

STOLEN AND LOST COPIES OF VESALIUS'S FABRICA

UKRADENI I IZGUBLJENI PRIMJERC I VEZALOVA DJELA DE HUMANI CORPORIS FABRICA

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SUMMARY

Thefts and losses of precious books are not rare. Here we report several incidents concerning Vesalius's Fabrica: the fire of the University Library of Leuven in Belgium, the fate of the collection of the Leopoldina Library of Halle in Germany, the thefts from the Crerar Library in Chicago and in Christ Church College in Oxford, the disappearance of an exceptionally beautiful 'Royal' copy from the Castle of Argenteuil (Belgium), and other Fabrica's missing at the Franeker Library in the Netherlands and at the Library of Oradea in West Romania. Finally the means of protecting precious book collections are discussed in short as well as the importance of book identification.

Key words: Vesalius, Fabrica, Leuven, Halle, Chicago, Oxford, Argenteuil, Wansleben am See

Thefts of precious and rare books from libraries and private collections are no rare events. In December 1998, German government signed for the *Washington Conference on Holocaust-Era Assets* to search for works of art that were seized by the Nazis and never returned, as well as for the heirs of such stolen goods. Only seven years later, a student discovered, while

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conducting research for a thesis, that the Berlin State Library owned more than 10.000 stolen books as well as another 9.000 volumes that were more than likely confiscated by the Nazis. The University of Marburg Library is the only large German library that has now carefully examined almost all of its books for the period mentioned. As a result, the library has been able to return many books to the heirs of their former owners, but in many cases, heirs can no longer be found [1]. The most spectacular individual case is that of Stephen Blumberg, who on his own stole more than 20.000 rare books and 10.000 manuscripts from 140 or more universities in the USA and Canada [2].

Besides, the cumulative list with theft reports of the *Rare Books and Manuscripts Section Security Committee* of the *Association of College and Research Libraries* is also very convincing [3]. An explanation for this increase in thefts is the rapid rise in value of old books and manuscripts, making them more attractive to thieves. For example: the rise in value of a copy of Andreas Vesalius's *Fabrica 1543* over the last 75 years equals nearly a hundredfold increase of purchasing power during that same period [4]. They are also the kind of objects one can easily hide and smuggle out of a building. Although this means a serious financial and patrimonial loss for the institutions involved, most libraries remain very discrete about it. They often reply in an evasive way to questionnaires or redirect you to a 'responsible' who leaves one no wiser than before. The reason is precisely the striking increase in such thefts. Libraries don't want to attract too much attention on those lucrative crimes [5]. Until now there are no entries of books of Vesalius in the Stolen Books Database of the Antiquarian Bookseller's Association of America (ABAA), although cases do exist [6].

We can expect that indeed, *mutatis mutandis* and all proportions considered, something comparable may happen to the works of Vesalius. Without claiming to have covered the whole extent, here we report seven different events.

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY OF LEUVEN (LOUVAIN, BELGIUM)

On the morning of 26 August 1914, the whole University Library of Leuven was destroyed. The library was set on fire at one or two o'clock in the morning. The night before, a father of the Holy Trinity College, which is located a few yards from the spot where the Germans smashed the main



Figure 1 - University Library of Leuven before the fire of 1914

Slika 1. Sveučilišna knjižnica u Leuvenu prije požara 1914.

window looking onto the Old Market Place, called the attention of the commanding officer to the fact that the building he was going to destroy was the University Library (Fig. 1). The officer replied: “Es ist Befehl (It’s an order).” Through that window they threw in/poured in inflammable liquid and fired a few shots, causing an immediate explosion. No soldier entered the library during the fire, and no book and no manuscript was taken away. Within four hours, the incunabula, the precious *Livres d’Heures*, the rare and just discovered manuscripts of the early Middle Ages, and more than 300,000 other volumes went up in flames (Fig. 2) [7].

Lost during the fire of the University Library was - according to Harvey Cushing and to Theodore Koch - a vellum copy of Vesalius’ *De Humani Corporis Fabrica Libri Septem* (Basel: Oporinus, 1543), presented to the library by the Emperor Charles V. Nowadays no *Fabrica* on vellum is known. Heinrich Haeser also stated this was a partially coloured *Fabrica* on vellum [8]. According to Harvey Cushing (1943), a copy of the 1552 edition of *Fabrica* also went up in flames and one of the only seven known copies of the first edition of Vesalius’s *Paraphrasis* worldwide, together with an extremely rare copy on vellum of the *Epitome*, of which he could not



Figure2 - University Library of Leuven after the Fire of 1914

Slika 2. Sveučilišna knjižnica u Leuvenu nakon požara 1914.

recall if it was hand-coloured as de Feyfer mentioned, but the little figures were cut out and pasted [9]. As a summary of his expensive *Fabrica*, the *Epitome* was intended for Vesalius' students who could not afford his splendid *opus magnum*. For this reason, it is now a bibliographical rarity. It is a large illustrated folio with only fourteen unnumbered leaves, dedicated to Prince Philip on 3 August 1542.

