

# Polis – Precious words

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Thanks to digital technology and the internet it's never been easier to express yourself. Word processors have made writing as easy as tapping your fingers. So the [Sacred](#) exhibition at the British Library is a useful reminder of how for thousands of years writing was both difficult and valued. It is quite simply the world's greatest display of Muslim, Jewish and Christian holy texts. I was somewhat suspicious of the preachy way the show pushes its inter-faith harmony agenda but these days even humanists have to hope that God-botherers get along a little better with each other. But the real message you got from

this stunning collection of manuscripts was just how hard humanity works to convey its ideas. Vast amounts of people's time and precious resources went in to creating huge works letter by letter. And the sheer beauty of the typography and illustrations is a mind-blowing tribute to the desire to forge graphic art of the highest order to match the spiritual splendour of the content itself. Anyone reading the limpid prose of the King James Bible or gazing upon the shimmering carpet illustrations of the medieval Quorans or the exquisitely minute micrographic decoration of an early Jewish bible is gazing at testament to the power of the word.

Nothing written online can ever match that craft, in itself. Some would argue that a digital culture is a diluted culture. However, the power of the internet to allow images and words from around the world and from our history to be broadcast so effortlessly is in itself nearly as awesome as these ancient holy books.

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