

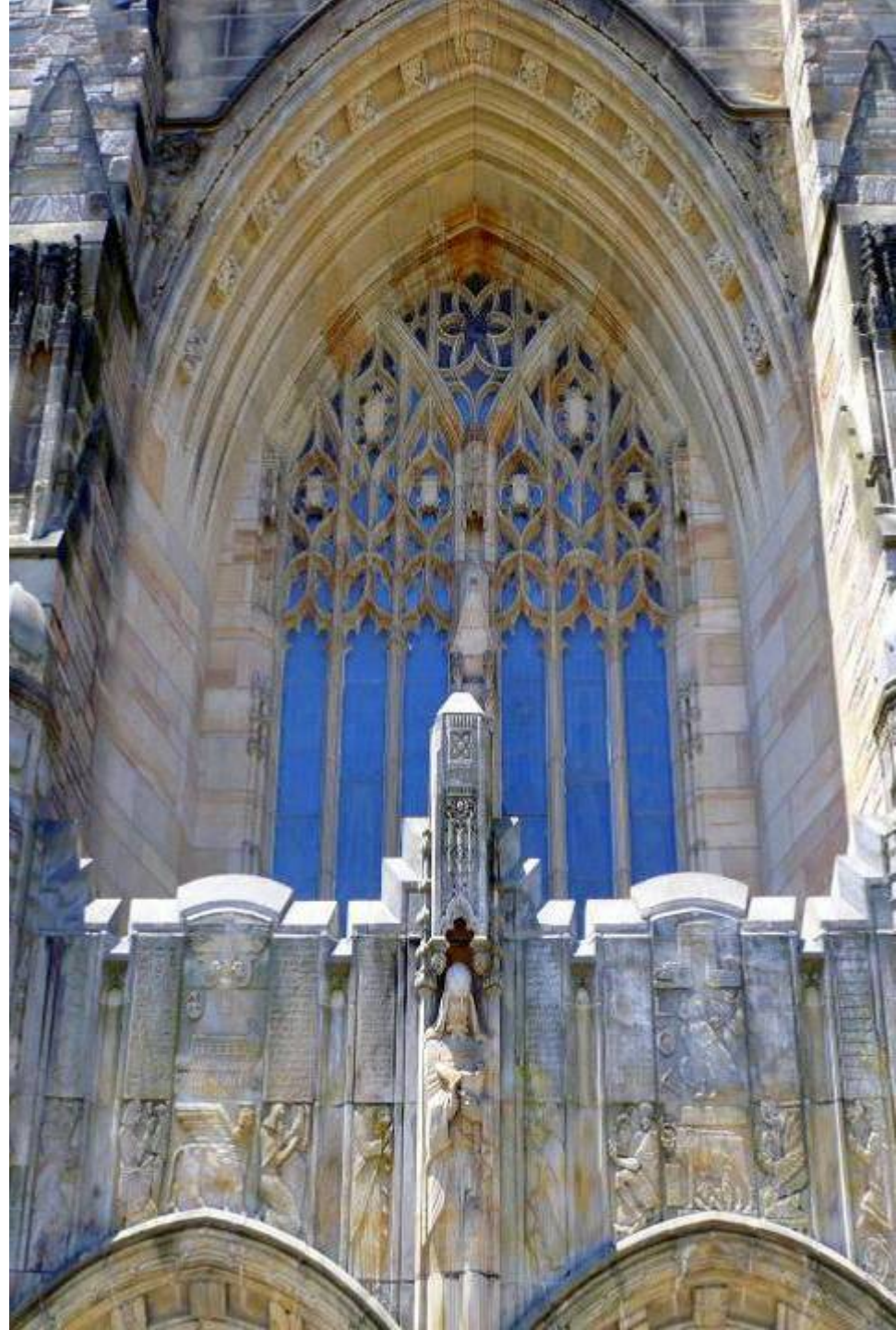
# *Special Collections in a Global Perspective*

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OCLC Members' Council

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# *Summary:*

1. The uniqueness of special collections:  
the challenge of definition
2. Uses of special collections
3. Their shared nature
4. Ownership
5. Originals and surrogates
6. The legal and diplomatic framework
7. Thinking globally and acting locally