With the support of the United States, the library was rebuilt and inaugurated on 17 July 1923. A total number of 263,000 books from gifts and another 300,000 purchased volumes found their place on the new book shelves. But in the morning of 17 May 1940 the library was set on fire again [10]. During the second fire the wood-block for the title page of the *Fabrica* 1555 was destroyed [11].

We have no detailed description of the *Fabrica* 1543 that went into flames, but Paul Delannoy, librarian of the University of Leuven at that time, writes that the library possessed the edition of the *Fabrica* 1543 by Oporinus; it had a beautiful frontispiece and a portrait of Vesalius, and it was illustrated with beautiful figures, all engraved in wood ("gravé en bois"), the whole being on vellum [12]. Cushing must be wrong in his

comment to the *Fabrica* 1543 stating it was the presentation copy to the Emperor:

The presentation copy to Charles V printed on vellum, once in the Library of Louvain, is now beyond recall. I well remember being shown a Vesalius on vellum there and that it had a leaf of superimposed figures. However, after 30-odd years I could not now be certain that it was the *Fabrica*, and I strongly suspect that it was rather a copy of the *Epitome* on vellum with figures of the last two leaves superimposed. The British Museum is reported to have had a copy on vellum, but it cannot be traced and is probably again a mistake for Richard Mead's vellum copy of the *Epitome* which was sold May 8, 1775, [...] to a person named Ball during the prolonged sale of Mead's effects [13].

The *Fabrica* is indeed a too big work to be printed on vellum, as the price would be prohibitively high.

In contradiction to Cushing's opinion it was certainly not the prestigious book that Vesalius personally gave to Charles V, that was destroyed, as this one still exists. Until recently, this splendid hand-coloured work of art was in the hands of Dr Haskell F. Norman (1915-1996), a psychiatrist from San Francisco. On 18 March 1998, the 'imperial' *Fabrica* was auctioned by Christie's. Valued at about 500,000 euros, it was sold for 1,652,500 euros to a collector whose name remains unknown. The expert of Christie's remains cautious, but the early French inscription on the flyleaf proves it was once in the hands of the Emperor: "Ce Liure a esté donné par lempereur Charles le quint a Messire Jacques Mesnage cheualier seigneur et patron de Cagny Ambassadeur du Roi de France Francois premier aupres de sa personne." Evidently Charles gave Vesalius' book to the French ambassador on some occasion between 1545 and 1547, when Mesnage was a resident at the imperial court [14]. No other fully hand-coloured copy of the *Fabrica* is known nor a copy on vellum. In two instances, Charles V himself speaks in his act of Vesalius' ennoblement of only one *Fabrica* that Vesalius gave to him, so the copy he gave to the university did come from elsewhere:

... nunc vero tua opera et studio medicis adeo peculiariter inaudita hactenus industria, solertia, sagacitate et diligentia maximisque sumptibus et laboribus variis et immodicis Parisiis, Lovanii, Patavii, Bononiae et Pisis, exhibitis publicis humanorum corporum dissectionibus, editoque ante multos annos de humani

corporis fabrica volumine tanti eruditionis verissimae iudicii, ingenii et industriae, sicque elaborato ut nil usque eloquentius nil doctius, nilque utilius compositum sit, ac facile procul summis omnibus libris qui de anatomiae facultatibus conscripti fuerant, praeclara erat illa illustrando... Nos cum idem volumen nobis ad Gueldricam expeditionem proficiscentibus offeres, ...[15].

This lost *Fabrica* is also mentioned by Ed de Moreau, who only gives short records of manuscripts and incunables [16,17].

