

The Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC)  
announces an Informal Talk

by

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**How to Write Spanish in Aztec Hieroglyphs: A 16th-Century  
Mesoamerican Response to a European Alphabet**

Aztec writing is perhaps the least understood of New World writing systems. In the last few decades, Maya writing has received a lot of well-earned attention and has, as a result, tended to shape our understanding of how Mesoamerican writing systems work. This has been reinforced by a recent claim that Aztec writing operates on the same principles. Phonetic spellings have been argued to echo the Maya practice of writing words with syllabograms (syllable-signs) that consist only of consonant+vowel signs: cf. Maya **ka-ka-wa** for kakaw 'cacao' and **ba-la-ma** for bahlam 'jaguar.' In this talk we will take a close look at the Aztec system. In particular, we will examine how well it stood up to the introduction of the Spanish alphabet and how capable it was of representing a new language, Spanish, in Aztec hieroglyphs.

**Tuesday, 19 April 2016 at 2 pm**  
Room 0001, CSMC