Medieval manuscripts have an anomalous status in modern culture. They are visible as precious objects, but little understood for what they actually were: dynamic creators of culture in their own time. This lecture will illustrate the nature of the medieval manuscript culture at its most vibrant: Paris in the fourteenth century, the center of international cultural production. It will tell the story of this culture by addressing such questions as the difference between print and manuscript technology; manuscripts as political propaganda; manuscripts as a politics of knowledge; the relation of manuscripts to nature and urban life; the role of patronage; Christine de Pizan as cultural arbiter; the role of manuscripts in making polyphony possible; manuscripts as social satire.

The lecture opens the Lilly Library exhibition on “The Performative Book from Medieval Europe to the Americas.”

Thursday, 14 January, 6 pm
Lincoln Room, Lilly Library
refreshments provided by Friends of the Lilly Library

Stephen G. Nichols
(James M. Beall Prof. Emeritus of French and Humanities, and Research Prof. at Johns Hopkins University)