From the last will of Georges d'Autriche Jr., we know that he gave a copy of Vesalius' *Fabrica* to the Collegium Trilingue. Georges d'Autriche, the dean of the St Peter's Church (Sint-Pieterskerk) of Leuven and chan-

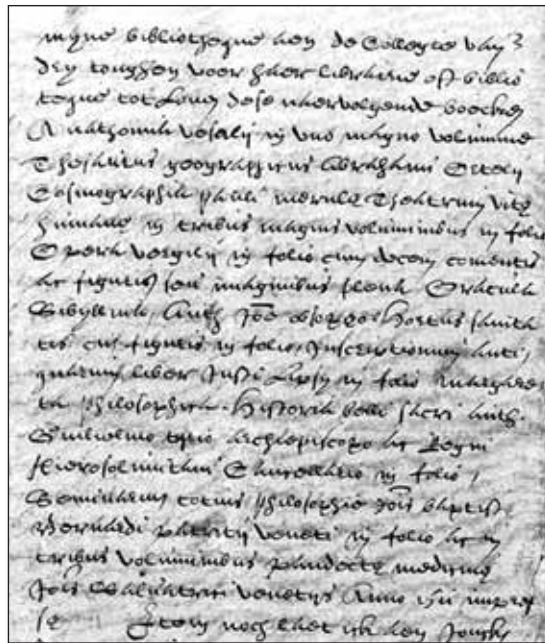


Figure 3 - Belgian State Archives, Leuven. Archives de l'Université de Louvain (1426-1797), Inventaire H. De Vocht, nr. 1464: Last Will of Georgius van Oostenryck, alias Joris van Oostenrijk, alias Georges d'Autriche Jr., dean of the St. Pieterskerk and chancellor of the University of Leuven, dated 16 September 1613 (in old Flemish)

Slika 3. Belgijski državni arhiv, Leuven. Archives de l'Université de Louvain (1426–1797), Inventaire H. De Vocht, nr. 1464: Testament Georgiusa van Oostenrycka, kardinala crkve Sv. Petra i počasnoga rektora Sveučilišta u Leuvenu, od 16. rujna 1613. (na staroflamanskom)

cellor of the University in 1597, died in 1619. He was the natural - but legitimised - son of the prince-bishop of Liège with the same name, who was himself a natural son of Emperor Maximilian I and thus the uncle of Emperor Charles V:

Ick Georgius van Oostenryck... Noch laet ick vuyt mijne bibliotheque aen de collegie van dry tonghen voer haer librarie oft biblioteque tot Loven deze naervolgende boecken Anathomia Vesalii in uno magno volumine Thesaurus geographicus Abrahami Ortelii Cosmographia pauli merulae Theatrum vitae humane in tribus magnis voluminibus in folio Opera Vergilii in folio cum decem comentis ac figuris seu imaginibus plena Oracula sibyllina auth Joe Obsopeo Hortus sanitatis cum figuris in folio Inscriptionum antiquarum liber Justi Lipsii in folio Margareta philosophica Historia belli sacri auth Guilielmo tyrio archiepiscopo ac Regni Hierosolimitani cancellario in folio Seminarium totius philosophiae Jois baptist Bernardi patritii veneti in folio ac in tribus voluminibus pandectae medicinae Jois Salvatrici venetis anno 1511 impressae (Fig. 3) [18,19].

Was this the copy that came into the University Library of Leuven and was destroyed during the fire? In the meantime the University Library of Leuven has again its own copy of the *Fabrica 1543* (Basel: Oporinus) in an 18th-century French binding.

THE COLLECTION OF THE LEOPOLDINA LIBRARY OF HALLE (GERMANY)

A *Fabrica 1543* got lost during World War II; stolen by the Russian troops and not given back. This copy was from the Leopoldina Library in Halle (Saksen-Anhalt) and disappeared in Wansleben am See. At that very moment it was stored in the potassium mine of the village (Fig. 4).

For more than two thousand prisoners the mine served as a concentration sub camp of Buchenwald 75 miles away. The camp was freed by the 104th US Infantry division in April 1945 and was occupied by the Soviet troops eleven weeks later. In the spring of 1946, the Russians took the entire art and book collection to Moscow. Thanks to research by then 68-year-old miner Horst Bringezu from Halle (an der Saale) for an article for *Bergbau* (journal of mining industry), we do know today what really happened in those days on that particular spot. This historical autodidact found secret documents of the 'DDR-Ministeriums für Staatssicherheit'.



Figure 4 - Leopoldina of Halle

Slika 4. Knjižnica Leopoldina u Halleu

The discovered Stasi documents gave an insight in the history of the mines. The work in the mines was stopped in 1926. Under the Nazis it was first used as a shelter for art objects, then also as a camouflaged armoury for the Wehrmacht, and as a subterranean concentration camp, where hundreds of prisoners found their death. (Fig. 5).

In the summer of 1943, Germany's most famous scientific academy, the Leopoldina in Halle, had sent its entire collection of rare 16th- and 17th-century medical and botanical books to Wansleben, eighteen kilometres west of Halle, to be stored underground in order to avoid losses due to Allied air raids. From October on, fourteen full-loaded furniture vans were on transport with 524 chests and 4660 packages of 6902 precious books, unique manuscripts, incunables, Goethe letters, scientific works, and several private archives. The books went into 380 m deep mine galleries. Finally on 25 November 1943, thirteen oil paintings from the library went the same way.

