidore after having broken away from it in the seventh and the eighth centuries. Many formats of the non-encyclopedic *Etymologiae,* on the other hand, acquired a life of their own, circulating as

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80 As is observed in John J. Contreni, "The Carolingian Renaissance: Education and Literary Culture," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History,* ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), vol. 2, 726, and Codoñer Merino, "Transmisión y recepción de las Etimologías," 23.

self-sufficient texts for centuries after the decline of the Carolingian *scriptoria* that created them.[81] We must ask whether even those who moved between these two domains, as many Carolingian scholars did in different stages of their lives, saw the non-encyclopedic formats of the *Etymologiae* as related to Isidore's encyclopedia. It is possible that medieval users saw them as categorically different because they rarely treated a text as an abstract object that could be separated from its material embodiment. Instead, they thought with their hands, which would tell them that the big, heavy, and immobile encyclopedia perched on a lectern in their monastery was unlike the small and light *libellus* that they carried to school in their youth.

Sometimes, we should follow the example of those medieval scholars, and peek from behind our laptop screens to think with our hands (and backs). Only once we are forced to carry those early medieval books back and forth in libraries and wrestle with their pages, trying to keep them open on our desks, does something as abstract as the physical dimensions, or even worse, the taille of a manuscript, acquire real significance. It is one thing to read that an average one-volume manuscript of the *Etymologiae* copied in Caroline minuscule has a taille of 572 mm (22.52 in.), and quite another to have to use such a manuscript *in situ,* being forced to consider the operations for which such a large and heavy book could be used. It is only then that one can appreciate a taille difference of 5, 10, or 15 cm (1.97, 3.94, or 5.91 in.). For those who cannot immediately rush to a library, it may be enlightening to know that an average Carolingian one-vol-

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81 The *Ars Isidori* can be encountered as a model for the teaching of grammar up until the twelfth century; see Roger Baron, "La grammaire de Hugues de Saint-Victor," *Studi medievali* 7 (1966): 835–55, and Evina Steinová, *"Notam superponere studui": The Use of Annotation Symbols in the Early Middle Ages* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2019), 154. The Carolingian catechetical collections likewise continued to be transmitted well into the central Middle Ages. The excerpt collection *Interrogationes et responsiones de diversis causis,* for example, survives in six manuscripts dating from the eleventh to the fifteenth century and the collection *De catholica ecclesia et eius minisitris et de baptismatis officio* appears in nine eleventh- to thirteenth-century codices.

ume copy of the *Etymologiae* has pages slightly larger than Aris's *Explicatio formarum litterarum* (but is substantially thicker and heavier given the weight of parchment and wooden boards). At the same time, those non-encyclopedic *Etymologiae* with tailles of around 400 mm (15.75 in.) are roughly the equivalent of Bischoff's *Latin Paleography,* and perhaps not much heavier, depending on the number of folios and whether they were bound or not.

The shrinking of the *Etymologiae* in the early Middle Ages was neither accidental nor haphazard. It was a marvelous development, stimulated by a cocktail of factors. Early medieval scribes emerge from this story as enthusiastic and intelligent innovators, challenging the idea that the early Middle Ages was an era of conservativism and limited progress. We may be further surprised by their creativity if we study the material aspect of other early medieval textual traditions.

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