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Cut Out of Place: The Geography and Legacy of Otto Ege's Broken Books

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Cut Out of Place: The Geography and Legacy of Otto Ege's Broken Books

A Thesis Presented

By

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"Cut Out of Place: The Geography and Legacy of Otto Ege's Broken Books"

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DEDICATION

To Cameron, for your unwavering support and your tolerance for my infinite *Star Wars* references.

To Elijah, for keeping me young.

And to Anton, the Frodo to my Sam. Your memory will always be a blessing.

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ABSTRACT

CUT OUT OF PLACE: THE GEOGRAPHY AND LEGACY OF OTTO EGE'S BROKEN BOOKS

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Otto Ege cut apart hundreds of medieval manuscripts during the first half of the twentieth century, claiming to do so to provide wider access to them. His destruction resulted in the loss of provenance, material history, and context of these manuscripts. Moreover, he made mistakes when identifying and dating the manuscript leaves he cut, and the loss of the bindings and front matter of the manuscripts makes it difficult to correct these. Much of the research concerning Ege focuses on his identity as a biblioclast, yet even scholars who denounce his book-cutting admit he allowed for places and people to have access to these manuscripts that otherwise would not. In this thesis, I examine how place impacted not only Ege's motivations to distribute medieval manuscript leaves, but how place further impacts the accessibility of these leaves to people of lower socio-economic status. By mapping the locations of Ege's *Fifty Original Leaves of Medieval Manuscripts* portfolios against the percentage of the population with college degrees, I make the argument that Ege's portfolios are not as accessible to underrepresented populations as they could be, because most of these portfolios are located at university special collections and archives. I draw on social and geographic theory to show that non-college educated people are less likely to visit a college campus

than those who attended college. I then explore current scholarship in archives and special collections to show the importance of public outreach programs and how bridging the gap between university archives and special collections and public libraries or other community institutions can make Ege's portfolios more accessible to a broader audience. I conclude that while Ege did irreparable damage to the historical value of these medieval manuscript leaves, they do indeed still have value in their ability to allow more people to learn from and appreciate them. Ege's vision of democratizing medieval book history may not have been perfect, but with the damage done, we can move in a more positive direction so as not to waste the potential benefits of these portfolios.

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TOUCHING A PIECE OF THE PAST

I never thought I would see a medieval manuscript, never mind touch one. I grew up in a working-class family in a post-industrial town. Most of the people I knew growing up were from the same background, and while most of us at one point in our youths were obsessed with knights and castles, that was where we left those interests: in childhood memory. Well, most of us, anyway. I was the odd duck who never let go of my historical leanings, and though it took me longer than most, my interests led me to pursue a graduate degree at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. It was purely by chance that, when deciding on a topic for research, I asked, “I wonder how old the oldest thing in the university archives is?” This led me to discover a collection of pages of medieval manuscripts that had been cut away from their parent books by a man named Otto Ege in the early half of the twentieth century. Suddenly, I was doing what I had thought was impossible: holding pages that were hundreds of years old. Pages that were painstakingly inked and gilded by monks in the 1200s, leaves from books that took months and even years to complete. Some pages were crisp, smooth, and hard to the touch, others felt softer, inscribed on paper that was more fibrous. There were fifty leaves in all, the oldest from the early 12th century.

When I gingerly lifted that first leaf, I could not help but feel like I was doing something wrong, like a sheepish child sneaking a bite of cookie dough. Yet at the same time those thoughts gave way to a sense of keen fascination. This was not just a sheet from a book that had text on it. There were notes in a different hand from the original script. Over the years, people had not only been reading this manuscript; they had also taken notes in it, just like I did in my own books today. Everything was in Latin, but I felt an odd sort of kinship with this piece, and my sense of awe, while it did not lessen, changed from a sense of reverence to that of discovery. Someone could spend a lifetime studying just this single manuscript, reading the notes, examining the lines of thought of the people who handled it, comparing how the notes had changed over time, how the way people read the piece changed. Yet, there was just one leaf from the manuscript in this collection. The rest were in other archives around the country, in collections like the one before me, or they were lost. No one could study the book at all because the book no longer existed, just scattered leaves.

At the same time, here I was with my fingers upon these things that had been forbidden to me for much of my life. The same person who had possibly destroyed the hopes of studying these manuscripts as works of material culture had made them accessible to a great many people. My attention drifted from the manuscript leaf itself to the man who had cut these books apart, whom I would eventually learn was named Otto Ege. I pondered what his intentions were. Holding these pages was amazing, but I could not help but wonder what had been lost in the process of getting this page into my hand. What was more important? The sanctity of the manuscripts as objects, or the opportunity for a great many people to handle them, to touch a piece of history and feel a relation to it? The answer, as I will show with my research, is not entirely clear cut.

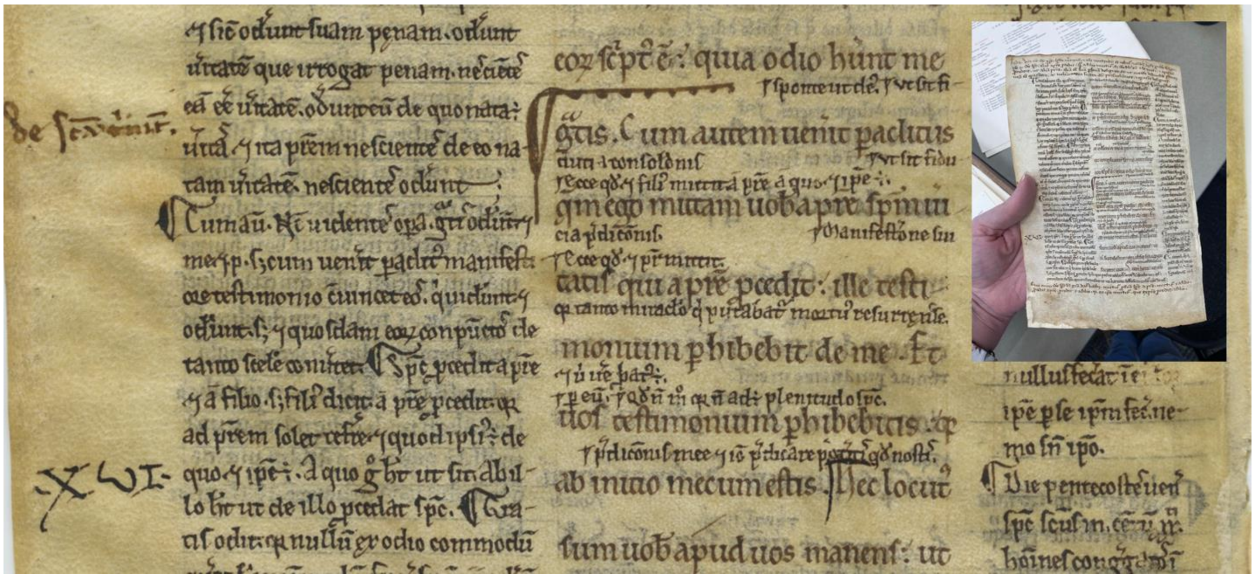

Figure 1 Testamentum Novum, Cum Glossis Bedae, Hieronymi, et Gregorii (New Testament with notes about Bede, Jerome, and Gregory), ca. 1100, in the University of Massachusetts Amherst archives. Photo by author.

