

---

---

## Introduction: Commanding Women

---

---

On Saturday, September 27, 1997, the Mid-Hudson Medieval Circle hosted a special meeting: a conference in honor of Charity Canon Willard, entitled “Commanding Women: Female Patrons and Collectors — Their Authors and Their Books.”

About 35 of Dr. Willard’s friends and colleagues gathered at Mount Saint Mary College in Newburgh, New York, to acknowledge her many professional contributions to the field of Christine Studies and the study of medieval society and culture, and to express their appreciation for her generosity and guiding spirit in their own intellectual and personal lives.

The papers presented at the conference, comprised of both preliminary investigations on a topic and studies that are more advanced, are gathered here. These four essays give fresh insight to late medieval book culture. Issues of collection, production, and circulation are all raised. One striking aspect to emerge is how the papers seem to intersect and overlap in various ways, their protagonists often forming a network of relations, not unlike the network of colleagues and friends that has grown from the yearly meetings of the Mid-Hudson Medieval Circle, which Dr. Willard co-founded nearly three decades ago.

I would like to express my thanks to Professors James Cotter and Toni Saldivar of Mount Saint Mary College for their assistance in the organization of the conference, and especially to Professor Christine Reno of Vassar College for her help and support in preparing these essays for publication in a special issue of *Profane Arts*. Special thanks finally are due Dr. Elaine C. Block for her interest in publishing this volume.

Leslie Abend Callahan