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**DEVOTIONAL LITERATURE IN THE LATE MIDDLE AGES AND EARLY-MODERN PERIOD (15<sup>TH</sup>-16<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY)**  
(International Conference, Cluj-Napoca, 31<sup>st</sup> May – 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2018)

With the recent cultural and scholarly effervescence occasioned by the celebration of the five hundred years since the Reformation, studies pertaining to the religious, ecclesiastical or cultural history enjoyed great research focus. On this background, contemporary historiography has highlighted the importance of religious literature for a better understanding of the transition from the late Middle Ages to the time of the Reformation. From the research point of view, the study of prayer books opens the perspective of scrutinizing the religious devotion of clergy and laity alike, offering at the same time the opportunity to explore Christian mentalities and practices in the period under discussion. Besides the particular focus on several exceptional specimens, the analysis of prayer books would largely benefit from its contextualization within the broader phenomenon of devotional literature, by reference to the cultural, religious and artistic trends of the epoch, to the circulation of ideas and their reception in a given context.

The international conference dedicated to the devotional literature (Gebetsliteratur) of the late Middle Ages and the period of the Religious Reformation (15th - 16th centuries), organized between 31st of May and 2th of June 2018, by the Central University Library "Lucian Blaga" from Cluj-Napoca, in partnership with the University of Tübingen – Protestant Theology Faculty (Dr. Volker Leppin), The Reformation Research Consortium RefoRC (dr. Herman Selderhuis), and the Institute of Evangelical theology, University of Koblenz-Landau (dr. Ulrich A. Wien) aims at offering a broader scholarly framework for discussing prayer and other devotional books. The idea started from the intention to place into a wider perspective a spectacular German prayer book of the fifteenth century (Ms. 683 - <http://dspace.bcucuj.ro/handle/123456789/13246>), which might not be the oldest codex in our collections, but it is undoubtedly the most beautiful and well-known one. Most likely destined for private devotion, as indicated by its small size, the manuscript is elegantly calligraphed and richly illustrated with 31 full-page illuminations. Insufficiently explored in existing literature, it lends itself to a variety of research approaches, from the philological and codicological analysis, to interpretations related to the history of art, the study of religious piety or the sociology of reading. Relevant for the study of German devotional literature in the late Middle Ages, the mentioned codex also provides the ideal opportunity to initiate a wider discussion of similar works, manuscripts or printed books.

This is precisely the intention of our conference, namely to attract international scholarly attention to manuscript Ms. 683, on the one hand, and to provide the starting point for a multifaceted interdisciplinary approach of the phenomenon of devotional literature in the late Middle Ages and early modern period, on the other hand. By focusing on the latter, the conference intends to highlight the transition from medieval to early-modern religiosity, more specifically from the religiosity of medieval Catholicism to the post-Reformation piety, either Protestant or specific to post-Tridentine Catholicism. Furthermore, one should keep in mind that devotional literature of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries was greatly influenced not only by the already mentioned religious developments, but also by the transition from

handwritten to printed texts. Both processes had profound implications on its content, form and functions. Addressing such issues while investigating devotional literature as a broad genre, the conference aims to illustrate both the continuities and the discontinuities within the religious practices and mentalities of the epoch.

Putting under scrutiny manuscripts and printed books alike, produced in a period of co-existence and transition from handwritten to mechanized printing techniques, the purpose of the conference is to create a dialogue platform that should mediate between different regional historiographies and various scholarly disciplines. Such an interdisciplinary dialogue will bring together experts from five countries and thus facilitate the encounter between the most up-to-date research directions in Western literature and the Transylvanian documentary material. The organizers encourage methodological and interpretative approaches that shall not be limited to mere descriptive analyzes specific to analytical bibliographies, but contribute to a broader contextual understanding of the subject, from a multitude of points of view. Therefore, contributions from the areas of philological studies, social and cultural history, the history of medieval and early modern piety, as well as the history of art (in relation to the study of illuminations and book illustration) are more than welcome. The ultimate outcome of such an endeavor is to facilitate the encounter between the local documentary material and historiography and the major directions of contemporary research and thus to contribute to refining the understanding of the European devotional and cultural horizon in the 15th-16th centuries. Just as importantly, such a dialogue platform would be extremely beneficial for integrating the Transylvanian documentary material into the international scholarly circuit.

We look forward to presentations on 15<sup>th</sup> -16<sup>th</sup> century devotional literature, which should be included in one of the following thematic sections:

- Devotional practices of the clergy and of the laity; private devotion
- Between religious norm and popular religion
- Text-image relationship (with reference to illuminations and book illustration)
- Circulation of texts - intellectual networks
- Philological analysis and text editing

Other approaches are also welcome, as long as they fit into the general thematic and chronological span of the conference.

Given your contributions to the field, we would be honored if you accepted our invitation and attended our conference. Please submit to the organizers a working title, accompanied by an abstract of maximum 1500 characters, by 15.12.2017.

The conference will be held from May 31 to June 2, 2018 at the "Lucian Blaga" University Library in Cluj-Napoca. The languages of the presentations will be English and German, with simultaneous translation into Romanian and Hungarian.

Cluj-Napoca,  
28<sup>th</sup> November 2017

Sincerely yours,  
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