I believe that focusing on the story of Otto Ege and the morality and ethics of his actions, while interesting and relevant, is not the only important thing to consider. His actions have been done and exist in the past tense. While many people are currently trying to "put Humpty back together again," as it were, if we only focus on this piece, we are missing the larger picture. Ege stated—reliably or not—that he cut apart these manuscripts to serve the greater public. "Surely to allow a thousand people 'to have and to hold' an original manuscript leaf, and to get the thrill and understanding that comes only from actual and frequent contact with these art heritages, is justification enough for the scattering of fragments."[1] In Chapter 1 of this thesis, I will examine Otto Ege's

[1] Otto Ege, "I Am a Biblioclast," *Avocations* (March 1938), 518.

background and how place impacted his life as well as his impetus behind cutting apart hundreds of medieval manuscripts. In Chapter 2, I will explore the current controversies surrounding his work, the efforts to rejoin manuscripts he cut apart, and why it might be worthwhile (or not) to do so. Chapter 3 will focus on what to do now that these manuscripts have been cut apart. Even if Ege's goal was to provide access to these manuscript leaves, I will show why the public still has barriers to them, in the form of geography and social strata. How can we better realize Ege's vision of allowing thousands of people to have access to these leaves, while still ensuring their preservation and security for years to come? I believe the answer lies in educating the public about archives and special collections so they feel comfortable using older materials, and making the public feel more welcome at institutions that claim to be open to them. If more people felt like they had true access to these materials that on paper, they *can* access, they will be more likely to visit the collections and in turn, could potentially contribute intellectually, economically, or in other ways. History belongs to all of us, and no one should feel ostracized from it.

CHAPTER 1

EGE'S LIFE

There is a sort of busy worm
That will the fairest books deform,
By gnawing holes throughout them;
Alike, through every leaf they go,
Yet of its merits naught they know,
Nor care they aught about them.
Their tasteless tooth will tear and taint
The Poet, Patriot, Sage or Saint,
Not sparing wit nor learning.
Now, if you'd know the reason why,
The best of reasons I'll supply;
'Tis bread to the poor vermin.
Of pepper, snuff, or 'bacca smoke,
And Russia-calf they make a joke.
Yet, why should sons of science
These puny rankling reptiles dread?
'Tis but to let their books be read,
And bid the worms defiance.

–J. Doraston, in William Blades's *Enemies of Books*, 1881

Bookworms have brought dread to the hearts of collectors and lovers of books throughout much of modern history. These larvae make meals of the paper pulp that the pages of books are made from and have the potential to do great damage to collections. Yet older manuscripts have been thought to be safe from this creature, since it has no interest in eating the animal skins that make their parchment pages. This is true of most documents created in medieval Europe and is one reason so many of these works remain to this day. There is another type of creature who poses a danger to these pages that archivists and preservationists dread with as much acuteness: humans, in the form of biblioclasts.

Biblioclasm is the practice of tearing, or in some cases, destroying, books. The motivations behind this range from ignorance to censorship to artistry. There was at least one person, however, who claimed to tear books for the sake of generosity. Otto Ege, who lived from 1888 to 1951, spent nearly forty years of his life dedicated to the practice of "book breaking," and proudly proclaimed that it was for the sake of sharing knowledge of medieval manuscripts with others; yet not everyone sees it this way. A great many people were and still are shocked by this practice and seek to reunite the scattered fragments of the books Ege tore apart, lamenting this treatment of irreplaceable medieval manuscripts. People who knew him, his students and colleagues, spoke kindly of the man and appreciated the spirit behind his seemingly destructive actions.

What kind of person would look at manuscripts hundreds of years old, with beautiful illuminations colored with blues, reds, and gilded with gold, and think cutting them apart would be a service? The answer, after examining Ege's life and work, isn't entirely clear-cut, nor will it be the same for everyone who asks it. To have a true understanding of the situation, one must not only look at Ege's life, but also at the practice of biblioclasm in general. Why did he tear apart certain manuscripts and not others? How could he afford all these manuscripts to begin with, and was he really doing this out of generosity, or was there a financial focus to it as well? Did his accomplishments match his mission?

Was Otto Ege a destroyer of books, a curator, or a philanthropist?

Early Life and Education

Amid the shriek of brakes on steel rails, the shouting and jostling of mill workers, and the belching smoke of factories and trains, a new baby joined the home of

Dr. John Ege and his wife Paulina in the booming industrial city of Reading, Pennsylvania. Ege was John and Paulina's fourth child, but none of their other children had quite been born into the situation Ege was. Money was tight in the Ege household that year, and tensions were high. John could feel a career he'd worked so hard to attain slipping from his fingers, and all his energy was focused on gluing the remnants of his life together into something new. He had started from scratch before, however, and being surrounded by hard-working people for whom industry seemed to be a second nature, he would not shy away from doing so again.

John Ege had been born in the Kingdom of Würtemmberg, Germany in 1854. After attending his local school until age 14, he went on to more advanced studies in neighboring areas and then studied medicine for two years. In 1880, he decided to move to America. He arrived in New York City and settled in Reading Pennsylvania, where he practiced medicine for a year. Before long, he decided to further his medical training and went to lectures at Hahnemann College in Philadelphia, finishing his education in 1883. In that same year, John married Paulina Wonnberger, the daughter of an organist and composer at St. John's German Lutheran Church in Reading. The two married and started a family. John focused his career on treating patients with tuberculosis, a leading cause of death in the nineteenth century. He started a small hospital connected with his medical practice in order to treat his consumptive patients.

Child by child, his family grew, though not without some heartache: John and Paulina's first child, a girl named Olga, died in infancy. A boy, Carl, and a girl, Rhea, joined the Ege family before Otto's birth in 1888. John's career grew, as well. In 1887, he was invited to present a special paper at a medical convention in Washington, DC. Then

John experienced a complication to what had been, until then, a successful and busy career.

John had a license to practice medicine in Berks County, Pennsylvania. In 1887, however, he was accused of practicing medicine without a license in Lebanon County. He lost both the initial case in court as well as the appeal. The court actions took place right around the time when Ege was born, but they did not seem to overly dampen John Ege's ambition. In 1889, the year after Ege's birth, he traveled to Europe to attend the Paris Exposition, and then went on to Switzerland and Germany, where he studied bacteriology and other medical subjects. When he returned to the United States, his career blossomed. He cured cases where others had failed, he made great advances in the field of radiation therapy for cancer, and he published a great many articles. He and Paulina had one more child, Waldo, during this time.

Ege wouldn't have remembered the court case his father was involved in, nor even his father's absence was when he was an infant. But he and the other children would have remembered their father's drive to help others and his commitment to education. These values passed on to them and manifested in their careers in pharmacology and teaching.

Another side to John Ege might have inspired a love for the arts in his fourth child. At the end of the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries, it was very stylish for homes to feature floral centerpieces on their dining room tables. Flower arranging in general was a great fad then, as now, and people would go to flower shows and exhibitions for a fun day out. Women often engaged in the hobby as a way to occupy their time, but men also did it to relax in their nonwork hours as well as during their retirement years. John turned his attention to peonies. He cultivated and arranged them, and later in life, he entered these arrangements into competitions.[2] At the time John practiced this art, rules were being established for a proper floral arrangement, much of which revolved around the presentation looking haphazard or natural, while in actuality it had a very definite plan to it. It involved a high level of attention to detail, something Ege would become known for as well. Surrounded by this detail and artistry on their father's side, and music on their mother's, unsurprisingly at least one of the Ege children turned to the arts.

