

Institution: The University of Manchester		
Unit of Assessment: 29 (Classics)		
Title of case study: The Circulation of Ancient Manuscripts on the Antiquities Market: Improving the Ethical and Regulatory Practices and Standards of Market Stakeholders		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2014-2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Roberta Mazza	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Lecturer in Graeco-Roman Material Culture	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 2009–present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Mazza's research on the circulation of papyri on the antiquities market revealed unethical practices and illegal activities on the part of individual actors in the marketplace and a broader need for higher ethical standards in the collection, handling and publication of manuscripts. On the strength of this research, Mazza has worked with key stakeholders (collectors, publishers, professional bodies, police officers and higher education providers) to effect change. The research has produced the following impacts: 1) the codifying and adoption of more ethical practices and policies on the part of collectors, including the largest museum of biblical artefacts in the US; 2) improvements to the policies and practices of professional bodies, UK police, and a key publisher; and 3) a new emphasis on ethical considerations in the teaching of text- and artefact-oriented academic subjects in the UK and internationally, influencing the training of the next generation of papyrologists and curators.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Mazza has researched the circulation of papyrus manuscripts outside Egypt since 2014. The research examines current collecting and publication practices within both the contemporary context of increased trafficking of antiquities from Egypt since the Arab revolution in 2011, and the longer history of colonial exploitation from the early nineteenth century onwards. It has developed through two closely related strands of inquiry: 1) the history of the Green Papyri and the Museum of the Bible in Washington DC and 2) a broader investigation of the role of collectors and researchers in the circulation of papyri, with a focus on ethical challenges and responsibilities.</p> <p>Investigation of The Green Collection and The Museum of the Bible</p> <p>Mazza reconstructed the history of the <i>Green Collection</i> (GC), which includes an estimated 5,000 papyri acquired by the Green family, owners of the American Hobby Lobby Corporation, since 2009. Some of the GC papyri have been donated to the Green-sponsored <i>Museum of the Bible</i> (MOTB, opened in 2017), the largest museum of biblical artefacts in the US, visited by approximately 1,000,000 people each year. The research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysed the religious, ideological and economic dimensions of the Green family's collecting practices [1, 2] as well as the ethical questions the GC raises. The unusual speed with which this extensive collection was formed, in particular, prompted further inquiry into issues of provenance. • Generated 'biographies' of two of the GC papyri: <i>P.Oxy. 15. 1780</i> (P39), a fragment of the Gospel of John, and <i>GC.MS.462</i>, a small Coptic fragment of Galatians 2 [1, 2]. In both instances, the research revealed periods of obscurity for which ownership and location information was missing, indicating that the GC had not paid due attention to the history of these artefacts during the process of acquisition. In the case of <i>GC.MS.462</i>, Mazza found that prior to its acquisition for the GC, this manuscript had been illegally listed for sale on eBay by a seller based in Turkey; its route from eBay to the GC has never been fully explained. As well as shedding light on ethically problematic transactions in the formation of the GC, the biographies serve as case studies for the wider problems affecting the market. These problems include: the 'disappearance' of papyri when they are acquired by anonymous private collectors who fail to provide access for study purposes; lack of detailed record-keeping by auction houses; and inadequate checks on provenance on the part of dealers and collectors. The biographies also expose the interconnectedness of licit and illicit markets. 		

- Mapped a network of academics involved in the GC as part of the Green Scholars Initiative, highlighting instances of their unethical practice (e.g. the destruction of mummy cartonnage to obtain papyri, [3]) and lack of transparency in their interactions with the wider scholarly community, an approach mandated by the use of non-disclosure agreements for participating scholars [2]. This stream of research substantially contributed to the discovery of the theft of 120 papyri from the Egypt Exploration Society collection deposited at the Sackler Library. Some of the papyri had been sold to Hobby Lobby/MOTB and to another American collector, who agreed to give them back to the legal owners.