Later, on 26 January 1962, eleven inspectors of the 'Ministerium für Staatssicherheit' of East Germany's communist regime launched a secret investigation into a mine called Georgi (Schächte Georgi). As the Guardian reported, a Stasi investigator, Sgt Meyer, went down into the pit



Figure 5 - Potassium factory of Wansleben between 1930 and 1936, by courtesy of Paul Reinhardt, Wansleben am See

Slika 5. Tvornica kalija u Wanslebenu između 1930. i 1936., ljubaznošću Paula Reinhardta, Wansleben am See

and was confronted with “an evil smell” that probably came from the “corpses of former prisoners”, he reported. He found a postcard from “a 14- to 15-year-old-child - probably of Jewish origin” - and several sacks full of yellowed SS-documents. Of the precious books and paintings there was no sign. In 1966, communist officials sealed the mines of Georgi and Neu-Mansfeld and their secrets with concrete. According to Jochen Thamm, director of the Leopoldina Library, of the vanished collection only fifty books were returned to his library. They came via Georgia and Tallinn (Estonia) that got the books from Moscow. The rest would still be in Russia .²⁰ Among the lost books was an early volume by the astronomer Johannes Kepler, a Paracelsus text[20] from 1589, and a “unique 1543 anatomy atlas by Andreas Vesalius”.

According to *The Guardian* Dieter Michaelis, a young boy then, who grew up in the bakery of the village, one of the overseers at the camp was a Herr Spiess. He fled to southern Germany after the war. He later came back heavily disguised and with a beard. One of the Poles who had been in the camp and stayed on in the village recognised Spiess. He killed him. Still surviving witnesses and prisoners in 2005 were a Pole Karol Zeglicki

as prisoner no. 96 548 and a Czech Franz Kalas as prisoner no. 31 512 [21,22].

It is not certain that the imperfect copy in the Lenin Library of Moscow, not mentioned by Cushing (1943) but listed by Horowitz and Collins (1984), would be the *Fabrica* of Halle [23]. According to the German coordination centre for lost art, apart from the *Fabrica 1543*, a copy of Vesalius' *Anatomicarum Gabrielis Fallopii observationum Examen* and his *Opera Omnia* by Boerhaave and Albinus also got lost [24].

In 1984, Michael Horowitz and Jack Collins found eight copies of the *Fabrica 1543* in Germany, namely in Augsburg, Bamberg (imperfect copy), Berlin, Dresden, Eichstätt, Erlangen, Göttingen, and Wolfenbüttel [25].

THE THEFT FROM THE CRERAR LIBRARY (CHICAGO)

In the early 1980s, the University of Chicago Library merged with the formerly independent John Crerar Library. Many rare books and professional papers of Chicago physicians and the archives of Chicago medical organisations came to the University of Chicago Library. The Special Collections Research Centre of the University of Chicago Library mentions a copy of the *Fabrica 1543* in a contemporary binding dated to 1581, together with the first edition of a translation of Vesalius' work into German, *Anatomia Deudsch* (Nuremberg: Jul. Paolo Fabricio, 1551), and *Icones anatomicae* (Munich - New York: Bremer Press, 1934) [26]. Some caution is necessary here because the author mentions the use of "the 1548 second edition woodblocks", an edition that is not known.

The whole story was told by Jennifer S. Larson. Warren R. Howell, who died in January 1984, was one of the world's foremost antiquarian book dealers with an unquestioned reputation for integrity, expertise, and encyclopaedic book knowledge. His passion for books got him into trouble when he entered into an agreement with a man known to him as Joseph Putnam of Milwaukee (Wisconsin), to sell him on consignment, over a period of time that turned out to be six years, a group of books valued at approximately \$330,000. They were later found to be stolen from the John Crerar Library of Chicago (Fig. 6).

The first contact between Putnam and Warren Howell was in September 1976, with a letter offering Howell forty "rare old books" important for the history of science and medicine. The same letter was also sent to other antiquarians and auction houses and Warren Howell



Figure 6. Warren R. Howell. Photo by courtesy of Jeremy Norman (Norman Publishing, Novato, CA)

Slika 6. Fotografija Warrena R. Howella, ljubaznošću Jeremyja Normana (Norman Publishing, Novato, Kalifornija, SAD)

agreed with Jake Zeitlin to act jointly, should an agreement be reached with Putnam. They had already been partners for six years. Putnam allowed a 25 per cent commission: 12.5 percent each.