# 1. The uniqueness of special collections: the challenge of definition

*Special Collections in libraries include:*

## 1.1. Rare books

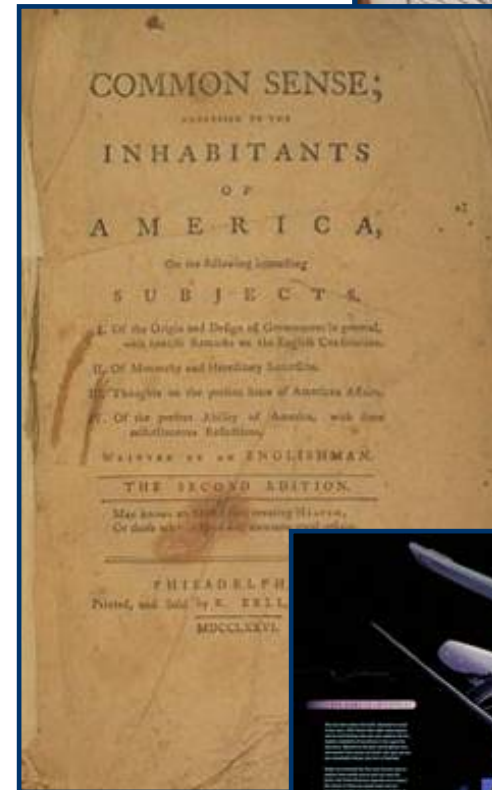
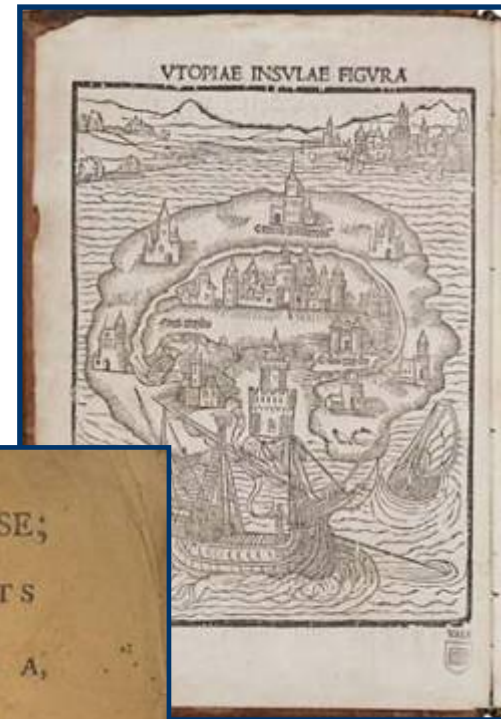


Image from More's Utopia; image from title page of Thomas Paine's Common Sense; illustration from Gene Roddenberry, Star Trek

# 1. The uniqueness of special collections: the challenge of definition

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2.2. Printed Ephemera





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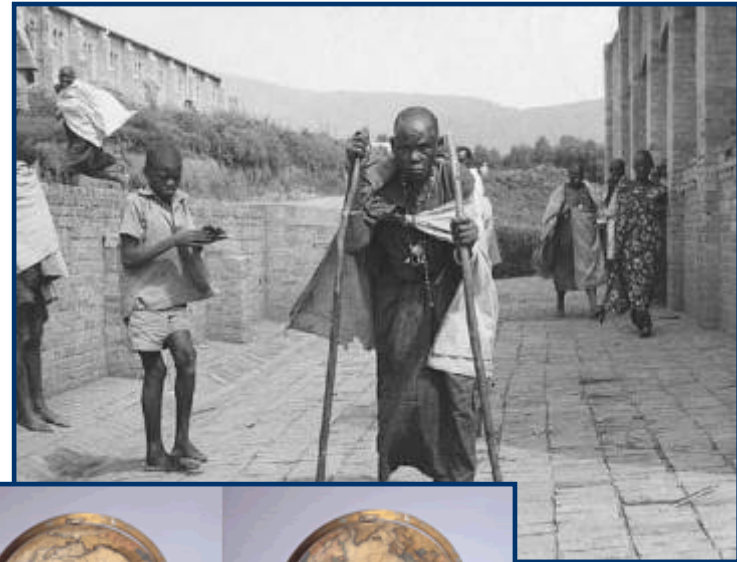
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- 3.3. Manuscripts & personal papers
- 4.4. [Institutional archives](#)



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*Photograph of old Tutsi woman; globes from  
Yale University Library Maps Department*

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- 1.6. Film, video and recorded sound




*Marion P, a Dutch rescuer of Jewish fugitives during WWII*



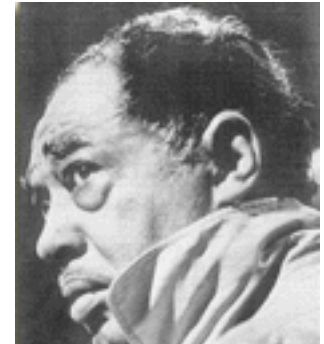
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- 7.7. Oral histories 



*Aaron Copeland*



*Duke Ellington*



*Mel Powell*



*David Lang*



*Ellen Taaffe Zwilich*

*Images from Yale  
University Library Oral  
History of American  
Music collection*

