

Preface

Barbara S. Bowers

For those unfamiliar with the work of AVISTA, the Association Villard de Honnecourt for the Interdisciplinary Study of Medieval Technology, Science and Art, as our name declares, it is our special and particular mission to promote the interdisciplinary studies. Since our founding in 1985, our activities include sponsoring sessions of papers both at the International Congress on Medieval Studies at Kalamazoo and the International Medieval Congress at Leeds, the publication of the AVISTA *Forum Journal*, and by our maintaining a web site at <www.avista.org> to provide online information, news and networking opportunities to scholars.

This third volume in the series AVISTA Studies in the History of Medieval Technology, Science and Art is the result of sessions I organized for the 36th International Congress on Medieval Studies for AVISTA. These sessions were co-sponsored by *Medica* (the Society for the Study of Healing in the Middle Ages), and the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library. The six sessions provided a significant forum for 23 scholars from Europe and the USA to meet, present the latest research on the medieval hospital and medicine and, most importantly, to exchange ideas. The wealth of expertise exchanged was most notable at the speaker round table, the grand finale that capped three very intense days of presentations.

This ambitious program would not have been possible without the very generous financial backing of The Samuel H. Kress Foundation, whose financial support made it possible to bring together such an impressive group of international researchers and to further support the publication of this volume.

I would like to express my thanks first to my assistant editors for this volume, Anne Van Arsdall, Emilie Savage-Smith, Theresa Vann, and Carol Neuman de Vegvar, who during the initial review process were instrumental in getting this book off to a solid start. Thanks too to the readers who lent their expertise in the critical review phase of preparing this text, John Goodall, Piers Mitchell, John Riddle, and Ellen Shortell. Beyond question, the editing process would have been impossible without the unflagging help and support of Marie-Thérèse Zenner, editor of the second volume in this series, who answered innumerable questions and provided clear guides and templates to follow. AVISTA's Publications Chair, Ellen Shortell, rode shotgun along the way, giving sound advice and help at every turn. And special thanks go to Mary Counter of *Counter Point*, my tech-guru who, with gargantuan effort, brought this Luddite into twenty-first-century computer technology.

My greatest expression of thanks and gratitude goes to my authors, who patiently bore with me in this, my often stumbling process of editing, and who have provided me with revised and updated versions of their original congress papers so that, with this volume, I can present the latest cutting-edge scholarship.

For my own part, I had nothing more to recommend me as the organizer and editor for this volume other than the claim that I am the daughter of probably the last practicing country doctor in Ohio, and the way of *doctoring* that this implies. What has turned out to be an enormous undertaking began by my envisioning the possibilities that the medieval hospital could have as a central organizing theme, one that could call together scholars from many diverse disciplines to focus their expertise on a single topic: the medieval hospital. As the theme evolved, it focussed on the hospital and medical practice as part of a holistic environment centering on site and setting. Eventually, this theme led to combining archaeological evidence, architectural history, textual criticism, monastic studies, and other fields of inquiry. The aim was to bridge the evidence and seek out and share new approaches to research. As this volume demonstrates, we have succeeded.