Although this was less than the usual commission, they agreed. Putnam told Howell that most of the books came from the library of Dr Bruno (von) Menck of Basedow bei Melchink (East Germany), the father of his first wife. He met his wife while stationed in Germany after World War II. He also told Howell that he bought other books personally at various book stores throughout Europe in 1953, while he was there in the army and that he later made some acquisitions in America. It was only late in 1982 that Howell wrote to a European colleague making inquiry into the collecting habits of Dr Menck, who died during the war. He didn't exist!

In the meantime, during January 1977, Putnam came to San Francisco to collect some money and to negotiate the second consignment of books

that arrived in March 1977. In June, the third shipment arrived. The cooperation with Zeitlin stopped after the first hundred books, because of Putnam's various commitments and demands for advance payments. The remaining five consignments arrived at irregular intervals from two to twenty months and were accepted and sold by John Howell-Books alone. Over six years, a total of 247 titles were consigned and payments from John Howell-Books to Joseph Putnam for 182 titles sold totalled \$235,620.68. Most of the value resided in three great books: William Harvey's *Exercitatio Anatomica de Motu Cordis et Sanguinis in Animalibus* (Frankfurt, 1628), a copy of Nicolaus Copernicus's *De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium* (Nuremberg, 1543), and a *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* (Basel, 1543) by Andreas Vesalius. Research by Howell's staff, of whom both Michael Horowitz and Jack Collins were members, proved it to be an unrecorded variant issue. They both met Putnam in March 1977. On another occasion he told Collins that his real name was Joseph Punta, being of Polish descent, and that he preferred to use the Anglicized form of the name. The possession of a copy of the *Fabrica* 1543 by the John Crerar Library was also mentioned by Richard Aulie in 1970. Although the illustration of the capital letter "S" included in his article comes from the 1555 edition, not from the *editio princeps*, this does not rule out that his assertion was correct.

Howell must have been very unaware of a possible dishonest origin of the books, as he physically sent the Copernicus to Owen Gingerich, a world authority on that book, for his expert opinion. Gingerich, professor of astronomy and history of science at Harvard University, had started in 1970 a revision of the 1943 census of the first edition of *De Revolutionibus* and had more than tripled the number of located copies of it. As Gingerich made no connection between the received copy and the one he saw himself at the Crerar Library some 10 years earlier, Howell could not believe this copy was suspect in any way. Moreover the Crerar Library did not respond to Howell's questionnaire on Vesalius. This was sent to them directly. They also failed to react to his *Catalogue* 53 of 1981, offering not only the Vesalius but their own distinctive copy of the Copernicus as well, which was fully described and illustrated, together with a lot of other books that was their property. An enormous amount of research by his staff determined that the copy supplied by Putnam was indeed a previously unrecorded variant of Vesalius's *Fabrica*, of which five copies (of them only two perfect ones) were eventually located. John Howell-Books placed advertisements in several journals, asking to contact owners of the

copies of the *Fabrica*, and sent a detailed questionnaire to over 400 possible owners all over the world, requesting them to compare their copies with the variant. It were Horowitz and Collins who devoted their time to the compilation of a census of the *Fabrica 1543* and who published the discovery of the variant. Eventually the Vesalius was sold by Howell to a London dealer, who returned the book because it appeared to exhibit some typographical irregularities in the preliminary leaves not matching known copies of the first edition.

The final shipment from Putnam arrived in November 1980, but by the fall of 1982 numerous books remained unsold when Howell agreed to buy the remaining books and to make his final payments in January 1983. But in September this criminal situation finally became exposed, thanks to the expertise and persistence of a single scholar in pursuit of a unique 15th-century manuscript of Nicolas de Cusa, a medieval philosopher. It was Professor Raymond Klibansky of McGill University who first discovered the manuscript through a catalogue of Jacques Rosenthal published in Munich in 1928. The manuscript was sold to the John Crerar Library in 1927, and Klibansky received photostats of the manuscript from there at that time. The manuscript's acquisition was mentioned in a 1945 publication of the Library. On a visit in 1948, however, the manuscript could not be found in the Crerar Library and it wasn't even catalogued. He finally located the manuscript in the 'Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz in Berlin', where it had been acquired in 1978 from Bernard Rosenthal, a San Francisco book dealer and grandson of Jacques Rosenthal. Rosenthal acquired it from Warren Howell in May or June 1978. On 13 September 1980, Bernard Rosenthal wrote to Klibansky, who replied only on 7 December 1981, recounting in detail the facts of provenance of the manuscript, but it took until September 1982 for Rosenthal to communicate Klibansky's information to Howell. Only then did the entire history of the systematic theft from the John Crerar Library of Chicago become apparent. Putnam was arrested in January 1983 and sentenced to two years in federal prison [27].