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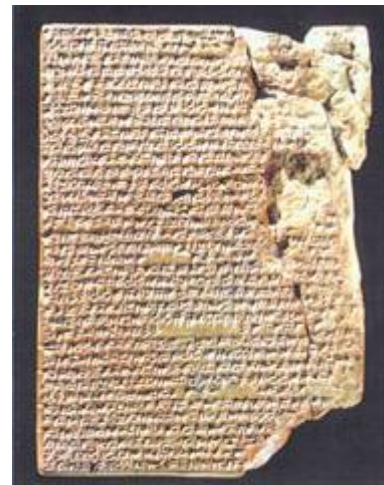
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- 8.8. Objects and artifacts



Stone weight in form of duck, about three pounds (YBC 2262)



Mathematical exercise to find diagonal of square, using the square root of 2 (YBC 7289)



Old Babylonian recipe collection (YBC 4644)



Old Assyrian letter with envelope (NBC 1905)

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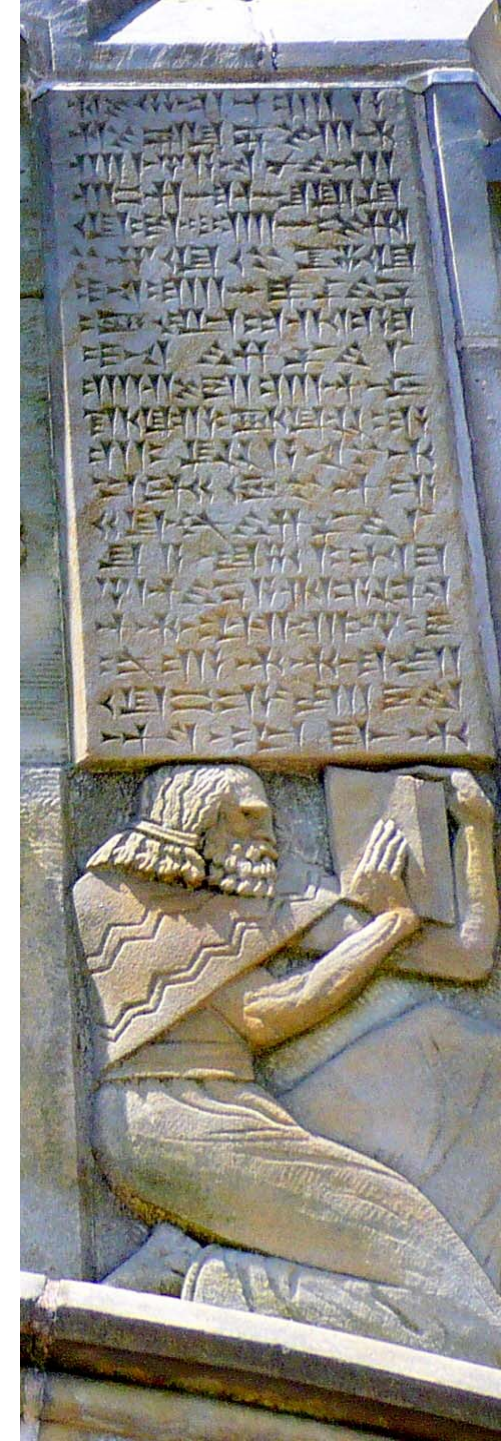
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- 8.8. Objects and artifacts
- 9.9. Born-digital databases, web sites, creative works



## 2. Uses of special collections

### 2.1. Traditional uses of primary source materials:

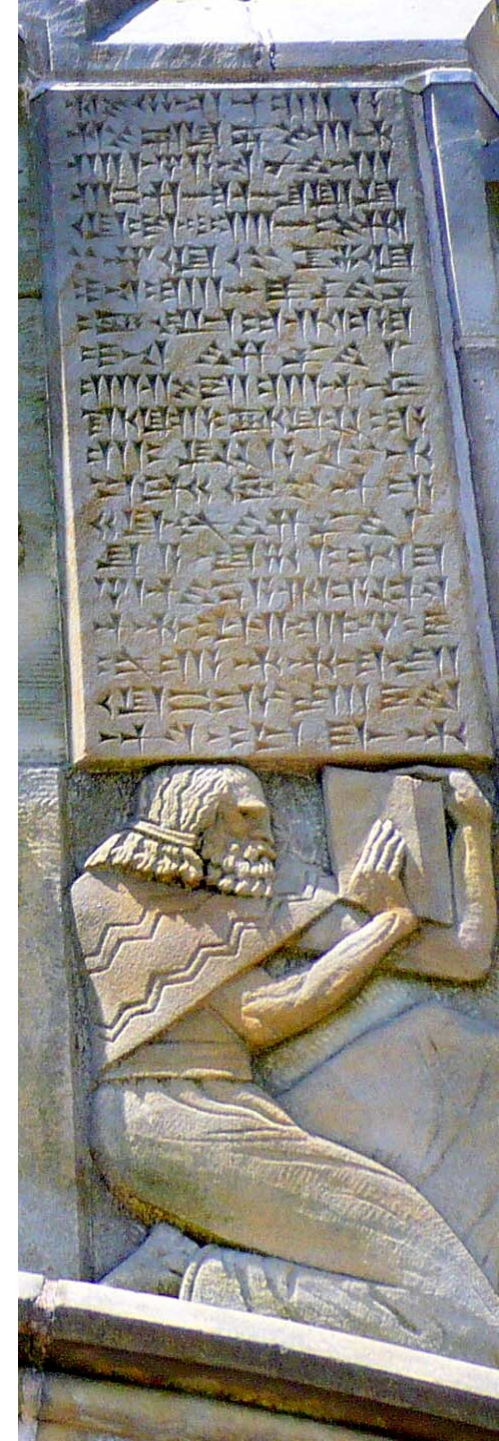
- in academic research and scholarly enquiry
- in exhibits and public presentation
- as sources for popular research into local history, genealogy
- as institutional memory
- for legal purposes
- for promotion and fund-raising