In 1902, Ege began high school at the all-boys Reading High School. Reading had experimented with coeducation for about twenty years in the mid-nineteenth century, but had since abolished the concept, creating separate high schools for boys and girls. While there were no girls in Ege's school, Reading had desegregated its schools in 1876, so unlike many institutions in the United States at the time, the student body also was of mixed races.[3]

Nineteenth-century Reading was an industrial city based around the railroad. Steel, and the people who worked with it, was everywhere. Other factories that produced things like cough drops, woolens, and other fabrics grew and flourished in the city as well. Reading was located in between several transportation hubs, both of people and goods, and was also near coal mining operations. Because there was so much traffic and industry, the people in Reading in the later nineteenth century were well-employed and had a high rate of homeownership. Ege grew up surrounded not only by busy, working

[2] Scott Gwara, *Otto Ege's Manuscripts* (Cayce, SC: De Brailes Publishing, 2013), 7.
[3] "RHS History," Reading Senior High School, accessed March 15, 2022. https://www.readingsd.org/Page/754

people, but with a strong sense of community among the predominantly German-Americans in Reading. The steel and fabric companies donated a lot of money to the city's museums, libraries, and hospitals. They created housing communities for their workers, and founded schools and, particularly relevant to Ege, art institutions. At the time Ege was a teenager, there was a strong socialist movement among the workers of Reading, and they maintained a foothold in the city, including in government positions, for several years in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[4] Even without knowing specific details about Ege's childhood, by looking at the environment in which he grew up, a picture begins to emerge of some of his possible influences.

While Ege was in high school, one of the teachers there, Dr. Levi W. Mengel, was an oddity among high school teachers and fascinating to teenagers: not only was he a noted lepidopterist, studying and collecting butterflies, but he also was an arctic explorer. He was a part of the Peary expedition in 1891-92, which set off to discover whether Greenland was an island or a peninsula of the North Pole.[5] Mengel was a great proponent of hands-on learning and had collected nearly two thousand specimens from the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis and used them in the school for students to learn from.

Mengel believed that "giving a child a chance to see and handle the things about which they study is not only the greatest timesaver, but the most effective way of

[4] Visitor's Center, "Reading Pennsylvania: A Brief History," City of Reading, accessed March 15, 2022. https://www.readingpa.gov/reading-s-history; Rob Engle, "The Guilded Age in Reading Pennsylvania," Berks History Center, accessed March 15, 2022. https://www.berkshistory.org/multimedia/articles/the-gilded-age-in-reading-pennsylvania/

[5] "Dr. Levi W. Mengel: Director of Reading Museum Accompanied Peary in 1892," The New York Times, February 4, 1941, pg 21.

giving an absolutely correct impression."[6] It is hard to ignore the parallels between his philological philosophy and that which Ege would develop over time.

Figure 2 Levi Mengel (Credit: Reading Public Museum)

Figure 3 Otto Ege as youth, year unknown (Credit: Yale University)

[6] Levi W. Mengel, "About Us," Reading Public Museum, accessed March 14, 2022. https://www.readingpublicmuseum.org/about-us/

After graduating from high school in 1907, Ege went on to attend the Philadelphia Museum and School of Industrial Art (PMSIA) in order to study design. This school was founded in 1876 just after the Centennial International Exhibition in Philadelphia and consisted of a museum to showcase art as well as an institution for teaching it.[7] One of the school's notable students in the very early 20th century was Samuel Yellin, a talented young metalworker who had immigrated to the United States from Ukraine in 1905. Born in 1884, he was just four years older than Ege. He started taking classes at PMSIA in 1906, and within just a few months he was already teaching classes at the school.[8] After arriving at the school the next year, Ege studied and apprenticed under Yellin for several years.

Figure 4 Otto Ege (circled) at the Yellin Ironworks (Credit: Jack Andrews, Samuel Yellin, Metalworker (Ocean City: SkipJack Press, 1992).)

[7] "History," University of the Arts, accessed March 12, 2022. https://www.uarts.edu/about/history

[8] Christina Alphonso, "Samuel Yellin and the "Poetry and Rhythm of Iron," *The Met Museum Blog*, May 30, 2014. https://www.metmuseum.org/blogs/in-season/2014/samuel-yellin

Figure 5 Inside the Yellin Foundry (Credit: Unattributed image, https://i.pinimg.com/originals/92/f5/b1/92f5b1b0bd5c2a29fc4f30f9be592c44.jpg)

While at PMSIA, he also studied under Howard Fremont Stratton, the director of the school. Stratton was a firm believer that once a student received a broad training in general design, he should be able to tackle any project thrown at him.[9] When one looks at the variety of media for which Ege won awards for while he was at PMSIA, it is clear that he took this to heart. From metalwork to watercolor, furniture design and more, Ege excelled at a wide range of skills, showing his well-rounded education.

Ege's collection of awards won for his work while at PMSIA speak to his accomplishments there. In 1910, he won the Emily Leland Harrison prize for his ironwork, as well as another prize for watercolor painting. When he graduated with a degree in Normal Art Instruction and a certificate in Interior Decoration in 1911, he received prizes for his furniture design and for general excellence in his work, ranging

[9] Henry C. Pitz, "Otto F. Ege (1888-1951)," *College Art Journal* 11, No 1 (Autumn, 1951), 41-42.

from painting to metalwork.[10] Despite these accolades, he did not earn a place among the school's (now named The University of the Arts) notable alumni.[11]

After graduation, Ege continued to do ironwork with Yellin at his private company for several notable projects including the St. Thomas Church in New York City and the Daughters of the American Revolution Building in Washington, D.C., for which he won an international prize.[12] Unfortunately, there are no pieces that specifically bear his name, making it difficult to see samples of his artwork. He left the ironworks at some point in the early 1910s to pursue what would become his greatest passion: teaching.

Soon after graduating from PMSIA, Ege began teaching art classes there, once more under the watch of Howard Fremont Stratton. Stratton stayed true to his philosophy and assigned his protégé to teach classes in a wide variety of topics, from perspective to poster-design, modeling to lettering, and even methods of teaching.[13] This was surely a challenge, with Ege needing to develop new classes and hone skills with every coming semester, but he excelled.

While he was teaching, Ege also got to know some of the more innovative printers of the time, including William A. Kittredge of the Franklin Printing Company in Philadelphia.[14] This was to prove a game-changer for him. He started to immerse himself in the world of fine printing, learning design and process as well as the history of print itself. He sought to understand how books were made, not only modern printed ones but

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[10] Gwara, 7-8.
[11] University Archives, "Notable Alumni," UArts University Libraries, accessed March 16, 2022. https://library.uarts.edu/archives/notablealumni.html
[12] Fred Porcheddu, "Otto F. Ege: Teacher, Collector, and Biblioclast," *Art Documentation* (26, no. 1, 2007) 4.
[13] Pitz, 41.
[14] Pitz, 41.

medieval books that were created by hand as well. During this time, he won the American Institute of Arts silver medal, their highest award, for a broadside he designed for the Franklin Printing Company.[15]

Printing has an interesting history among German immigrants to the United States. Because so many Germans settled in Pennsylvania, the state became a hub of printing while it was still a colony, and the tradition held even while Ege was growing up. Philadelphia, Germantown, and Reading were centers of this work, and the histories of immigration and printing often go hand in hand in these cities. Ege, living in the German part of Reading and primarily engaging with this father's countrymen, was surrounded by printed broadsides and pamphlets, and the Bibles at the church he attended had been designed and printed locally. By the time Ege reached college age, the publishing industry had moved to New York, and the printing that took place in his local areas acquired more of an "arts-and-crafts" flavor. People designed broadsides as an art form as well as for their usefulness. As with John Ege's peony arranging, contests arose for those who designed these broadsides, not just for the artwork on them, but for things like typography and overall design work.[16] While Ege still enjoyed metalwork, he began to spend a lot more time studying at these elements of typography and print design. Studying and teaching in Philadelphia was the perfect place to do this, where boutique printing using old-style presses was still an admired occupation.

Although teaching classes, apprenticing, and honing his own craft might seem like an overwhelming amount of work, Ege knew he would only get so far with the

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[15] Gwara, 8.

