COULD READING THE VOYNICH MANUSCRIPT IN A NEW ORDER SOLVE ITS MYSTERY?

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

The Voynich manuscript is one of history's strangest books. Made from parchment in the early 1400s, it contains drawings of plants, stars, pipes and people, alongside writing that nobody has been able to read. Some people have called it a secret code, a lost language, a medical guide or even a clever hoax. New research suggests that the problem may partly be the way the pages were put together. Researchers Colin Layfield and Lisa Fagin Davis think the pages may originally have been separate sheets stacked like small booklets. Later, someone may have bound them in the wrong order. This does not reveal what the writing means, but it may change how the book was used. Evidence also suggests that up to five different writers worked on it, making it more likely to have been a shared collection of knowledge rather than the work of one mysterious genius.

WHY IS THIS INTERESTING?

The Voynich manuscript shows how difficult it can be to understand the past when evidence is incomplete. A small mistake in the way pages were arranged may have confused readers for centuries. It also reminds us that historical objects were often created by groups of people, not just famous individuals.

THINK LIKE A HISTORIAN

"What might the manuscript's pages tell us about medieval knowledge?"

Source: The Guardian

https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2026/oct/06/voynich-manuscript-research-pages-wrongly-bound