## 2. Uses of special collections

### 2.2. Increasing uses:

- in teaching and student research, at all educational levels
- as promotional materials for corporations and marketing of all sorts
- in political discourse



### 3. The shared nature of special collections



*An 18th-century London map*

#### 3.1. Community inheritances

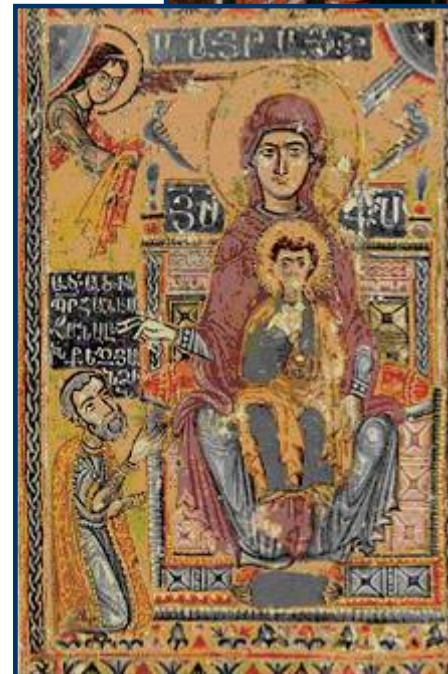
- Ethnic, religious and cultural inheritances
- The concept of the “Treasure”:
- Local treasures and world treasures:

[UNESCO's register of documentary heritage](#)



### 3. The shared nature of special collections

#### 3.2. National and international: Whose heritage is this?



*Page from the Ethiopic manuscript of the gospel of St Luke; Iraqi manuscript; Sacred Armenian manuscript, 1283, once belonging to King Levon III: displayed in "Treasures from the Ark", 2000*

*Arqueóloga Lucy Salazar, del Museo Peabody y Barbara Shailor, rectora de Yale, con parte de la colección Machu Picchu, y la única caja original que queda de la expedición de Bingham.*

## 4. Ownership

### *Ownership of the artifact*

- Yale and Machu Picchu
- The movement for restitution of Holocaust materials
- Long-standing and celebrated debates, e.g. the Elgin Marbles, the Codex Sinaiticus
- American Indian artifacts and human remains
- Icelandic manuscripts



Al escarbar en la controversia entre la Universidad de Yale y el Estado peruano por las piezas que Hiram Bingham se llevó de Machu Picchu en 1912 asoma un laberinto de desinformación y apasionamiento. Hay robusto encono entre arqueólogos, febril intervención de historiadores, y harto patriotismo político, siempre un tesoro a ras del suelo...



Library of Mohammed Bagayago

## 4. Ownership

### *The content*

#### Benefits and perils of web visibility:

- intellectual property in the material
- personal privacy
- publicity and exposure vs. security

#### Rights to scholarly interpretation

#### The case of Timbuktu

#### Notions of value

## 5. Originals and surrogates

- Digitization as a tool for sharing
- Enhancements and alterations in the digital environment
- Issues relating to evidential authenticity: the irreplaceable original
- Iconic vs. research value



## 6. The legal and diplomatic framework

- The Hague Convention of 1954, not ratified by the US
- Legal standing in other countries
- The debate between Germany and Russia
- Italian government activism: the cases of the Getty and the Met
- Archives of genocide and human rights: a whole set of case studies



## 7. Thinking globally and acting locally

What are we able to do in the library communities of the developed world?

- International partnerships, from cultural heritage to information on health and the environment
- Membership in international associations such as IFLA, UNESCO
- Bilateral partnerships and their challenges

Where should we be concentrating our energies?

- Description, exposure and discovery



**How can OCLC support the endeavors of individual member libraries?**