[16] Oswald Seidensticker, *The First Century of German Printing in American, 1728-1830* (Philadelphia: Schaefer and Koradi, 1893) v-x; J. Bennett Nolan, *The First Decade of Printing in Reading, Pennsylvania* (Reading: Reading National Bank and Trust, 1930) 5-17.

education he had, and he wanted to be able to reach even more people with his developing pedagogical ideas. He therefore enrolled in New York University's Master of Education program, graduating in 1913.[17] This enabled him to become the head of the teacher training program at PMSIA, a position he held from 1914 until 1920.

Over the next couple of years, he began to hone his interests and developed a specialty, culminating in his teaching of a class called "Surface Design and Color" in 1917. In this class, he focused on historical ornamentation, specifically looking at the illumination design of medieval manuscripts. It is clear the manuscripts he had begun to acquire made a deep impression on him, and he wanted to share this joy with others. He brought manuscripts he had purchased in Europe to school to show his students. By using actual manuscripts as examples, he found he could teach his students about the methods of illumination more easily.

Illumination was not his only focus. He also looked at the textual elements of the manuscripts, showing students different scripts and teaching them how to use them to inspire their own work. He created a class called "Typographical Design" at PMSIA, where he taught the finer points of typography and the creation of beautiful letters. His contemporaries admired his teaching methods, and several articles featured his work as exemplary.[18] What was it that made Ege's work special? To answer that, we need to look back a few years in Ege's life, to see where his other passion, manuscript collecting, started.

[17] A.S.G. Edwards, "Scattering the Leaves: The melancholy legacy of Otto F. Ege, book collector and book destroyer," *Times Literary Supplement* 9 (November, 2007) 13.
[18] Robert F. Salade, "Teaching the Art of Typography," *The School Arts Magazine* (21, no 8, April 1922) 472-480.

Industrial Art and Medieval Manuscripts

In 1911, after graduating from PMSIA, Ege went to the Stan V. Henkels auction room in Philadelphia, where he purchased his first medieval manuscript. By all accounts, this manuscript was considered nothing groundbreaking or rare. It was a Book of Hours done in a Humanistic hand, a font developed in early fifteenth-century Italy in order to be more legible than the Gothic and other fonts that preceded it. This particular book was created in a school of Ferdinand I, the king of Aragon and Naples who was a great supporter of secular education. The manuscript was damaged, nothing of interest to most museums or hardcore collectors. But for Ege, it would be a major catalyst for the rest of his life.

"As soon as I saw the book," Ege wrote, "I knew that I must have it at all costs. Timidly I bid $25. My distinguished neighbor raised my bid to $50. I boldly said $100; he followed with $125; and then I excitedly said $175 and obtained the treasure."[19]

This purchase came after Ege had taken a trip to Europe to celebrate his graduation. He had debts not only from this trip, but from other things as well, and his monthly salary was only $125 a month. It was an impulsive, one might even say irresponsible purchase, but something about owning such a book sparked a passion inside him, a passion that would burn bright for the rest of his days. It also sparked a feeling of guilt. How would he pay his debts back now that he owed even more? The answer came in the form of one of his prior schoolmates. Ernst Detterer, who at that point had moved to Chicago and started a collecting business of his own, heard about Ege's purchase and convinced him to split the book in order to sell him half.

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[19] Otto F. Ege, "I Am a Biblioclast," *Avocations* 1 (March,1938) 519.

"This was my first book 'crime,' and I am happy to say my most serious one," Ege said.[20] To him, this deal made perfect sense. He was already, at this point, developing the pedagogical philosophies that would guide him throughout his career. The manuscript did not have particular value to him in one piece. It was damaged, common, and would not have a high resale value in the United States. But in his classroom, where he could use this manuscript as an example of artwork for his students, it would make all the difference in the world. The book as an object was not precious to him; the lessons it could teach others were.

Ege taught what was called "industrial art." This type of learning came about in Europe in the nineteenth century in response to the failure of the fine arts schools to prepare their students for work in an industrialized world. Part of the method used throughout Europe was to employ manuscript fragments and leaves as objects of study by both students and professionals. Ege would not have been ignorant of these methods: his own alma mater, PMSIA, used them once the teaching of industrial arts came to the United States. PMSIA regularly used museum collections for study. Another part of the industrial art method was to focus on a geometric style of drawing, with lines and curves that often alluded to the alphabet.[21] There were strong connections between drawing and writing, and this too was clearly not lost on Ege. He published several articles and pamphlets about the geometry of art and the art of the alphabet.

Industrial art was first taught in the United States by Calvin M. Woodward, who established a school in St. Louis, Missouri in 1880. After wage labor became the

[20] Ege, 516.
[21] Arthur Efland, *A History of Art Education* (New York: Teachers College of Columbia University, 1990) 113-114.

most prevalent means of making a living, schools recognized the need to train students in skills necessary to prepare them to work in industrialized society. Industrial arts initially included woodworking and carpentry, masonry and stonework, metalworking, glassmaking, upholstery and sewing, and the design work that goes into all these things. Today these subjects are taught in trade schools and would also include things like automotive repair and even working with computers and robots. In Ege's day, however, the status of industrial art was between arts, crafts, and skill. It was art of a sort, but art that was for a trade. When people went to industrial art school, it was expected they would leave with the skills to make a living and would be hired as a worker, not as a fine artist.

In this way, industrial art democratized art education. Whereas the fine arts were seen as being the realm of the upper class, drawing and the industrial arts were relegated to the working class. For the most part, this was because in public schools, it was easier for ordinary teachers to learn and instruct this method than it was to either train teachers in fine arts or find artists who would be willing to teach. Drawing, for example, had a reputation for not requiring the sort of talent the fine arts required. While this might seem snobby, industrial artists embraced it. Proponents claimed if someone could write, then they could draw as well. This made art accessible to more people, a cause Ege championed.[22]

There was another tie between industrial art and Ege. Some art historians suggest that the movement had an especially strong following among Germans, and when many Germans emigrated to the United States in the mid-nineteenth century, they

[22] Efland 113-114.

brought this way of learning with them. Drawing, as opposed to the fine arts, was a popular school subject in places with a heavy German population, like many of the towns in Pennsylvania and Ohio where Ege himself lived both as a child and an adult.[23] Children of the German factory workers in Reading received lessons in drawing in their schools, which served as an art they wouldn't have been exposed to otherwise, as well as a skill they could employ later in life.

Not everyone appreciated drawing and industrial art. Some said drawing reduced art to a sum of its parts, just as manufacturing was reductionist in nature. Art had become broken down into simple tasks, critics said, to make learning and production more efficient. This criticism is not wrong, and in fact, supporters of industrial arts liked this aspect of it. Industrial artists developed skills in tools and processes that allowed them to work quickly. They could then find jobs at advertising firms and printers, making broadsides, ads, and illustrations for magazines and books. One could actually make a living with their art in this way. Ege based his work on this principle. This is why his typography class was so popular. His students used what they learned in this class to go on to work at magazines, newspapers and publishers, among other places.

Other art teachers began to talk about Ege's methods of industrial art and his using manuscripts as models of study. Robert F. Salade, in *The School Arts Magazine*, described Ege's methods at length and claimed that his classes were a wonderful opportunity for up-and-coming artists. Salade described Ege's travels to Europe in the 1910s, during which he collected rare books and made rubbings from the inscriptions on notable buildings. Ege's aim in his typography class wasn't just to teach how the artists

[23] Efland, 90-91.

of medieval times worked but how they thought as well, in order to capture their process as a whole. Ege would show his students manuscript pages as examples of how tones worked together as well as separately, how colors harmonized, and how to create an appropriate color scheme. These classes at PMSIA were intended for people from all walks of life, at all stages of their careers.[24]

Many people, including medievalist Scott Gwara, who compiled a catalog of Ege's known manuscripts, commented that this dedication to learning from the manuscripts he used, and his commitment to sharing his knowledge with others, showed that "Ege therefore appreciated medieval manuscripts as aesthetic objects, and his use of them in teaching at least superficially affirms his sincerity in brokering them for art instruction."[25]

In the mid- to late 1910s, Ege began his journey buying and selling medieval manuscripts in earnest. He made trips to Europe to purchase pages and books that had been damaged in some way, but that were still useable for his classes. He also purchased books he thought would have a higher resale price in the United States. While a lot of his focus was on business, Otto also collected items for his personal collection and enjoyment.

