Nuremberg chronicle, by Hartmann Schedel
Rare Books Collection, University of Melbourne Library

Hartmann Schedel (German, 1440–1514)
Lib[er] cronicarum, cu[m] figuris et ymag[n]ibus
ab inicio mu[n]di
(The ‘Nuremberg chronicle’)
Nuremberg: Anton Koberger, 1493
Gift of Dr J. Orde Poynton, 1959
Rare Books Collection
University of Melbourne Library
The *Nuremberg chronicle*, as it is commonly called (after the city in which it was produced), is a history of the world up until 1493. It represents an astounding feat of ambition and production, for it chronicles both religious and secular histories, illustrated with 1,800 woodcuts. It was printed firstly in a Latin edition (shown here is one of the two Latin copies held in the Baillieu Library), and then in the local German language, in a print run of some 1,500 copies, indicating that its intended audience was not only the specialist, but also the citizen.

The book was written by Hartmann Schedel, a physician, and published by Anton Koberger, dubbed the ‘Prince of Printers’, who was also the godfather of Albrecht Dürer. The illustrations are by Wilhelm Pleydenwurff and Michael Wolgemut, to whom Dürer was apprenticed, so the book serves also as a clue to the formation of that virtuoso artist.

The book’s maps of the world and expansive depictions of towns and cities are some of the most acclaimed among the images, reflecting as they do the geography of the 15th century. Some woodcuts are repeated through the book, yet others are curiously fascinating and have inspired scholars and artists alike.

**Teaching ideas**

The University of Melbourne’s curriculum is rich and varied, and changes from year to year. For more teaching ideas, [contact a collection manager](#).

**The Book: Late Antiquity to Renaissance**

Study the physical structure of the book – focus on the relationship between text and decoration in vernacular histories and romances, and the Renaissance humanist book.

**History of Books and Reading**

Focus on changing technologies and aesthetics of book production; relationships between reading and other cultural practices; changing roles of publishers, booksellers and authors; and the evolution of libraries as repositories and gatekeepers of approved knowledge. Develop an awareness of the long history of the book and its role in the construction of Western concepts of textual authority.

**Latin**

Discover the importance of reading a variety of Latin texts in the original language in order to study history and the ancient world. Become familiar with Latin grammar, syntax and vocabulary.

**The Print Room**

Incorporate the history of printed books and their display, while learning about techniques and media of printmaking, by working with the Baillieu Library Print Collection. Create an online exhibition and catalogue.

**Print Production and Design**

Understand the effect of changing technologies on typography, graphic design and production processes. Introduce the principles and value of good typography through book design.

**The Power of Ideas: Ten Great Books**

Explore critical traditions of thought that extend back through time, by viewing printed books from the Rare Books Collection to develop an appreciation of the power of creative expression and ideas.

**Urban History**

Examine the ideas, values and forces that influenced the physical growth and development of urban areas in the developed world.

**The Medieval Image: Art and Culture**

Use specific case studies in the Rare Books Collection to focus on how attitudes were manifest in particular artworks or monuments, with site visits to University of Melbourne collections.
Intersecting objects

[Biblia Latina], one leaf
(page from the ‘Gutenberg Bible’)
Mainz: Printer of the 42-line Bible
(Johann Gutenberg & Peter Schoeffer?), c. 1454–56
Rare Books Collection
University of Melbourne Library

Albrecht Dürer (German, 1471–1528)
Knight, Death and the Devil, 1513
engraving
24.2 × 18.4 cm (image)
25.5 × 18.9 cm (sheet)
Baillieu Library Print Collection
University of Melbourne

To learn more, visit the websites of the Rare Books Collection and the Baillieu Library Print Collection.

References