Original manuscripts and copies in international heritage

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This conference is entitled "Facsimiles, Fakes and Forgeries": a series of words beginning with the letter F, each one of which denotes something less than the original. I would like to offer a fourth word suggesting the positive and enhancing side of the work that we are all engaged in. That is, Fidelity. In different ways, the extraordinarily stimulating and thought-provoking papers that have been presented here all address an ideal of fidelity to the original. So why does the original matter so much? The conference has given us abundant proof of the passion and commitment that we all share, to preserve and do justice to original materials: rare books, manuscripts, photographs, oral history archives, and all the splendidly motley array of inheritances from other people's lives that go to make up our special collections. But why does our work matter to the
world?

Like any professional librarian or archivist, I am asked quite often by political or financial paymasters, why we continue to incur the costs of keeping original library materials when surely everything can be kept so much more efficiently in electronic form. The various replies that pass through one's mind range from ripostes about the astronomic costs of the digitization process, and the uncertainties over preservation technology, to issues of legality and guardianship.

First of all, without the original, where is the proof? Proof that a particular individual owned a particular parcel of land, proof that someone was born in a particular time or place, proof that the latest tract on the rights of the North American colonists was to be had from a particular bookseller at a certain date, proof that any transaction of legal importance ever took place… A former colleague of mine published a controversial book recently entitled *Did Marco Polo go to China?* Her arguments from the absence of documentary proof were compelling, though much contested. A segment of the academic publishing industry is sustained by arguments from lack of proof. Proof of any past event, in fact, relies almost invariably on the original documentation, and the value of the copy rests on the presumption that the original exists or did exist. Lawyers need proofs, scholars need proof, and all of us as citizens need proof. There is also the overriding proof of identity that supports a community, as witnessed in the carefully assembled collections of original local material that are to be found in most state or city historical

societies, and local public libraries. Given the importance that attaches to the inherent evidential importance of the original, it would be mild to say that forgery is a lie in physical form. As Bruce Whiteman said of Constantine Simonides, he was " a plain old liar". But whatever the motives (and Richard Landon explored these elegantly in his paper), forgery is a lie perpetrated against a community, and an offence against the principle of proof, not just a lie for personal gain.

Authenticity is another word that has suffused the presentations in this conference. Closely linked to proof, but in some ways less easy to define, the authenticity of one original artifact or publication often rests on the evidence of its provenance supplied by its context. The documentary context matters in every area where authenticity is an issue. Works of art undocumented remain in the realm of controversial attribution, as the many years of research on the Rembrandt project might remind us. Shipwrecks will lie undisturbed on the floor of the ocean if the underwater recovery industry has no authentic documentary evidence on dry land, of where precisely the ship went down, and what its payload was. Scholarly editions depend on the authenticity of the author's intentions, as demonstrated in original evidence. My citizenship and your citizenship rest on our birth certificates. And the examples multiply almost infinitely. If we turn to thinking about the ways in which documentation supports life, then we are also telling ourselves something about the fundamental importance of our work, and the immensity of our charge to get it right.

One of the most powerful reasons for preserving original materials lies in their symbolic, or iconic value. *The* original manuscript of a great poem, or *the* first printing of a the Declaration of Independence, have a value all their own. Their iconic value rests on uncontested authenticity, and also on the sense that here, in our hands or at least displayed before our eyes, is the source and origin of something pricelessly important to us. I would like to offer you now some examples from an international context, of the passions that original materials can arouse.

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On December 29 1943, as the Allied armies moved north through Italy, General Dwight D. Eisenhower issued an order for the protection of ancient monuments: "Today we are fighting in a country which has contributed a great deal to our cultural inheritance, a country rich in monuments which, by their creation, helped and now in their old age illustrate the growth of the civilization which is ours. We are bound to respect those monuments so far as war allows. " He went on to say that while the safety of Allied troops must always take precedence, all forces must be instructed in the whereabouts of important historic monuments, and must not use the phrase 'military necessity' to cloak indifference or mere convenience. Eisenhower's directive to the Allied armies acknowledged and supported the strenuous activity directed by American, British, and European officials, many of them scholars, museum directors and librarians in civilian life, toward preserving a common cultural inheritance.

