John Gower was a medieval English poet and a contemporary and friend of Geoffrey Chaucer. Both were equally well known, cited, and admired in their own times until about 1700. After that, Chaucer’s star began to eclipse Gower’s. Yet ask a young medievalist whose work is capturing the notice of up-and-coming scholars, and the answer is once again as likely to be Gower as it is Chaucer.

Early this month, nearly 150 scholars and students from as many as 20 nations convened at the University to share their research on Gower at the conference “John Gower: Language, Cognition, and Performance,” the Third International Congress of the John Gower Society and the first to be held in the United States.

Why is Gower so hot? According to Russell Peck, the John Hall Deane Professor of Rhetoric and Literature at Rochester, and a leading Gower scholar, one reason is that Gower’s work relates to many modern disciplines, from literary craftsmanship and gender studies, to cognitive science and medical humanities.

Another reason is the wide accessibility of Gower’s work online, including a digital project of the Robbins Library called the Middle English Text Series, which has been embraced by the National Endowment for the Humanities as a model of what the field of digital humanities can offer.