THE THEFT IN CHRIST CHURCH COLLEGE (OXFORD)

Between 1992 and 1995, Simon Heighes, a lecturer and expert in baroque music, who was attached to Queen's College and Oriel College (Oxford), smuggled 74 rare books one after the other out of the library of Christ Church College and sold them. He relieved the library of first editions of Milton's *Paradise Lost* and of Darwin's *Origin of Species*, and early



Figure 7. Christ Church College (Oxford, UK), by courtesy of Ralph Williamson, photographer.

Slika 7. Christ Church College (Oxford, UK), ljubaznošću fotografa Ralpa Williamsona

editions of the works of Thomas Hobbes, Edmond Halley, Samuel Pepys, and Galileo Galilei. In May 1995 he was arrested, only a few days after the college reported the missing books. Heighes had left his name at Blackwells, where he had sold the *Principia Mathematica* of Newton for £64,000. On December next he was convicted to two years in prison and a compensation of £160,000. After a considerable effort during eight years, the University of Oxford succeeded in bringing 73 of the works back from the United States, Malta and Germany, except Vesalius's *Fabrica* in a two volume 'pocket' edition from 1552 (Lyon: Jean de Tournes). The title-pages of Jean de Tournes, who died in Lyon in 1564 of the plague, bear a medallion formed by two vipers around the motto *Quod tibi fieri non vis, alteri ne feceris*. They had received the latter in 1733 as a gift of Charles Boyle, the fourth Earl of Orrery and alumnus of Christ Church College, and estimated its value at about £15,000 (Fig. 7). This edition of the *Fabrica* by Jean de Tournes was the second ever, the edition of 1555 by Oporinus was the third one. Heighes sold the Vesalius together with some

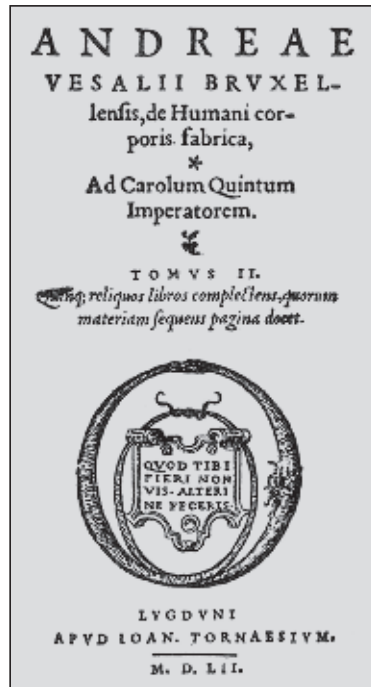


Figure 8. Frontispiece of Fabrica 1552

Slika 8. Ilustracija nasuprot naslovne stranice Fabricae iz 1552.

other volumes to Sotheby's in London. After their auction on 2 December 1994, it came in the hands of Jonathan Hill, an American bookseller for an amount of £7,000. The auction house asked Hill by letter of 9 June 1995 to return the books to Christ Church and offered him his money back. Hill did not cooperate and four years later Christ Church complained at the Antiquarian Booksellers' Association of America. Only then did Hill admit that he had sold the work to Shoten Ohi, a bookseller in Tokyo for an unknown amount of money. In turn, Ohi sold it to Nippon Dental University, where it is on display in the Museum of Medicine and Dentistry in Niigata City. After four years of unsuccessful corresponding, Ohi told that the owner would only agree with a restitution if an identical copy of the edition of the *Fabrica* 1552 would be provided. In a local newspaper Ohi complained he felt being treated as a criminal (Fig. 8).

David Morris, Oxford's representative for Japan, wrote to Izumi Nakahara, president of Nippon Dental University, to assure him that Oxford had no wish to damage the reputation of his university and hoped that the problem could be solved in a friendly way, without disturbing the academic relationships and the trust between Japan and Great Britain.

One week later he got his answer. It did not come from Nakahara, but from the curator of the Japanese museum, who told him that - after taking legal advice - the university had decided to keep the book. This wealthy private university of dentistry has a famous collection of historic medical books and is eager to have its own collection of Vesalius's works of which it believes a copy of the 1552 edition of the *Fabrica* is an essential part. The head of the museum, Teruo Higuchi, argued that the books were donated for the purpose of medical studies, and that the copies they had were not the only ones, so that it wasn't so easy to conclude they were the ones stolen from Oxford.