On the other side, it was quite clear that the Nazi regime in Germany appreciated the importance of cultural materials with at least equal intensity. The papers of the war-

time British Committee on the Preservation and Restitution of Works of Art, Archives and other Material in Enemy Hands (known as the Macmillan committee, for its chairman Hugh Pattison Macmillan, a senior British judge) contain a report that had also been presented to a number of American learned organizations by the Polish scholar Karl Estreicher during his stay in the United States between November 1942 and April 1943. He described in chilling detail the Nazi approach to national civilizations:

" In addition to mass murders and executions, expulsion of hundreds and thousands of the local population from their ancient abodes, beside mass deportation of the population to forced labor, the leaders of the European 'new order' declared a ruthless war on the spiritual culture of the subjugated nations. All manifestations of national life in the sphere of culture are regarded by them as dangerous for the future colonization…."

Estreicher went on to analyze scholarly trends in Germany under the National Socialists as contrasting with the development of economics and sociology and what he calls the 'historical sciences' in other countries, in favor of a concentration on historical studies from the point of view of extreme nationalism. "The Germans reached the conclusion" he wrote,

" that the greatest obstacle to their ruling over Central and South-Central Europe is the existence in the nations inhabiting those territories, of their own spiritual culture. Such nations as Poland and Czechoslovakia, which in the nineteenth century did not have separate states…succeeded, thanks to their own culture, in resisting all attempts at their germanization. Therefore, while conquering the respective countries, the Germans decided to destroy also their culture."

He then described special looting battalions attached to the main German commands, charged with stripping conquered towns and cities of their archives, libraries and art treasures; and the special project to set up in Hitler's birthplace of Linz, a collection of the most important works of art illustrating the history and culture of the Holy Roman Empire.

In Poland, scholars from hundreds of institutions of learning had been sent to concentration camps. Estreicher estimated that no Polish museum or library remained complete, and that up to 95% of the contents of museums, between 60 and 70% of that of libraries, and significant percentages of archives and church treasures had been removed. "This phenomenon is new, and neither history nor sociology has had any examples of it in the past. If the future is to bring mankind any advantage, matters pertaining to art, literature and learning should be taken into account as much as all other spheres of life."

Estreicher's estimates of cultural looting in Poland would have been hard to substantiate while the war was on. But they matched intelligence reaching the Allies from all over Europe: detailed accounts of the Einsatzstab Rosenberg, based in occupied Paris, whose task was to round up works of art from private and public collections in France and the Low Countries; reports of exhibitions specially prepared for Goering to select items for his personal collection; heartbreaking stories of the removal or destruction of individual treasures, like the Van Eyck altarpiece at Ghent, discovered in damaged condition at the end of the war. There was even occasional farce, like the stories of works of art from Italy hastily removed under blankets and in hay carts, with two of the most valuable, Cranach's masterpiece paintings of Adam and Eve, accorded the distinction of transport in an ambulance.

The Macmillan committee in Britain worked closely with the American commission chaired by Owen Roberts, a Supreme Court justice, which absorbed an informal committee for the preservation of European culture set up by William Bell Dinsmoor at the American Council of Learned Societies. (Among those who worked closely with the Roberts Commission was the Yale art historian Deane Keller, whose papers are housed in the University Library's Manuscripts and Archives department.) A third commission chaired by the French scholar Paul Vaucher represented the European governments in exile. Between them, the three bodies comprised a sizeable proportion of the cultural establishments of their respective countries. They collected and passed on to government large quantities of valuable information about looted treasures from all over Europe, which formed the basis for restoration to rightful owners after the war. Through their vigilance, they also identified and helped block channels for the disposal of looted works of art (especially in Switzerland). Though they had their disagreements, all three sought to extend their charge to overseeing the repair and restitution of monuments and works of art after the war, and they all recommended the establishment of an inter-allied restitution commission after the war. In these aims they were frustrated by the relative indifference of the Allied governments as they struggled to achieve a postwar settlement in which the voice of culture and learning was drowned out by the louder cries of hunger, re-education and reconstruction.

The Roberts commission and the Macmillan committee succeeded better than they might have feared, however. At the end of the Second World War it was estimated that nine tenths of looted archives, libraries and works of art were returned to their rightful owners. A huge amount of systematically collected information about damaged buildings and other treasures helped the postwar governments in the work of repair. It was also true that these two bodies established standards for the collection of information about endangered works of art and their protection, that had not existed before. Although there was a history of rudimentary provision for cultural restitution going back to the Congress of Vienna, and the Treaty of Versailles had provided for some restitution in kind, the work of Roberts and Macmillan and their colleagues was infinitely more complete.

The issues they confronted still have relevance now. These scholars, museum directors, cosmopolitan men of the world (they do all seem to have been men) who must have known their German counterparts well in peace time, had to face up to the fact that large numbers of academic experts had helped in the work of pillage. One notable example was the Babylonian scholar Langsdorff, who supervised the Germans' systematic spoliation in Italy. It was anticipated that after the war, German scholars working in foreign universities would work to persuade the world that Germany should retain its loot. The public role of the scholar and curator became ambiguous: on the one side the champion of learning and culture; on the other, possessing through learning and expertise a power that could be perverted to justify a spurious historical sensibility.