Ege's first professional client was Dr. Levi W. Mengel, the very same man who had taught at his high school. Using his extensive acquisitions from the St. Louis World's Fair as a base collection, Mengel had founded the Reading Public Museum in the school's administration building in 1907, the same year Ege graduated from high school. In 1913, the museum's collection grew enough to be opened to the public. In 1917, Ege

[24] Salade, 474.
[25] Gwara, 15.

sold five pieces to the museum, along with typed index cards that contained his descriptions. These were pieces of medieval manuscripts produced in monasteries in France and other European countries. Ege's mother also donated a collection of decorative collector plates to the museum, including two with medieval scenes depicted on them. Several years later, Ege also either sold or donated a piece of Egyptian papyrus to the museum, which has since been lost. The museum is still open today, although rather than being administered by the Reading Public School, it is now a foundation of its own, called the Reading Public Museum and Art Gallery. They now have acquired forty-four Otto Ege manuscript fragments and documents, in part thanks to donations from Ege's wife after he passed away.

By 1920, Ege's reputation as an engaging art teacher who developed innovative classes and who had a passion for sharing knowledge with others was so strong that in 1920 the Cleveland Institute of Art (CIA) offered him a position in their faculty. Therefore, at the age of 32, Ege went to Cleveland, Ohio, where he would spend the rest of his life, moving into an apartment on East 116th Street that was a short walk to the CIA. An imposing brick structure erected in 1910, this building had many architectural details Ege must have appreciated. The entire neighborhood had been developed as part of housing for the university district of Cleveland, and many younger adults lived there.

Figure 6 Otto Ege's first Cleveland apartment. (Credit: Google Maps)

Cleveland at the time was, like Reading, primarily an industrial city, thanks to the building of the Erie Canal and the transport that was made possible to and from the east coast. Cleveland was also built right on a river, and the railroad had a strong presence there. Iron, coal, and oil were all transported through Cleveland. John D. Rockefeller founded the Standard Oil Company in the city in 1870, before moving it to New York City in 1885. Many immigrants from Eastern Europe and Ireland came to Cleveland to make their fortunes. Like Reading, Cleveland saw a rise in radical labor movements along with its booming industrial economy. At one point, around eighty percent of the worker strikes that took place in the city were successful.

In the early part of the 1900s, the population of Cleveland exploded due to immigration as well as from what was known as the Great Migration, where African Americans from the south came to northern cities to work and find relief from racial discrimination. When Ege moved into the city in 1920, it was a center for manufacturing different types of automobiles, including steam-powered and electrical ones. Thirty percent of the city's population was foreign-born, and most of those people were workers in one of the city's many factories. There was a strong socialist movement which caused clashes and protest. The year before had seen the Cleveland May Day Riots, during which the city's first "red scare" had taken place. Like Reading, it was a bustling city with many voices, languages, and opinions.

Ege, ever the champion for educating the working man and his family, thrived in the city. He took an active role in advocating for arts education. He immediately headed the reorganization of the teacher training department at CIA in order to increase standards for the teaching of the arts. He soon became department chair and continued to teach classes in typography, lettering, and layout, much as he did in Philadelphia. Ege created several innovative ways to share drawing and the arts with the public. He set up summer and night schools so people who worked could still have access to lessons, and he started classes designed to teach children, which was rare and contentious at the time. There was a lot of discussion about whether the arts were a worthy subject for children to learn, and great debates were held on the subject in many states. Nevertheless, Ege clung to the belief that art classes would help students become artisans, rather than artists, which made a difference. Society didn't see artists as contributing to the economy, but an artisan or a craftsman made a living with their practical work. An artisan had a trade, whereas fine art was seen as a flippant pursuit. In the industrial world, this pragmatism made industrial art acceptable. While the classes Ege led were private rather than publicly funded, it was a step toward the general acceptance of teaching the arts to children.[26]

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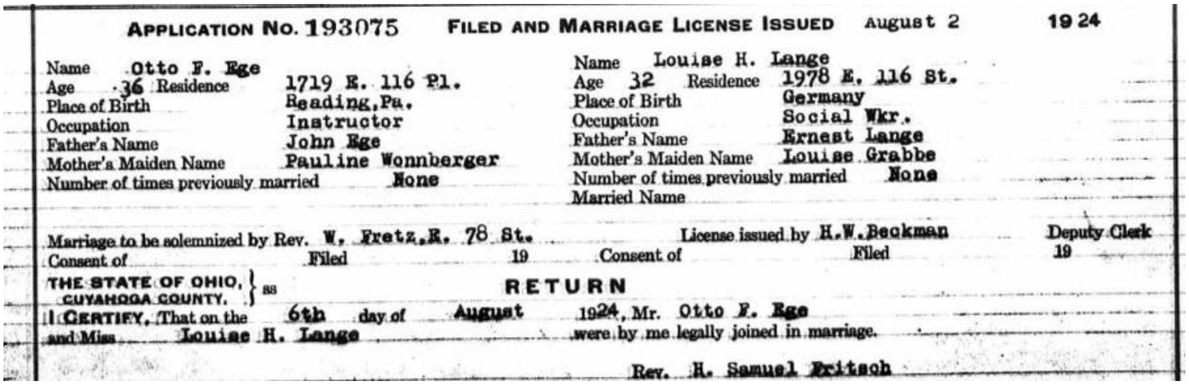
[26] Efland, 114.

Just a couple years after moving to Cleveland, Ege met a social worker who lived down the street from him. Louise Lange was born in Hagen, Germany in 1892 and emigrated to America, landing at Ellis Island in New York on April 12, 1907.[27] Her family, including her parents Ernest and Louise, and her three siblings Max, Editha, and Hans, settled in Hartford, Connecticut, where Ernest worked as a machinist at a screw factory. A few years later, Lange went to Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts in order to study social work. Shortly after graduating in 1917, she moved to Cleveland to start her career.

Ege and Lange were a likely couple. Not only did they live close to one another, but with both having recent German heritage, industrial city roots, and a great urge to help people through education and public service, it is not hard to imagine it being a good match. They married on August 6, 1924, when Ege was 36 and Lange was 32. Three years later, their only child, Betty, was born, and shortly after they bought a new home on South Compton Road in Cleveland. This house was not as close to the CIA, but the property did adjoin a large park. Louise stopped practicing social work and stayed home with their baby.