Notwithstanding repeated demands from Oxford to return the book, Japan refuses to negotiate the question. The reason for this is that according to the Japanese law stolen goods that have unwittingly been bought must only be returned within two years from the time they were stolen. Because in the meantime more than ten years elapsed, the Japanese university is no longer bound by their law. Oxford uses the argument that beside the legal aspect there is also a moral one, according to which it remains the moral owner. Several other British institutions take the same point of view, but without any success, and the situation remains as firm as a rock. To the last series of tentatives the only answer from the part of Nakahara was an icy silence.

Since the discovery of the theft in 1995, Christ Church started a new inventory of its library, and visitors have no longer access to the department of old and rare books without constant supervision. It is now situated on the upper level. Oxford does not give up the battle for restitution and found support with the British Library and Lambeth Palace [28-30].

Cushing mentions the existence of eighteen copies of the *Fabrica* 1552, including his own, and, as we saw, the copy that went into flames in Leuven on August 1914. His list is not complete, however, as he mentions only the copy in the Bodleian Library in Oxford. Complete sets are understandably rarer than single volumes [32].

THE 'ROYAL' FABRICA

Illegal changes of property are not only the case of renowned libraries, but also occur in private life, even at a high level. Where does lay the limit between borrowing a book and 'forgetting' to give it back on the one hand and pure theft on the other? Or unknowingly accepting a donation of someone else's book? What was the case in the disappearance of a splen-

did copy of the *Fabrica* in the Belgian Royal family remains uncertain, but some facts stand unchallenged.

In the 1860s - or somewhat later - Josse Schavye of Brussels (1822-1905) bound two copies of the *Fabrica*, both of the 1568 edition, in human skin. The first one found its way to North America, where William E. Louttit, Jr. (1904-1973) became the owner. He was a graduate of the Brown University (Providence, Rhode Island). As a bibliophile he possessed a huge collection of rare and valuable books and later he became the first keeper of the records of the John Hay Library of his university to which he gave numerous books. Preparing our paper on that particular *Fabrica* 1568 bound in human skin, we unexpectedly fell upon a catalogue reference mentioning the existence of another 1568 copy, also bound in human skin in the same famous book-binding house of Josse Schavye of Brussels [32].

As relates Charles De Samblanx (1855-1943) himself, he had to bind a *Fabrica* of Vesalius into two pieces of human skin [33]. De Samblanx was a master-binder of the house of Schavye. Afterwards the book was decorated on its front cover by Adolphe Dillens (Gent, 1821-Brussels, 1877), a painter-etcher, with - according to the auction catalogue - a large skeleton leaning on a spade. In the corners, skulls are placed above tibias [34]. That copy was never sold and stayed in the private collection of J. Schavye; perhaps it was too precious and too expensive. Only at the end of his life it was auctioned in Brussels and came into the hands of Prince Philippe Eugène of Belgium (1837-1905), Count of Flanders, who paid three hundred and ten Belgian francs for it, the equivalent of about one thousand and five hundred euros now. From that moment on the way of this precious book can be followed easily: firstly it came in the hands of his son, King Albert I of Belgium (1875-1934), then of his grandson King Leopold III (1901-1983), who after the settlement of the famous Royal Question in 1950 and the marriage of King Baudouin (1930 -1993) in December 1960, took it with him to the Castle of Argenteuil near Brussels (Fig. 9). After his death, Lilian Baels (1916-2002), his second wife, kept the book. She showed it on 25 October 1993 to a select group of visitors, among them Herman De Croo, Minister of State of Belgium, who recollects the event, Professor D. Compston, Professor. Sir Keith Peters (Cambridge), Professor Michel Verwilghen, and some others. From that moment on we lose all traces of the precious book. From the children of King Leopold III with Princess Lilian we have learnt nothing; Princess Esmeralda (1956) was so kind to tell us that she did not see the book again



Figure 9. The Castle of Argenteuil (unknown painter) “Musée communal de Waterloo” (photo by Omer Steeno)

Slika 9. Dvorac Argenteuil (anonimnoga autora), Musée communal de Waterloo (fotografija: Omer Steeno)

after her mother’s death, whereas we received no reply from Prince Alexander (1942-2009), but afterwards his widow Lea Wolman denied to possess the *Fabrica*. We had no contact with their sister Princess Marie-Christine (1951) who has been living in the United States for several decades. Our present king, His Majesty King Albert II, did not succeed in finding this book at the Royal Court [35].

OTHER CASES

THE FRANEKER ACADEMIC LIBRARY IN THE NETHERLANDS

On 29 July 1585, stadtholder Willem Lodewijk founded the University of Franeker in Friesland (the Netherlands) and from 1589 on they had their chair of medicine. In the region this was the third university after

Leuven (1426) and Leiden (1575). But it ended already under Napoleon on 22 October 1811, because it did not attract a sufficient number of students.