Further ambiguity resided in the choices and assumptions that the members of these commissions made in the course of their work. The Macmillan committee, for example, rejected the plea of the Master of the Rolls, on behalf of the Public Record

Office, that the committee should include someone with an expertise in archives. It was considered enough that the director of the British Museum was on the committee, betraying a strong bias in favor of the individual manuscript treasure as work of art, a bias that the Germans in their systematic pillage of archives and libraries did not share. And there were problems of conscience. The renowned art historian Sir Kenneth Clark 'gave comfort to the enemy' with his broadcast criticisms of the Allied forces' assaults on historic Italian towns; yet it was precisely the job of the Macmillan committee (from which he had resigned) to persuade military commanders to moderate those attacks. Other members of the Macmillan committee expressed doubts about the wisdom of restoring damaged archives and works of art immediately to war-ravaged institutions and governments that had no resources to care for them.

The extraordinary efforts of the Roberts and Macmillan committees during the second world war have a certain poignancy in the context of recent events. But they offer us an affirmation of values that I suspect all of us would recognize. In a similar vein, it is relatively straightforward to support the recent efforts of national governments under the umbrella of UNESCO, to identify any remaining materials in national collections that might have been looted or unlawfully acquired during the period of the Holocaust, roughly 1933 to 1945. Rightful ownership, whether by the government or community or by the individual, is a value underlying our own stewardship of the collections in our care.

It is not always so easy, however, to choose between competing claims, where for example, manuscripts or original works of art may embody the cultural heritage of a group spread across the world. What judgment can we make between the claims made by people in the area of origin to the Lindisfarne Gospels, one of the great examples of English manuscript art, or the early biblical text, the Codex Sinaiticus (which I was fascinated to learn, so narrowly escaped being known as the Codex Simonides), and the claims laid by an international community of hundreds of thousands of visitors with a dedicated interest in the iconic manuscripts of the early Christian church, who flock to the British Library each year to see these and other examples of sacred manuscripts, together in one place? The rival claims on the original laid by regional and world communities are not always reconcilable, nor is there one right answer. I will return to these questions a little later, in the context of the alternative power of the copy.

One new twist in the dilemma that faces special collections librarians is to be found in the recently publicized case of the Tuareg manuscripts which are kept in that ancient and under-estimated capital of learning, Timbuktu. These are the subject of strenuous efforts to maintain the cultural autonomy and pride of the people to whom they belong. The World Amazigh Action Coalition issued a press release in June 2002 announcing that the Timbuktu High Commission, mayor and religious leaders authorized Isa Ag Mohammed, Amazigh of Mali, 'To retrieve, confiscate, and return all ancient manuscripts which have been scanned or photocopied from the libraries of Timbuktu by US private concerns, without specific authorization of the Mali government or the local

authorities of Timbuktu to use these manuscripts'. [1] The text goes on to plead for awareness that funding should be provided for the preservation of Malian cultural heritage, and asserts that African scholars understand better than Americans the cultural context of Timbuktu's literary heritage. It includes a call to 'the University membership of our US community' to promote awareness of the Amazigh heritage of Timbuktu and Mali. These special collections remain in their place of origin, but the dilemmas of those who care about them have much in common with others. The attention of the international scholarly community is courted and needed; but foreign scholars nevertheless are expected to maintain an intellectual distance. Since that press release was issued, Issa Mohamed and his supporters have approached libraries including Yale in a spirit of greater collaboration. Nevertheless, the original message retains its power: these original manuscripts contain within them the identity and pride of an ancient civilization, and no copy nor any amount of respect paid from alien civilizations will substitute for the artifacts themselves, owned inalienably by the descendants of the scholars who created them.

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The history of collection building, combined with the sad history of looting and destruction that has persisted through to the present day, reminds us pointedly of the importance attached to the ownership of great cultural icons, and the profound sense of

[1] See www.tazzla.org and a story on the foreign service web site of the Washington Post, www.sum.uio.no/reearch/mali/timbuktu

communal loss, that attaches to their destruction. We probably all share a sense of outrage at the destruction of the national library in Baghdad this year, or the bombing of the national and university library in Sarajevo in 1992. At the same time, that sense of international loss is coupled for most of us with an intuitive understanding that the national and local communities concerned are the ones who have suffered the greatest loss. The pride in ownership of original materials, and the collective sense of bereavement at their loss, are emotions we can all understand.