[27] National Archives At Boston; Waltham, Massachusetts; ARC Title: *Petitions and Records For Naturalization, 10/1911 - 9/1991*; NAI Number: *615479*; Record Group Title: *Records of District Courts of the United States, 1685-2009*; Record Group Number: *Rg 21*



APPLICATION NO. 193075 FILED AND MARRIAGE LICENSE ISSUED August 2 1924

Name Otto F. Ege
Age 36 Residence 1719 E. 116 Pl.
Place of Birth Reading, Pa.
Occupation Instructor
Father's Name John Ege
Mother's Maiden Name Pauline Wonnberger
Number of times previously married None

Name Louise H. Lange
Age 32 Residence 1978 E. 116 St.
Place of Birth Germany
Occupation Social Wkr.
Father's Name Ernest Lange
Mother's Maiden Name Louise Grabbe
Number of times previously married None
Married Name

Marriage to be solemnized by Rev. W. Fretz, E. 78 St.
License issued by H.W.Beckman Deputy Clerk
Consent of Filed 19
Consent of Filed 19

THE STATE OF OHIO, CUYAHOGA COUNTY, } ss RETURN
I CERTIFY, That on the 6th day of August 1924, Mr. Otto F. Ege
and Miss Louise H. Lange were by me legally joined in marriage.
Rev. H. Samuel Fritsch

Figure 7 The Eges' marriage license (Credit: Cuyahoga County Archive; Cleveland, Ohio; Cuyahoga County, Ohio, Marriage Records, 1810-1973; Volume: Vol 137-138; Page: 115; Year Range: 1924 Jul - 1924 Dec)

Figure 8 The Eges' home on South Compton Road (Credit: Google Maps)

During these years, Ege was also involved in groups that worked to encourage the arts, like both the Eastern and Western Arts Associations, the National Education Association, the Society for the Study of Aesthetics, and the American Institute of Graphic Arts.[28] He spoke at many symposia and wrote a great many articles for newspapers as well as for academic journals. As his expertise in medieval manuscripts

[28] Peter H. Falk, *Who Was Who in American Art* (Madison, CT: Soundview Press, 1985), 183.

grew, he started teaching classes about book and art history at the nearby library school at Western Reserve University.[29]

It was also during this time that Ege did most of his traveling to collect medieval manuscripts. In 1928, he spent four months in Europe, going to ten different countries to expand his collection as well as his knowledge of books.[30] He was contracted to collect specimens for museums and libraries, but also purchased a good number for himself. Because of his modest means as a professor, he couldn't afford complete manuscripts, so he purchased fragments. These fragments would accomplish his goals of collecting different styles of art and examples of typography as well as complete manuscripts would. When he did come across entire manuscripts he could afford, they were most often damaged in some way, making them worthless to book collectors but valuable to Ege. They were smeared with old notes, the pages were discolored, there was water damage, and had various other stains.[31] Because he was able to collect so many fragments others thought worthless, it is likely he had one of the largest collections in North America by the 1930s.[32]

Ege began exhibiting his manuscripts and fragments in his home in the mid-1930s. He would advertise these events in the local newspaper and welcomed anyone who wanted to touch a piece of art history, whether they were students or members of the public. He loaned medieval manuscripts, ranging from missals and books of hours to

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[29] Porcheddu, 5.
[30] Otto F. Ege, "Indulging in His Hobby, and Being Paid for It," Cleveland Plain Dealer (January 26, 1923), 2; *Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving at New York, New York, 1820-1897.* Microfilm Publication M237, 675 rolls. NAI: 6256867. Records of the U.S. Customs Service, Record Group 36. National Archives at Washington, D.C.
[31] Gwara, 18.
[32] Porcheddu, 5.

hymnals and Jewish bibles, to libraries and museums, who put them on display in temporary exhibits. He was committed to sharing these works of art and history with the public, not just members of the elite or academia, to allow anyone to see and touch them. The 1930s did not just mark the period when Ege exhibited his collection. It was also the time period in which he began his biblioclasm in earnest.

While his first experience with biblioclasm, or book breaking, was early in his career, there is nothing to suggest that he continued the practice after that. To be sure, he bought and sold fragments of books over the years, but these were most likely pieces that had already been separated from their parent books before they entered Ege's hands. His collecting up until 1934 did not have a sense of purpose or a plan. He bought the (most often heavily damaged) manuscripts he liked that fell within his budget and sold things that he found redundant or that were less valuable to him in order to buy other pieces. Around 1935, however, something changed. Ege began actually dismantling books he had purchased whole.[33] Why would he start then, and not earlier? And why would he want to do this at all?

Ege's father died in 1929, and it is thought he left his son an inheritance. This explains why, in the early 1930s, Ege's acquisitions took on a finer quality than his earlier purchases. While most of his earlier purchases were liturgical texts that were not necessarily rare, as the 1930s dawned he began to buy more complete manuscripts rather than just leaves, and some of these were secular in nature and more valuable. Even so, he kept most of these books whole in his collection. It was only very particular books he split up. He did not indiscriminately destroy manuscripts.

[33] Gwara, 25.

“For years I have been deaf to the importuning of envious collectors to spare them a leaf or sell them a book because I feel that the text or the fragment is a heritage that should be kept inviolate,” Ege explained.[34] Yet not all book breakers were so discriminating in their practice.

Breaking Books

> In the other extreme, or in the defect, march those impious biblioclasts, book-tearers, book-ghouls, collectomaniacs and dizzards, impenitent, unthankful ego-maniacs, that will acknowledge no such standards of book-conduct outside their own, and in such matters have cauterized consciences, behave in a reprobate sense towards books, and are thus unworthy of our mercy.
>
> -- Holbrook Jackson, *Anatomy of Bibliomania*.[35]

Tearers of books have not been looked upon kindly in history. Jackson got his idea for the “book ghoul” from Scottish writer and literary critic Andrew Lang. Lang believed that “The Book-Ghoul is he who combines the larceny of the biblioclept with the abominable wickedness of breaking up and mutilating the volumes from which he steals. He is a collector of title-pages, frontispieces, illustrations, and book-plates.” Lang goes on to describe these ghouls brooding “over fragments of the mighty dead.”[36]

In 1888, the same year Ege was born, William Blades, an English printer and bibliographer, devoted a chapter of his *Enemies of Books* to “two-legged depredators,” not the thieves of books, but those who would take pages from books, collect them, and then sell them as portfolios.[37] Both Blades and Lang, as well as another book historian, Charles Dexter Allen, speak of a man named John Bagford as an exemplary enemy.

[34] Ege, “Biblioclast,” 520.
[35] Holbrook Jackson, *Anatomy of Bibliomania* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Company, 1950), 580.
[36] Andrew Lang, *The Library* (New York: McMillan and Co., 1881) 57.
[37] William Blades, *Enemies of Books*, (London: Elliot Stock, 1888) 117.

"The name 'biblioclast' has been angrily bestowed upon him, and there seems to have been a good reason for it; for not less than twenty thousand volumes passed through his hands, from which he tore title-pages, frontis-pieces, wood-cuts, portraits, and ornamental letters, wholly destroying some volumes and mutilating, to an extent which was actual destruction, a great many others."[38]

When Ege started his official business in buying and selling manuscripts and leaves in 1936, he knew full well the reputation biblioclasts had. Yet he carried on and armed himself by writing his famous article, "I Am a Biblioclast." Part defense, part manifesto, and part biography, Ege wrote this somewhat pompous piece in 1938, at the height of his biblioclasm adventures. He didn't waste words getting to the point. "For more than twenty-five years I have been one of those 'strange, eccentric, book-tearers.'"[39] He went on to describe how hated his ilk are and proclaims himself to be one of Lang's "aesthetic ghouls."[40] Yet Ege didn't defend all cutting and destroying of books. He very specifically called out examples of people he believed were the worst sort of book abusers, including Bagford, Shelley, Voltaire, Henry VIII, the Caliph Omar, and Pope Leo III. He also laid out a list of ground rules he believed all reputable biblioclasts should follow:

1. Never to take apart a "museum piece" book or a unique copy if it is complete.
2. To search for and make available to schools, libraries, and individuals single leaves or units of mediaeval manuscripts, incunabula works, and fine presses.
3. To circulate leaf exhibits, supplemented with outlines, lectures, and slides, to organizations so as to engender an interest in fine books, past and present.

