Scribes, Scripts, and Books: The Book Arts from Antiquity to the Renaissance

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Scribes, Scripts, and Books: The Book Arts from Antiquity to the Renaissance
Leila Avrin
356 pages, $50.00

Leila Avrin gives an extensive and informative exploration into book arts in her book Scribes, Scripts, and Books: The Book Arts from Antiquity to the Renaissance. Her experience as a faculty member at the School of Library and Archive Studies at the University of Jerusalem, as well as having an MLS from the University of Michigan and a doctorate in art history, adds to the content between the covers of this book.

Much of the book is devoted to the history of book arts from the ancient world to modern times. Avrin discusses materials used by people in each era to create their tomes, the sociopolitical climates of the regions and how this affected the book arts, and numerous other notions dealing with this interesting topic. There are chapters devoted to writing and the alphabet of different cultures, manuscript illumination, Greek and Roman books, and more. She briefly touches on papermaking and bookbinding, which don’t seem to have gone by the wayside with the emergence of the ebook.

The only complaint that can be made of this book is that the plates published within would have benefited from colour reproductions. Having studied medieval and renaissance history, I know that some of the plates in the book are very vibrant in colour, and readers would benefit by seeing the richness of the illuminated manuscripts. One chapter in particular that would be enriched by colour plates is the chapter on the Islamic book. The images and writing in the Islamic book section are very intricate and could benefit by the inclusion of colour plates. Cost was probably a factor in the decision not to include color plates.

Scribes, Script, and Books would be a fantastic addition to any library or private collection in need of a history of the book arts. The cost for the softcover is a bit steep at $50.00, but the content is informative and valuable.

Lizzy is currently working on her MLIS with the University of North Texas SWIM cohort and works as a Library Assistant 2 at the Boise State Albertsons Library.