

# A Delicate Balance: Preparing a Parchment Fragment for Posterity

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## Context

- Greek manuscript fragment approx. 12<sup>th</sup> - mid 13<sup>th</sup> c.
  - Initial study indicates the text is theological, very possibly unknown, & unpublished
- Newly acquired by the Hesburgh Libraries to support the Medieval Institute's Byzantine studies
  - Utilized in paleography & codicology classes
  - Studied with intent to publish by curator Dr. David Gura
- Treatment prioritized given this potential discovery of an unknown ancient text, and its value to teaching and research at Notre Dame and beyond

## Condition Issues:

- Some text obscured due to creases resulting from moisture damage
- Surface of parchment is flaking in areas
- Areas of staining and accretions
- Vulnerable tears and areas of loss

## Treatment Goals:

- Flatten parchment to reveal hidden text as possible
- Remove staining to improve text legibility as possible
- Mend tears to stabilize
- Provide handling for housing and support

## Humidification

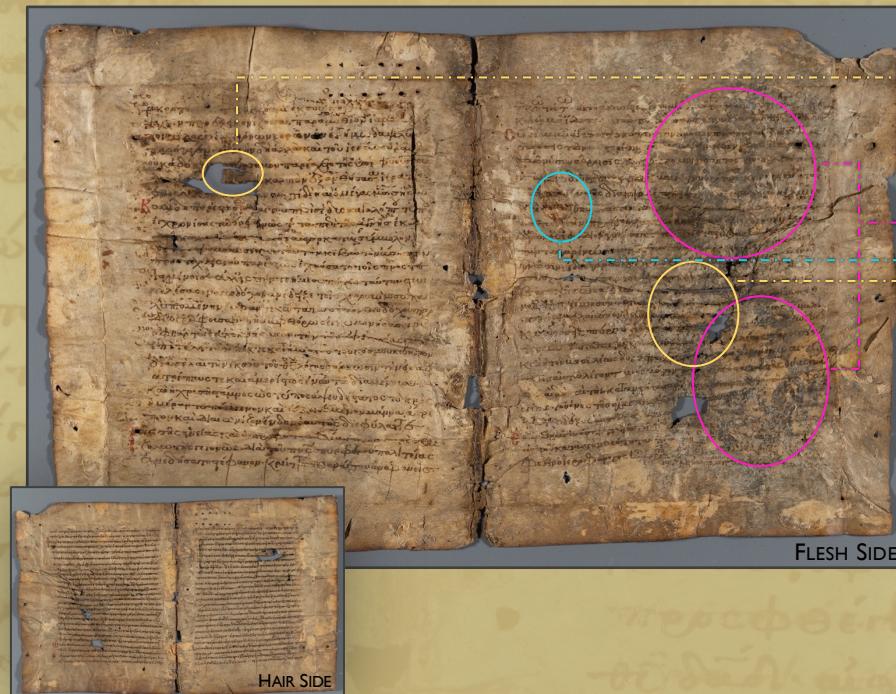
- Identified 4 areas where text was obscured by the parchment folding over itself (indicated in orange)
- Gortex Pack Sandwich:
  - Allowed even & gentle humidification
  - Moisture from top & bottom meant the parchment was exposed for less time



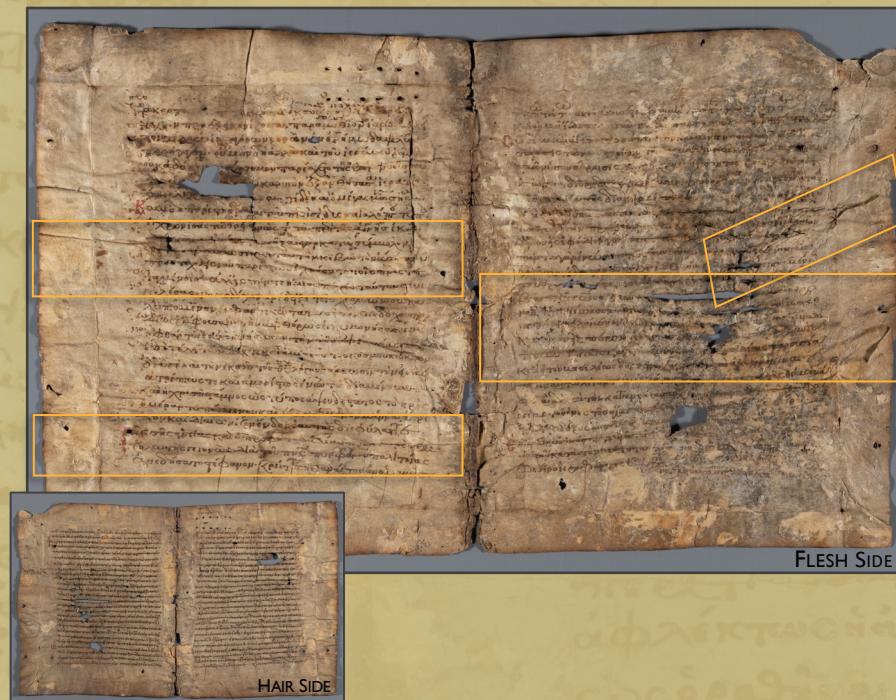
- Independently positionable pieces of Melinex allowed for targeted humidification
  - Time was tailored to the condition of the parchment in each area
- Small bag weights held parchment in position during drying



## Before Treatment



## After Treatment



## Further Treatments

### Surface Cleaning



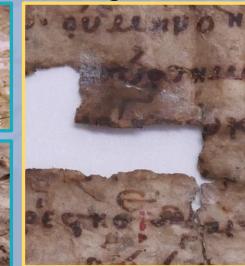
50/50 Ethanol & D.I. Water  
Rolled over select areas on damp cotton buds

### Consolidation



3% Gelatin Mousse: Cold gelatin sieved through silk screen & applied with a brush

### Bridge Mends



Pre-coated Tissue: 5gsm Tengucho & WSP Activated with 3% Gelatin Mousse

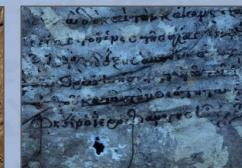
## Photography

### Visible Light



- Comparative photos during treatment
- Minimizes need to consult fragment

### Ultraviolet



- Determining necessity for cleaning
- Identifying problem areas
- Enhances text Visibility

### Microscopy

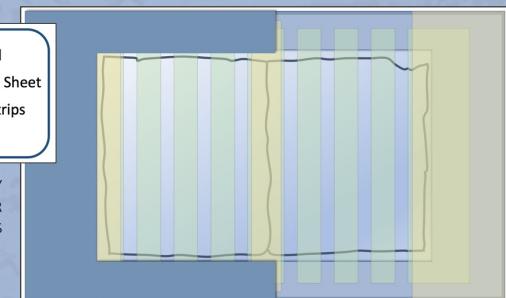


- IDAP Diagnostics
- Solvent testing
- Monitoring moisture effects

## Double-sided Window Matte:<sup>\*</sup> For Storage & Safe Handling

- E-flute Corrugated Board
- Medium-weight Melinex Sheet
- Heavy-weight Melinex Strips
- Polyethylene Strips

TOP MATTE CUT AWAY TO SHOWCASE INNER COMPONENTS



<sup>\*</sup> ADAPTED FROM THE BRITISH LIBRARY'S HOUSING FOR BURNT FRAGMENTS OF THE COTTON COLLECTION.

## Outcomes

- Previously obscured text is now visible
- Vulnerable areas of parchment stabilized
- Housing facilitates safe active use
- UV imaging heightens text visibility
- Digitization increases access to text