Medieval badges are small, cheap, mass-produced, lead-alloy objects meant to be worn, most commonly to be pinned or sewn onto clothing. Sacred and profane badges were manufactured and sold throughout the high and late Middle Ages, especially north of the Alps and in Great Britain. Thousands of badges survive; millions were probably produced between the late twelfth century and the Reformation. Whether made with religious or secular purposes in mind, badges employ a large arsenal of motifs and symbols to create memorable images. Closer study reveals that medieval badges are not merely souvenirs, visual representations, or signs. Rather, they imagine the relationships between self and world in ways that differ from our own. Are medieval badges a form of media? In this talk, Prof. Rasmussen will make the case that badges are an early form of mass media, arguably the first in the western world, and she will offer some thoughts on what medieval studies stands to gain from embracing this new form of evidence.

Thursday, 23 January • IMU University Club Presidents’ Room • 4pm
reception to follow