Papyri and Ethics: Towards a Due Diligence Approach

The research on individual papyri from the GC and other collections [1] informed Mazza's exploration of a wider set of questions relating to the ethical responsibilities of all those involved in the handling, purchase and publication of ancient manuscripts exchanged on the antiquities market, including academic researchers. This research:

- Demonstrated that the attitudes and practices of some collectors and papyrologists display continuities with nineteenth- and twentieth-century colonial and imperial beliefs. In particular the perceived right of European and American collectors and scholars to acquire antiquities, and their perceived authority in understanding and interpreting them for scholarly and wider audiences [2]. In the case of papyri, these persistent attitudes may be accompanied by a further belief in the primacy of written culture over the integrity of material evidence, a view which is itself religiously motivated for some collectors of papyri who seek to retrieve the word of God by obtaining biblical manuscripts [4].
- Shown that some papyrologists remain insensitive to the ethical implications of their activities, for example by publishing papyri with poorly documented or entirely undocumented provenance [1, 2]. In prioritising the cultural value of these objects and the prestige of publication over ethical considerations, papyrologists confer legitimacy on papyri acquired in dubious or even illegal circumstances and perpetuate unethical or illegal market transactions [2].
- Proposed a new due diligence approach, which requires in-depth research of collection history before handling and studying any papyrus and full transparency following publication [5].

3. References to the research

1. **Mazza, R.** 2015 'Papyri, Ethics and Economics: A Biography of P.Oxy. 1780 (P39)' *Bulletin of The American Society of Papyrologists* 52: 113-142. <https://doi.org/10.2143/BASP.52.0.3203266> [Peer-reviewed leading international journal in the field of papyrology.]
2. **Mazza, R.** 2019 'The Green Papyri and the Museum of the Bible' in C. Concannon, J. Hicks-Keeton (eds.), *The Museum of the Bible: A Critical Introduction* (Rowman and Littlefield): 171–205. Available from HEI on request. [First publication focussed on MOTB.]
3. Gibson, A., Piquette, K.E., Bergmann, U., Christens-Barry, W., Davis, G., Endrizzi, M., Fan, S., Farsiu, S., Fitzgerald, A., Griffiths, J., Jones, C., Li, G., Manning, P.L., Charlotte, M.J., **Mazza, R.**, Mills, D., Modregger, P., Munro, P.R.T., Olivo, A., Stevenson, A., Venugopal, B., Wallace, V., Wogelius, R.A., Toth, M.B. & Terras, M. 2018, 'An assessment of multimodal imaging of subsurface text in mummy cartonnage using surrogate papyrus phantoms', *Heritage Science* 6(1): 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40494-018-0175-4>. [Peer-reviewed international journal, multi-authored with leading scientists and digital experts.]
4. **Mazza, R.** 2014 'Papyri, Collectors and the Antiquities Market: A Survey and Some Questions', Sixth Annual Interdisciplinary Art Crime Conference, Amelia, Italy, 27-29 June 2014. https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/files/31177676/FULL_TEXT.PDF [Conference paper and circulated online; Pure and Academia.edu over 1,000 downloads.]
5. **Mazza, R.** 2019 'Papyrology and Ethics', in: Nodar A., S. Torallas Tovar (eds.), *Proceedings of the 28th Congress of Papyrology; 2016 August 1-6; Barcelona*. Barcelona: 15-27. <http://hdl.handle.net/10230/42017>. [Keynote invited speech, then peer-reviewed article.]