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Given the extraordinary importance of the original (and I could spend far more time than is available today quoting examples of the different ways in which the original is valued) how do we approach the copy? For special collections librarians, the surrogate version of an original edition or manuscript text, a photograph, map or work of art, is at once both a second best and a powerful tool. Stephen Rhind-Tutt's awe-inspiring exploration of the power of the electronic edition has given us all, I suspect, new insights into the potential power of the surrogate as a tool for the advancement of knowledge.

The shortcomings of copies are obvious enough. A copy introduces one more stage of human intervention, and therefore possible error. It exposes us to the dangers of fraud as described by thespeakers earlier in this conference, even more acutely than manuscripts which we take to be original. A copy, however well presented as being just that, can delude and mislead; it can be intentionally or inadvertently partial; it can purport to be complete when it is not; and the quality of the reproduction is often (perhaps always) imperfect.

I would like to devote the last part of this talk, however, to the benefits of the copy. If, in considering questions of international heritage, we acknowledge and celebrate above all the importance of the original, I would like to argue that the surrogate copy of cherished originals is potentially an even more powerful tool for us, the librarians, and the many international communities we serve.

Copies of original material can bring together complementary sources that are separated in their original form by continents and oceans. The new digital editions of Shakespeare folios and quartos produced by Octavo editions, and the careful compilation of Early English Books On-line (EEBO) are just two examples. You will all be familiar with many more. Digitization partnerships between libraries can bring together widely separated collections of letters and other manuscripts that make the scholar's task almost unbelievably easier. Comparison of different printings is made possible by digitization from separate library holdings. Not long ago, the British Library mounted an exhibit of digitized versions of the Gutenberg bible, two from the BL and one from Keio University in Japan, which illustrated more graphically than any prized single version could do, the differences in printing norms provided for different customers. The version printed with careful rubricated punctuation marks to help monks read the Bible aloud to their brothers

at meal times, was a different object altogether from the sumptuous copy with hand-painted illumination, made for a wealthy patron.

Not only do surrogates of original material make it possible for researchers to work without having to see the originals, but they provide twenty-four hour access. They facilitate teaching, at all levels, in ways that we are only now exploring. History professors introducing their classes to primary source material, for example, can compile digitized collections (as we do at Yale in our ELI project) for their students to use on-line, and they are beginning to teach in new ways as a result. As an educational tool, the copy, intelligently used and presented, advances teaching immeasurably.

David Levy's introduction to this conference struck a chord with many of his audience when he described the wonder of school classes when they were introduced to original material. Despite what I have just said about the transformation of teaching by use of digital copies, I too believe very strongly that in special collections libraries we have a responsibility to introduce students, preferably including K through 12 students, not just undergraduates, to some of the original material in our care. All too many school history text books claim to introduce " primary sources" or " original evidence" by printing small illustrations or framed quotations of a few words, generally selected from a canon of rather well-used sources. If the student has not seen real, original rare books and historical documents, he or she cannot fully understand the nature of the copy, either in a secondary printed work or represented on the computer screen. It seems to me to be a vital part of a citizen's education to be aware of the distinctions between the real, the copy and the fake – to ask questions about gaps, and bias, and incompleteness, of the sort that we have been asking ourselves in this conference. But, if the copy used exclusively can be a dangerous tool, it is also the most powerful mechanism possible for introducing the legacy of the past into present learning. And of course, it brings with it an obligation to apply to that legacy the most rigorous and highly developed standards of contextual description.

One of the most exciting applications of copies is in the area of enabling new forms of research. One early example of digital copies making a difference in this way was the Hartlib papers project at Sheffield University in England. The papers of Samuel Hartlib, one of those members of the prototype 'invisible college' in the mid seventeenth-century which formed the crucible of the scientific revolution, contain important letters from the Polish philosopher Comenius. By digitizing the originals, then scanning in a typed version of the text, which lies behind the scanned copies, the University enabled scholars to search on any word appearing in Comenius's text, and to track the ideas he was disseminating to his correspondents in northern Europe. Textual searching of this kind is one way in which digital technology can transform scholarship, and every discipline has its own versions. In economic research for instance, it is now possible to call into service statistical materials that formerly were intractable. Demographic trends can be tracked using digitized versions of historic survey, and calling into service quantities of statistical material that were formerly unusable simply on account of their bulk.