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38 Charles Dexter Allen, *Ex Libris: Essays of a Collector* (London: Lamson, Wolffe, and Company, 1896) 34-35.
39 Ege, "Biblioclast," 516.
40 Lang, 59; Ege, "Biblioclast," 516.

4. To encourage and inspire by these fragments the amateur calligrapher and private press devotee not to imitate the deeds of the masters of the book, but to think as they did to meet present day problems.
5. To build up a personal collection of books and important fragments to illustrate the *History of the Book* from the days of Egyptian papyrus and Babylonian clay tablets to the work of Updike and Rogers.[41]

There is no reason to believe Ege strayed from this code. He certainly had an extensive collection of whole books in which he saw value and he showed nothing but disdain for those who cut apart valuable or unique manuscripts. He had a proven track record of sharing his fragments and books with the public at museums and libraries. He used the fragments in his classes to teach students about calligraphy and how to translate it to modern typesetting. And while the manuscript fragments may seem in good condition for being hundreds of years old, when one examines them, they are all damaged in some way, including mildew spots, small tears, and chipped up edges. These things make the leaves worthless to many, if not most collectors.

Over the last two decades of his life, Ege put together six different types of portfolios of assorted leaves from medieval manuscripts. He sold these to museums, libraries, schools, and individuals. They included "Original Leaves of Famous Books," "Original Leaves from Famous Bibles," "Fifty Original Leaves from Medieval Manuscripts," and collections of eleven leaves showing the progression of humanist calligraphy styles. Each type of portfolio could have upwards of fifty leaves from different manuscripts in it.[42] This marks a large change in his practices, a departure from

[41] Ege, "Biblioclast," 517.
[42] Porcheddu, 7.

just collecting what he could and sharing that collection to students and the public. Looking at the larger picture of history, however, might supply an explanation for this.

The Great Depression in the United States was from 1929-1939. The Ege family felt the same insecurities everyone else did at the time. Selling off some of his manuscripts made sense and packaging them in the form of portfolios gave them a specific kind of value. The portfolios were more likely to sell at that time than more valuable and expensive pieces. He could sell more pieces at lower prices to more venues and make the same amount or even more than he would have by selling a single piece to one buyer. Ege was a teacher, and his wife a social worker turned housewife. They were reaching retirement age, and though the Social Security Act was passed in 1935, he would not have amassed a considerable pension. It is quite possible selling these portfolios was his pension plan. No matter his reasoning, his book-breaking and sales certainly remain controversial even today.

Over the next decade, Ege continued with his teaching, collecting, biblioclasm, and selling. He became the Dean of the Cleveland Institute of Art in 1946. He wrote extensively about book history and the art of typography and traveled and spoke at conferences about book history and medieval manuscripts. His family became involved in the world of his work as well. His wife kept the house prepared for visitors who wanted to see Ege’s collection, who by now not only ranged from students and the public, but to scholars and collectors as well. His daughter Betty loved illuminated manuscripts, and once was so distraught that she didn’t have her very own that she refused to sleep until Ege put one in her bedroom.[43] When she was older, Betty would give framed manuscript pages to her close friends as gifts.

In the 1940s, Ege began on his most ambitious project: compiling forty sets of fifty manuscript pages that would be standard examples of the scripts, illuminations, and styles of medieval manuscripts. He painstakingly collected manuscripts that represented bibles, books of hours, missals, and even some secular volumes, wrote descriptions of each of the pieces that included their time period, the script used to write it, where it was made, and other interesting information, such as how the age of the document was deduced by the color of the vellum, or information about the type of quill used to write the text. Unlike some of his earlier collections of leaves, these portfolios contained pages that were not as heavily damaged, and indeed, had some pieces that archivists now consider more valuable, such as the Beauvais Missal that is leaf number fifteen in the portfolio.

Whether Ege realized the value of what he had at the time is up for question. His intention was to create forty of these sets and distribute them at a fair price to places where the public would have access to them. While he may not have understood the value of some of the manuscripts he had, he certainly realized the gravity of what he was doing, and he knew his actions would not be kindly looked upon by many. Yet he stood by his actions, stating, “Surely to allow a thousand people to ‘have and to hold’ an original manuscript leaf, and to get that thrill and understanding that comes only from actual and frequent contact with these art heritages, is justification enough for the scattering of

[43] Ege, “Biblioclast,” 519.

fragments. Few, indeed, can hope to own a complete manuscript book; hundreds, however, may own a leaf."[44]

Ege had almost completed this massive undertaking and had plans to create more sets from different parts of Europe and different time periods in order to catalog an entire history of book printing and illustration. In 1951, however, before he could sell the first of them, he died from complications of diabetes. He left his wife Louise with their house, his car, and almost $50,000 worth of books and leaves. After his death, she went on to complete the Fifty Original Leaves project, selling them to museums and libraries, as well as a few private collectors, at $750 a piece. Schools like the University of Massachusetts, Ohio State University, Kent State University, and Smith College, as well as public libraries in Buffalo and Erie, New York and Lima, Cincinnati, and Cleveland, Ohio own some of these collections, as well as many more. Louise Ege also donated a great many manuscripts and leaves to museums, in the spirit of her husband's mission to give regular people access to medieval materials.


July 20, 1951

CLEVELAND PLAIN DEALER

ES A LEGACY

BIBLE LEAVES

Teacher Gives Collec-

to Posterity

Figure 9 Louise Ege holding a leaf from Ege's collection (Credit: The Cleveland Plain Dealer, July 20, 1951)

[44] Ege, "Biblioclast," 518.

CHAPTER 2

EGE'S LEGACY

In the twenty-first century, digital technology is making it possible for people to put many of Ege's broken books back together again, at least partially. The locations of most of the *Fifty Original Leaves* collections are known, and libraries and archives are working together to digitize and make these collections available online. While a great many archivists and historians bristle when Ege's name is mentioned, it is hard to argue that he did in fact make it possible for people outside the highest echelons of society or academia to have access to these works. Even though many of the collections have been digitalized, having the leaves in libraries accomplishes something that a computer screen cannot. With a collection of leaves from fifty different sources, one can experience pages from different parts of the world, and feel how different the paper is, see the different ink and styles used, and other differences between the leaves. Having touched the fragments in the Otto Ege collection at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, I could tell firsthand that many different types of parchment and vellum were used. Some were thick, others so thin you could see through them. There were inks that were dark and rich, and others that seemed faded. Some leaves were soft, almost fluffy feeling, and others were smooth and crinkly. This is an experience one would never be able to have in a digital form, and it was made possible by Ege's biblioclasm.

There also is a lot about Ege's practices that is worthy of criticism. Scholars have noted inaccuracies in his notes and dating, and several of the pieces he has dismembered have been found to hold secrets beyond what's visible on the page. One manuscript in the *Fifty Original Leaves* collection has ink that was erased and is now only visible with ultra-violet light, as vellum was often reused in medieval times due to its expense. What could that writing tell us about the history of that time? We may never know without the full context of the text. At the same time, even these same critical scholars admit that the books Ege broke were indeed typical examples and were, for the most part, not particularly valuable on their own. While he left an interesting puzzle for archivists and others to put together, there is a valid question of whether it is even worth the effort to do so. Yes, complete books can tell us a lot about the history of bookmaking and books in general, but there are many other books to study that are comparable to the ones Ege took apart.

I went into writing about Ege knowing that he was a menace to books and knowing that he destroyed pieces of history. But as I flipped through the leaves of his portfolio collection time and again, I gradually understood what he was about. As I studied his roots, rather than just being a book destroyer, he became a person with the same goals I have: to share the joys of knowledge and learning with others and to democratize history. Who knows, perhaps someone who was inspired by their experiences with these manuscript leaves might go on to be a great medievalist who discovers new and wonderful things about the past. Could that be more valuable than keeping a common medieval manuscript complete, yet inaccessible? There are a great many opinions about this from renowned scholars and archivists alike.

