Many more documents survive from the early Middle Ages than from the Roman Empire. Although ecclesiastical archives may account for the dramatic increase in the number of surviving documents, this new investigation reveals the scale and spread of documentary culture beyond the Church. The contributors explore the nature of the surviving documentation without preconceptions to show that we cannot infer changing documentary practices from patterns of survival. Throughout Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages – from North Africa, Egypt, Italy, Francia and Spain to Anglo-Saxon England – people at all social levels, whether laity or clergy, landowners or tenants, farmers or royal functionaries, needed, used and kept documents. The story of documentary culture in the early medieval world emerges not as one of its capture by the Church, but rather of a response adopted by those who needed documents, as they reacted to a changing legal, social and institutional landscape.

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## Contents

List of figures and tables.......................................................... page vii  
List of contributors....................................................................... viii  
Acknowledgements......................................................................... ix  
List of abbreviations....................................................................... xi  

1 Introduction.................................................................................. 1  

2 Lay archives in the Late Antique and Byzantine East: the implications of the documentary papyri......................... 17  
PETER SARRIS  

3 Public administration, private individuals and the written word in Late Antique North Africa, c. 284–700.................. 36  
JONATHAN P. CONANT  

4 Lay documents and archives in early medieval Spain and Italy, c. 400–700......................................................... 63  
NICHOLAS EVERETT  

5 The gesta municipalia and the public validation of documents in Frankish Europe................................................. 95  
WARREN C. BROWN  

6 Laypeople and documents in the Frankish formula collections............................................................................ 125  
WARREN C. BROWN  

7 Archives, documents and landowners in Carolingian Francia................................................................................. 152  
MATTHEW INNES  

8 The production and preservation of documents in Francia: the evidence of cartularies.............................................. 189  
HANS HUMMER
Contents

9 The laity, the clergy, the scribes and their archives: the documentary record of eighth- and ninth-century Italy
   MARIOS COSTAMBEYS

10 Sicut mos esse solet: documentary practices in Christian Iberia, c. 700–1000
   ADAM J. KOSTO

11 On the material culture of legal documents: charters and their preservation in the Cluny archive, ninth to eleventh centuries
   MATTHEW INNES

12 Documentary practices, archives and laypeople in central Italy, mid ninth to eleventh centuries
   ANTONIO SENNIS

13 Archives and lay documentary practice in the Anglo-Saxon world
   CHARLES INSLEY

14 Conclusion

Index
Figures and tables

Figures
5.1 BnF lat. 10756, pp. 63–4. page 110–11
6.1 BnF lat. 2123, fol. 147r, detail. 146
6.2 BnF lat. 2123, fol. 121va, detail. 148

Tables
9.1 Proportions of ‘lay’ documents in some Italian archives. 239
9.2 Proportions of documents of sale in some Italian archives. 241
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This book is less a traditional edited volume than one result of a highly fruitful process of collaborative research. What began as a discussion over a pint in Princeton in November 2000 grew into an ever-widening e-mail exchange spanning eight time zones, and then a panel at Leeds (2002); formal workshops in London (2003), Pasadena (2004), Vienna (2005), Canterbury (2006) and Cambridge (2007); a panel at the Medieval Academy in Vancouver (2008); and finally – for the four editors – a remarkable series of group writing sessions, from which the introduction and conclusion emerged and the various parts were woven into a whole. From the beginning, the ten members of the Lay Archives Working Group, as we came to be called, were all frustrated by the increasingly outcomes-driven framework of much research in the humanities. We therefore banned all discussion of a collective publication until several years into the undertaking; our goals were, rather, undirected exploration of our common theme and intellectual exchange among a transatlantic network of younger scholars, most of whom did not know each other well or at all when we began. Various members did publish work separately as we progressed, but only when it became clear that we as a group had something potentially important to say did we turn to work on the present volume. This long process (punctuated by the arrival of eight children!) lies behind what we hope will be seen as a very well-integrated publication – not a set of papers, but a book with a collective voice and a common argument.

So as not to succumb to groupthink, from early on we invited other scholars to sit in on our workshops, and it is their probing questions, collegial suggestions and encouragement of our collective approach that we have the pleasure to acknowledge first: Rosamond McKitterick and Christina Pössel at London; Patrick Geary, Jason Glenn and Claudia Rapp in Pasadena; Walter Pohl, Peter Erhart and Bernhard Zeller in Vienna; and Geoff Koziol and Barbara Rosenwein, who served as commenters on the Vancouver panel. Koziol went on to serve as an extraordinarily incisive reader of our manuscript for Cambridge University
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We dedicate this book to our mentors, formal and informal, who taught us to value collaboration over competition.
Abbreviations

Series

CSEL  
Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum
Latinorum (Vienna, 1866–)

CCSL / G  
Corpus Christianorum series Latina
(Turnhout, 1953–); series Graeca (Turnhout,
1977–)