4. Details of the impact

Neglect of ethical considerations in the exchange, handling and publication of papyri poses a threat to heritage preservation and feeds the cycle of looting and trafficking of antiquities from Egypt. Drawing on the due diligence principles developed through her research [5], Mazza has promoted the transformation of policy and practice across key stakeholder communities, resulting

in the application of higher ethical standards. Impact of significance and reach has been achieved via regular dialogue with key stakeholders (collectors, publishers, professional bodies, police officers, teachers and education providers) and through consistent dissemination of the findings beyond academia. Mazza's *Faces&Voices* blog [A] and other online publications and media coverage [B] have been important platforms for sharing the research with papyrologists, collectors and curators. International media coverage of the research (e.g. *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Guardian*) [B] has also reached a large general readership and helped to expose some of the illegal practices associated with the antiquities black market that the research challenges.

Stakeholders in the Antiquities Market

Collectors

Important institutional and private collectors have responded to the research by adopting more ethical practices and policies. The most prominent institutional collector to do so is the MOTB, the largest museum of biblical artefacts in the US (approximately 1,000,000 visitors per year). Mazza has engaged extensively with staff at MOTB since 2014, drawing their attention to the research findings, for example the illegal source of the largest part of the MOTB papyri collection [1], and recommended the adoption of more ethical approaches. As a result, the MOTB stopped exhibiting the papyri bought through the Turkish seller and opened a conversation with the Egyptian government about repatriation, which was agreed and publicly announced in March 2020 for a total of 5,000 items [B.vi, C.i]. It also stopped the practice of dismantling cartonnage and dropped a plan to include live demonstrations at MOTB, with the result that substantial damage to heritage objects has been prevented [C.i]. Mazza's research contributed to the shaping and issuing of MOTB's first acquisition policy in 2017 (now expanded into a Collection Management Policy), which follows international museum standards. [C.ii]. The adoption of an acquisition policy represents a significant practice change for MOTB, which between 2009 and 2015 operated on the antiquities market without one and had been found guilty of breaking the law. The policy sets legal and ethical standards that must be followed in future acquisitions to prevent the perpetuation of unethical and illegal actions. For instance, approximately 5,000 papyrus fragments were acquired between 2009 and 2014, but not a single one after 2017. The research also had an impact on the Museum's online display of papyri and other artefacts, where labels now include information on provenance [C.i, C.ii]. [text removed for publication]

Mazza's scrutiny of the GC and MOTB generated substantial media coverage [B], which in turn raised awareness of the research findings among other institutional collectors, including university libraries and museums, many of which now refer to this research as a key source of information about the importance of researching documented provenance before acquiring papyri offered on the market. For instance, the research convinced the University Library of Notre Dame (US) to turn down the opportunity to purchase a collection. Here, the rare collections and manuscripts curator referred to the importance of Mazza's body of work, writing, "*When I had to explain my decision not to purchase the papyri to several of my colleagues – many of whom are not aware of the issues surrounding most papyri – I was better equipped to do so. Publically accessible tools such as your research on the ethics of papyri do a great service to the library world*" [D.i]. The International Council of Museums (Italy) prevented the sale and dispersion of a private collection held in the Papyrus Museum of Siracusa in response to Mazza's research [A, B.vii].

The impact extends to private collectors. While renowned dealers such as Christie's and Sotheby's were seen as a guarantee of reliability, cases brought to light through the research and outreaching publications [A, B] demonstrated that due diligence in checking all documents provided by any type of seller must be submitted to close scrutiny. These findings have changed the approach and practices of important private collectors of ancient manuscripts. [text removed for publication]

Leading publisher: Brill

The research [1] argued that academic publication plays an important role in lending increased legitimacy to manuscripts with poorly documented or undocumented provenance. Ensuring that publishers operate to high ethical standards is therefore crucial. Mazza guided a group of specialists to write an open letter to *Brill* [E.i], a prominent press in text-oriented disciplines, publishing over 1,300 titles and 332 journals each year in Classics, Biblical Studies, Egyptology, and related disciplines. The letter gained the support of more than 150 researchers and curators

globally. The initiative brought about a close collaboration between Mazza and Brill's Publishing Director and staff, which led to the issuing of a revised Publication Ethics document that now includes a new paragraph concerning unprovenanced artefacts [E.ii, p.4]. Brill used the research findings to highlight instances of poor practice in relation to the documentation of provenance and authenticity issues. For the first time, a document binds all Brill authors and collaborators to follow the ethical guidelines of the relevant academic professional bodies in matters of provenance and authenticity. This has never before been the case, not only at Brill but also at any other similar academic presses. The Brill Publishing Director states in a testimonial that Mazza's research was "*instrumental*" [E.iii] to the establishment of these guidelines. In view of her research expertise, Mazza joined the board of Brill's Ethics Committee in May 2020 [E.iii].