And, finally, the digital copy offers for all of us, individuals and communities alike, a chance to capture and preserve material that is contested ,vulnerable, and dispersed. My own experience as custodian of important international collections has brought me frequently into the arena of cultural restitution or repatriation . This is a subject for other papers and other conferences, but I'd like to raise a few examples here to illustrate our theme of the role of the copy versus the role of the original. I have already referred to the Tuareg manuscripts in Timbuktu, fiercely guarded by their owners and yet desperately in need of the international attention that can help preserve them. At the British Library, where I worked before I came to Yale, I encountered a form of more local patriotism in the campaign by politicians and local groups to restore that great artifact of Anglo-Saxon manuscript art, the Lindisfarne Gospels, to its " spiritual home" in north-eastern England. A delegation traveled down from Newcastle to London on March 20 2000, St Cuthbert's day, equipped with banners, Northumbrian pipes and a fiddle that was played quite magically by a teenage girl. They held a vigil beside the manuscript, displayed under glass in the British Library's exhibition galleries. For these, most passionate local patriots, no amount of high resolution digitization, complete with page-turning verisimilitude, nor high-quality facsimiles could substitute for owning the original there in the north-east of England, where it had been created somewhere around the year 800 AD. For the British Library, it seems to me, the only correct response is the one it is making:

to employ digital technology to produce the best possible " Turning the Pages" version, where members of the public in north-eastern England (and in fact now, any user of the web)

to continue in its preservation and investigation of the manuscript, revealing for example, with the use of Raman spectroscopy, that the blue pigment used by the artist of the Lindisfarne Gospels was lapis lazuli at that time only obtainable from Afghanistan

and to persevere in its insistence that this triumph of manuscript art is also a treasure belonging to an international community of scholars, bible enthusiasts and religious people of every kind, who also have a right to see the original and can see it best in London alongside other early gospels and some of the iconic manuscript works of other religions.

Among those other iconic manuscripts is the Codex Sinaiticus, which has also been the subject of claims for cultural restitution. Bruce Whitehead described how it was first lent and then given by the monks of St Catherine's monastery to Tsar Alexander II and subsequently sold in 1933 by the Soviet government to the British. The original gift was, say the authorities at St Catherine's monastery now, a wicked trick perpetrated by the evil scholar Constantine von Tischendorff, and they ought to have the manuscript back. This case too can be ameliorated and, hopefully, resolved by recourse to digitization. Keep the manuscript in London where it can be well preserved and forms part of an important international collection, but create in collaboration with the monks of St Catherine's a digital version that celebrates this earliest authentic version of the Gospels, and makes it available to the world.

In the end, no amount of digitization and cultural exchange will ever assuage the passions that surround original materials. Whether we are talking about personal family

papers, cherished and passed down from one generation to another, or great cultural icons, the original is irreplaceable. I would like to conclude this talk by describing just one more example of international stewardship which, for me, explained a lot of why being a special collections librarian is a useful occupation. In the spring of 2001, the British Library mounted an exhibition celebrating seventeen hundred years of Christianity in Armenia. Armenia was the first state to adopt Christianity as its national religion, and the British Library possesses some wonderful examples of early Armenian manuscripts. The exhibition brought together alongside these treasures, artifacts including monuments, wood carvings, ceramics and textiles illustrating Armenian culture and history from the many different communities of the Armenian diaspora across the world: from Calcutta, Jerusalem, and various parts of Europe. The Metropolitan of the Armenian Orthodox church and a former prime minister of Armenia, among others, attended the exhibition's opening ceremony. They spoke with evident passion about their nation and its history. Seventeen hundred years ago, they said, Armenia was a nation, and we cherished the proofs of our religion, and we carried our manuscripts before us into battle. For many centuries we have not been a nation; the Armenian people have been persecuted, exiled, and scattered around the world; but we have still preserved our identity through learning, scholarship and culture. Now we are a nation once more, and we thank you for preserving and caring for the evidence of our identity; we thank you for giving it a home, and for bringing it to the attention of an international audience.

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This conference has focused on the copy and facsimile, and the outright fake. We have explored the need to be constantly wary of forgeries and impostures, and some of yesterday's speakers have presented us with disheartening evidence of the ethical failures that bedevil some parts of our community. *Why* are the forgers criminals, and *why* is it so important for us to guard the principle of the original, through thick and thin? Well, the people of Lindisfarne, Baghdad, Timbuktu, Mount Sinai, and Armenia can tell us why. It is only through our care, and the guiding principle of fidelity that our profession adheres to, that the authentic literature and record of the past is handed down, and a legacy of learning and experience and human values can be shared. New generations of special collections librarians and curators will ensure that our work as custodians will continue to bear fruit and the people of the past and present, including ourselves, can speak to the people of the future in our own voice.