MGH  
Monumenta Germaniae historica
AA  
Auctores antiquissimi
Capit.  
Capitularia
Const.  
Constitutiones et acta publica imperatorum
et regum
DD  
Diplomata
Epist.  
Epistolae
Libri mem. n.s.  
Libri memoriales et necrologia, nova series
LL  
Leges (in folio)
LL nat. Germ.  
Leges nationum Germanicarum
SrG [n.s.]  
Scriptores rerum Germanicarum [nova
series]
SRL  
Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum et
Italicarum
SRM  
Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum

MGH Formulae  
Formulae Merovingici et Karolini aevi, ed.
K. Zeumer, MGH Legum sectio V (Hannover,
1886)

Form. Andec.  
Formulae Andecavenses
Form. Arvern.  
Formulae Arverneses
Marculf  
Formulae Marculf
Marculf [Supp.]  
Marculf formulae [Supplementum]
Form. Marc. Kar.  
Formulae Marculf aevi Karolini
Form. Tur.  
Formulae Turonenses vulgo Sirmundicae dictae
Form. Tur. Add.  
Additatmenta e codicibus formularum
Turonensium
xii  List of abbreviations

Form. Bitur.  Formulae Bituricenses
Form. Sen.  Formulae Senonenses
Cart. Sen. [App.]  Cartae Senonicae [Appendix]
Form. Sen. Rec.  Formulae Senonenses recentiores
Form. Sal. Big.  Formulae Salicae Bignoniana
Form. Sal. Merk.  Formulae Salicae Merkeliana
Form. Sal. Lind.  Formulae Salicae Lindenbrogiana
Form. Sang. Misc.  Formulae Sangallenses miscellaneae
Coll. Sang.  Collectio Sangallensis Salomonis III. tempore conscripta
Form. Salz.  Formulae Salzburgenses
Coll. Flav.  Collectio Flaviniacensis
Form. Vis.  Formulae Visigothicae


Charters

ChLA  Chartae latinae antiquiores, ed. A. Bruckner et al. (Olten, 1954–)
CDL  Codice diplomatico longobardo, ed. L. Schiaparelli et al., 5 vols. in 7 (Rome, 1929–2003)
Cluny  Recueil des chartes de l’abbaye de Cluny, ed. A. Bernard and A. Bruel, 6 vols. (Paris, 1876–1903)
Rio, Formularies  A. Rio, trans., The Formularies of Angers and Marculf: Two Merovingian Legal Handbooks (Liverpool, 2008)
### List of Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TP</td>
<td><em>Die Traditionen des Hochstifts Passau</em>, ed. M. Heuwieser (Munich, 1930)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wartmann</td>
<td><em>Urkundenbuch der Abtei Sanct Gallen</em>, ed. H. Wartmann, 6 vols. in 7 (Zürich, 1863–1931)</td>
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### Law

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<tr>
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<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>CTh</td>
<td><em>Codex Theodosianus</em>, ed. P. Krüger, T. Mommsen and P. M. Meyer, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1905)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dig.</td>
<td><em>Iustiniani Digesta</em>, ed. T. Mommsen and P. Krüger, <em>CIC</em> 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>ER</td>
<td><em>Editus Rothari</em>, ed. G. H. Pertz, MGH LL 4:3–90</td>
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<tr>
<td>J.Edict</td>
<td><em>Iustiniani XIII Edicta quae vocantur</em>, ed. R. Schöll and W. Kroll, <em>CIC</em> 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LRV</td>
<td><em>Lex Romana Visigothorum</em>, ed. G. Haenel (Leipzig, 1847)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
xiv  List of abbreviations

**Papyri**

*CPR*  *Corpus papyrorum Raineri* (Vienna, 1895–)

*P.Bad*  *Veröffentlichungen aus den badischen Papyrus-Sammlungen*, 6 vols. (Heidelberg, 1923–38)

*P.Ital.*  *I papiri diplomatici*, ed. G. Marini (Rome, 1805)

*P.Oxy*  *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* (London, 1898–)

*PSI*  *Papiri greci e latini* (Florence, 1912–)

**Studies**


List of abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recht und Schrift</td>
<td>P. Classen (ed.), <em>Recht und Schrift im Mittelalter</em> (Sigmaringen, 1977)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses of Literacy</td>
<td>R. McKitterick (ed.), <em>The Uses of Literacy in Early Medieval Europe</em> (Cambridge, 1990)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wickham, Framing</td>
<td>C. Wickham, <em>Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean</em>, 400–800 (Oxford, 2005)</td>
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Journals

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<th>Journal</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>EME</td>
<td><em>Early Medieval Europe</em> (Harlow, 1992–)</td>
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<tr>
<td>TRHS</td>
<td><em>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</em> (London, 1872–)</td>
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Varia

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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>BnF</td>
<td>Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIL</td>
<td><em>Corpus inscriptionum Latinarum</em>, 18 vols. (Berlin, 1862–1899)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of abbreviations


Niermeyer, Lexicon  J. F. Niermeyer, Mediae Latinitatis lexicon minus (Leiden, 1976)

Settimane  Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull’alto medioevo (Spoleto, 1953–)