Professional Bodies

Drawing on the research, Mazza called upon papyrologists and collectors to recognise fully their ethical responsibilities in the circulation of illicit manuscripts and to adopt higher and stricter ethical standards for professional practice. Although some academic association guidelines on the handling of unprovenanced manuscripts existed, the research [5] demonstrated that they were insufficiently clear and too often ignored by both collectors and academics. The due diligence principles [5] are at the centre of the redrafting of guidelines by all the professional bodies in this field. The *Society of Biblical Literature* (SBL) and the *Society of Classical Studies* (SCS) have already revised their policies, while the *International Association of Papyrologists* (AIP) and the *American Society of Papyrologists* (ASP) are in the process of improving their policies in line with Mazza's recommendations [F.i-F.iii]. These revised policies are essential as members of these professional bodies (over 10,000 members overall) are required to respect their guidelines in order to maintain their affiliation. They are also the official documents of professional standards constantly referred to in practical cases, not only by papyrologists and other scholars, but also by institutional and private collectors. A member of the Governing Council of the SBL notes the "*integral*" role Mazza played in the development of its 2016 policy on the use of unprovenanced ancient materials [F.iii], also citing [4] as research that influenced SBL in this area. They state that "*Mazza's emphasis on due diligence before publication and transparency on provenance was extremely valuable*" [F.iii]. Mazza's research was used in the redrafting of the SCS policy (2019), specifically the paragraphs on due diligence in documenting the collection history of ancient objects, including manuscripts [F.i]. Mazza is a member of the committee entrusted with the new shared AIP/ASP policy regarding the commerce in papyri [F.ii]. The president of ASP states that Mazza "*made key contributions to [the] committee [...] her concept of due diligence is the foundation upon which the entire document is structured*" [F.ii].

London Metropolitan Police

The contribution of this research in charting and exposing illegal practice led to direct engagement with the police [see B.iv]. The London Metropolitan Police (LMP) has a dedicated unit which deals with a wide array of crimes related to art and antiquities, including smuggling, theft, forgery, and the repatriation of objects illegally obtained. The LMP Unit operates nationally and the UK has the second largest antiquities market (including manuscripts) in the world. The LMP Unit comprises three officers with a substantial workload, and Mazza has been working with the Unit to use her research to provide much-needed expertise since 2016. Mazza provides expertise in cases where objects appear at auctions or on sale and are reported to the Unit by potential buyers, dealers or the Egyptian government. [text removed for publication] She has also provided other expertise varying from ascertaining via email if a papyrus is a forgery, to answering specific technical questions on objects that the police have insufficient time or knowledge to address [B.i].

Education

The research demonstrated that a lack of awareness about the nature of manuscripts as archaeological objects is at the root of unethical and illegal practices, and as a consequence Mazza has called for a change in the way text-oriented disciplines are taught [5]. Through the dissemination of material and case studies via open access publications and the blog [A; see also B.iii], Mazza has provided teaching case studies and tools, and has facilitated the embedding of ethical research practices and handling of manuscripts in curricula in 6 university programmes. As attested for instance by a Professor at MF Norwegian School of Theology, Religion and Society,

Oslo, Mazza's blog material is used successfully for teaching HIS9021, a course unit running every year as part of the methods, theory and ethics focus of their PhD programme [G.i]. The same is attested for other text-oriented course units at both graduate and undergraduate level in subjects ranging from Classics (e.g. at the University of Toronto; Macquarie University; University of Chicago), to Jewish and Biblical Studies (e.g. University of Agder, Norway) and Egyptology (e.g. Arab Academy for Science, Technology & Maritime Transport, Egypt).