The Franeker University Library succeeded however in establishing a valuable collection of works. In 1644, it had eighty medical books in possession, seven of which were stolen, among them five anatomical works: a *Fabrica 1555* by Andreas Vesalius, donated by Eilardus Reynalda (died on 27 October 1610), a *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* by Adrianus Spigelius (Venice, 1627), the *Historia anatomica* (Paris, 1600) by Andreas Laurentius, the *Praelectiones anatomicae* (Rome, 1586) by Archangelus Piccolomini, a gift from Menelaus Winsemius (died in 1639), and a *Pentaestheseion sive Anatomia quinque sensuum* (Frankfurt, 1612), a gift of Isbrandus Hieronymus Vranck at his promotion on 12 May 1625. Three of them were returned. While the *Fabrica 1555* of Vesalius could be replaced by a copy of the first edition (1543), the *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* by Van den Spiegel (Spigelius) had to be replaced by a copy of the edition by Van der Linden (Amsterdam, 1645) [36].

THE LIBRARY OF ORADEA

In the course of years the library of the minster in Oradea (Hung.: Nagyvárad, G: Groszwardein, Rom.: Oradea Mare, L.: Varadia), now a city with a population of about 250.000 in West Romania, twelve kilometres from the border with Hungary, lost one of its greatest treasures: Vesalius's *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* (Basel, Oporinus, 1555). Reference to the work may now be found as no. 632 in their *Catalogus Librorum Bibliothecae Capitularis*, an attempt to retrieve the missing titles. Their *Fabrica* disappeared when at least 80 copies from the 16th century were moved as a 'gift' to the National Library of Bucharest between 1978 and 1982 [37].

MEANS OF IDENTIFYING BOOKS

No wonder that after more than four centuries, even precious books such as Vesalius's, show defects, which can be mended such as tears, wormholes, loose pages, or a defective binding. Some owners have, according to Vesalius's intention, cut out the smaller drawings and pasted them on the bigger ones. Others, wanting to link themselves to this immortal work, have written their names on it fixed a stamp or a bookplate or written a dedication accompanying a gift.

All these actions have made these copies unique. This makes their individual identification easier. More and more antiquarians and auction houses refer to these details in the descriptions of the books they offer. Sometimes this makes it possible to follow a copy's fate and to identify previous owners.

HOW TO PROTECT COLLECTIONS?

Protecting a collection means taking care that no book is stolen from a library and that a library does not appropriate a stolen book. What may give away a stolen book are deleted marks, labels, stamps, bookplates or missing entries of previous owners. Forgers also resort to deleting library records and stamps. Traces of previous owners are found in about every fourth book suspected to have been stolen. Only one third of these suspect books is usually identified to its rightful owner. Then comes the difficult step of locating the owner's descendants [38].

Alvan Bregman made a number of recommendations on how to protect books and recover the ones that have disappeared in his preconference talk of June 2006 for the *Rare Books and Manuscripts Section* (RBMS) of the *Association of College and Research Libraries*. Librarians and archivists must take it seriously how they guard their collections. They should ensure controlled access to them, bearing in mind that a great number of thefts involved insiders. In addition, librarians should do their best to catalogue, describe, and mark all books and documents, so that the material is readily identifiable in case it is stolen. It is recommended to create a website showing all the identification marks that have been used on the materials the library collected, as well as the binding styles and the owner's marks. All institutions should keep such a record public for easy reference of colleagues, dealers, and collectors. Each institution should be familiar with and use the ACRL Guidelines on Marking. All catalogue records should refer to copy-specific details about each book. Alvan Bregman takes The Royal Library of Denmark as an example [39].³⁹ Victims of theft must be encouraged to take action and alert the trade to their loss.

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SAŽETAK

Krađe i nestali primjerci vrijednih knjiga nisu rijetka pojava. Ovaj se članak osvrće na nekoliko događaja vezanih uz Vežalovo djelo De humani corporis fabrica: požar u Sveučilišnoj knjižnici u Leuvenu u Belgiji, sudbinu zbirke Knjižnice Leopoldina u Halleu u Njemačkoj, krađe iz Knjižnice Crerar u Chicagu te iz Christ Collegea u Oxfordu, nestanak iznimno lijepoga "kraljevskog" primjerka iz dvorca Argenteuil (Belgija) te na ostale primjerke Fabricae nestale iz knjižnica Franeker u Nizozemskoj i Oradea u zapadnoj Rumunjskoj. Na kraju se kratko raspravlja o načinima zaštite zbirke knjiga te o važnosti identifikacije knjiga.

Ključne riječi: *Vežal, Fabrica, Leuven, Halle, Chicago, Oxford, Argenteuil, Wansleben am See*

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