Mazza's research is also used in professional programmes organised by the Association for Research into Crimes against Art (ARCA) in Amelia, Italy. ARCA runs an annual postgraduate Master's degree in Art Crime and Cultural Heritage Protection (between 20 and 30 students per year) and various shorter CPD courses taken not only by university students but also by professionals such as curators, police officers and dealers. For example, the research is being used as an important case study in a specialised training programme ARCA is developing for SMEs working on heritage crime in the Middle East and eastern North Africa [G.ii]. The CEO of ARCA explains that through its use in such training programmes, Mazza's work "*exemplifies how applied academic research [...] can support law enforcement investigations into multinational illicit trafficking networks*" [G.ii]

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- A. **Blog:** <https://facesandvoices.wordpress.com>, especially the following post on ICOM/Italy: <https://facesandvoices.wordpress.com/2018/03/19/dove-comprare-papiri-antichi-in-greco-e-demotico-al-museo-del-papiro-di-siracusa/> (19 March 2018).
- B. **Key media coverage and contributions:** (i) *Hyperallergic* <https://hyperallergic.com/429653/the-illegal-papyrus-trade-and-what-scholars-can-do-to-stop-it> (1 March 2018; approximately 1,100 shares); (ii) *Marginalia*, *LA Review of Books* <https://marginalia.lareviewofbooks.org/property-of-a-gentleman/> (6 July 2018; over 1,800 views/116 shares); (iii) *Eidolon* <https://eidolon.pub/the-green-fiasco-in-context-f6f6d2c87329> (7 November 2019; over 2,500 views); (iv) *The Guardian* <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2020/jan/09/a-scandal-in-oxford-the-curious-case-of-the-stolen-gospel> (9 January 2020); (v) *The Atlantic* <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/06/museum-of-the-bible-obbink-gospel-of-mark/610576/> (June 2020); (vi) *The Wall Street Journal* <https://www.wsj.com/articles/hobby-lobby-president-to-return-11-500-antiquities-to-iraq-and-egypt-11585324494> (27 March 2020); (vii) *La Stampa* <https://www.lastampa.it/cronaca/2018/04/09/news/siracusa-l-autofinanziamento-choc-del-museo-vendiamo-fragmenti-di-papiri-1.34002913> (9 April 2018).
- C. **Museum of the Bible:** (i) Testimonial [text removed for publication] (31 August 2020); (ii) MOTB Collections Management Policy: <https://www.museumofthebible.org/policies?&tab=collections-management-policy>.
- D. **Collectors:** (i) Testimonial from Curator, Ancient and Medieval Manuscripts, Hesburgh Library, University of Notre Dame (16 December 2020); (ii) [text removed for publication]
- E. **Brill:** (i) Open letter: <https://facesandvoices.wordpress.com/2020/01/22/2388/> (22 January 2020) and <https://facesandvoices.wordpress.com/2018/11/05/open-letter-to-brill-fake-and-unprovenanced-manuscripts/> (5 November 2018); (ii) Revised publication ethics: https://brill.com/fileasset/downloads_static/static_publishingbooks_publicationethics.pdf; (iii) Testimonial from Publishing Director, Brill (16 September 2020).
- F. **Professional bodies:** (i) Testimonial from Executive Director, SCS (27 October 2020); (ii) Testimonial from President, ASP (27 October 2020); (iii) Testimonial from Governing Council member, SBL (2 November 2020).
- G. **Education:** (i) Testimonial from Professor, MF Norwegian School of Theology, Religion and Society (15 December 2020); (ii) Testimonial from CEO, ARCA (20 September 2020).