The biggest argument against Ege's practices is that he cut up pieces of history. Many see the books as works of art, as did Ege. But others look at the manuscripts, damaged or not, as a part of book history that is worthless scattered to the wind, as it were. Ege's point in dividing up the manuscripts was to have collections and samples of different types of calligraphy, illumination, and style. They were to be teaching models. Historians, however, while they also appreciate these things, also want context. The archaeology and part of the material culture of the book has been lost, because we can no longer see the binding, know how the book was packaged, or know how uniformly all the pages of the book were decorated. The book as an archaeological artifact can help answer questions like who owned the book? What monastery made it? Where did the book travel over the centuries? How accurate is the dating of the leaf? Could there have been some clues lost in the binding or end pages? Looking at how medieval manuscripts were made, as well as their history, can help shed light on what is lost in the process of cutting them apart.

The Making of Medieval Books

A lot of labor, expense, and time went into the making of a medieval book, and it was seldom the work of a single person. While people have been writing on pretty much every surface imaginable since the advent of writing, each age and location tends to have its preferred support for writing, whether stone, wax, papyrus, or paper. In medieval Europe, where most of Ege's manuscripts came from, the preferred medium was parchment. Parchment is a general term for a writing support made from animal hide. There are various kinds of parchment, depending on the animal used or how it was prepared. Older animals tended to be less suitable for fine parchment, though with proper preparation and care, it could be made to rival that of a younger animal.[45] Vellum was an expensive form of parchment made from unsplit calfskin, the most prized being from an unborn calf. It can be extremely hard to tell the difference between parchment made from goat, sheep, and calf without a microscope, but generally, finer parchment was made of calf. Generally, the animal skin was soaked in lime, or calcium oxide derived from limestone. Then it was stretched and dried on a frame, with the parchment-maker stretching the skin tighter as it dried. After the skin was dried, it was scraped with a tool called a *lunarium*, which had a curved blade to allow for the contours of the skin.[46] This removed any hair from the outside of the skin and any remaining fat and skin material from the inside. Finer pieces of parchment would be additionally polished with chalk to make it a brighter white color. Finally, the parchment was removed from the frame and was cut into sheets. Each stage above had variations depending on region or time period.

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[45] Barbara A. Shailor, *The Medieval Book* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002) 8-9.
[46] Raymond Clemens and Timothy Graham, *Introduction to Manuscript Studies* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007) 11.

Sometimes there was a vigorous rinsing between multiple lime baths. Other times the skins were scrubbed with pumice in addition to being scraped with the *lunarium*. Because these skins are from animals, there are often imperfections in them. A sheet of parchment might be darker along where the spine ran on the creature. Different colors of fur, for example, on a spotted goat, meant the skin was different colors as well. This was not necessarily seen as a defect; many thought these mottled patterns were aesthetically pleasing, and parchment makers would make a great variety of pieces for their patrons to choose from.[47] Because animal farming in medieval times was not as controlled for disease and injury as it often is today, the skins of animals might have other blemishes that needed to be considered. There might be a hole where the animal was injured. Scar tissue makes a thicker blemish in the parchment. A parchment-maker usually stitched up holes, and many manuscript leaves still show the evidence of this stitching or of the holes from the needle where the thread has worn away. Patches were also made to cover holes.[48] Regardless of the condition of the skin or animal, parchment had two distinct sides: the hair or grain side and the flesh side, which were different colors and textures. This would need to be taken into consideration by the scribe, because inks tended to work better on flesh side than the other.[49]

[47] Christopher de Hamel, *Scribes and Illuminators* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 8.
[48] Clemens and Graham, 13.
[49] De Hamel, 15.

Once the parchment was cut into sheets, it could then be folded into halves (folio), quarters (quarto), or eighths (octavo), and cut to make that size of codex. Depending on the time period in which the book was produced, the pages were pricked evenly along the edges to show where to rule the page.[50] Earlier codices have rules on the page that were drawn with a stylus, a sharp instrument that was pressed down onto the parchment and drawn along a straightedge. This would leave an imprint on one side of the parchment, and a raised line on the other. Later, rules were drawn on with an instrument similar to today's pencil. Vertical lines were often drawn as well to show where columns should be. Yet another way to rule the page involved a ruling board, which was a frame with cords running across it. The page was laid on top of the frame and then pressed down to leave an impression of the cords on the page. While standard ruling like we see on lined paper today was common, there could be quite complex rulings on the page, depending on the purpose of the book and how elaborate the page layout was.[51]

When the parchment was prepared, pricked, and ruled, the scribe began his work of copying the text onto the page according to his patron's wishes. Scribes were learned in common scripts of their day as well as more artistic fonts, and their work needed to be fastidious and accurate. Their tools were inks made of lamp-black, iron gall, or oak gall, goose feather quills, and a penknife to sharpen quills or scrape off mistakes.[52] It was hard,

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[50] Shailor, 13.
[51] Clemens and Graham, 15-17; Shailor, 13-18.
[52] Clemens and Graham, 18.

eye-straining, back-breaking work that was oftentimes underappreciated. It could take a scribe or group of scribes months of work to create one manuscript. Once the text was complete, the manuscript was passed on to an artist who created the illustrations or illuminations on the page with colored ink and gold leaf.

After the writing, decorating, and illumination was complete, it was time to create the physical book itself. The leaves of the manuscript were first put into order, often using markings or catchwords to line up the pages in the proper sequence.[53] Then, these gatherings of pages were sewn together by a binder. Depending on when and where the codex was produced, the binder used different methods of sewing and different stitches. The covers, or boards, of the medieval book were most often made of wood, and these boards were covered with textiles, leather, paintings, jewels, or other decorations, few of which still survive.[54]

The Breaking of Medieval Books

Otto Ege was not the first, nor the last, person guilty of breaking and displacing medieval codices. These manuscripts have always held different value to different people since the moment of their creation. During the medieval period, people used scraps of these manuscripts for mundane things like shopping lists or notes. In the sixteenth century, when printing was invented, manuscripts were cut up and used as binding material. The practice of cutting up medieval codices for their artistic value began in

[53] Clemens and Graham, 49.
[54] De Hamel, 67.

earnest in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.[55] It was during this time people began cutting manuscripts not only into leaves, but even into smaller elements. Single illuminated initials or individual images were framed and used as décor or gifts. Collectors often put together fragments they procured while traveling into scrapbooks or albums. In time, people began to see the potential for using fragments in their studies as examples of art. John Ruskin, a notable nineteenth-century scholar, is now arguably better known for his destruction of manuscripts than he is for his contributions to the field of manuscript studies. It is not difficult to see why Ege saw him as an inspiration, with his quote, "There are literally thousands of manuscripts in the libraries of England…of which a few leaves, dispersed among [the] parish school, would do more to educate the children of the poor than all the catechisms that ever tortured them."[56] Ege was the follower of a long tradition, yet he took it to a scale seldom realized before him.

While one could argue that we know how codices were made throughout much of the medieval world and that the books Ege and others cut apart would not have added significantly to this body of knowledge if they were kept whole, we must remember that each of these items was handmade, and differences existed between each one purely because of this. Moreover, while we have a great many examples of medieval manuscripts from which to draw knowledge and use as examples, when we take into

[55] Sandra Hindman et al., *Manuscript Illumination in the Modern Age: Recovery and Reconstruction* (Evanston: Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art, 2001), 68.
[56] Quoted in Hindman et al., 73.

consideration how much was lost in the cutting up of so many more, not only by Ege but by generations of people before him, how can we be positive as to what "normal" was? The destruction of these manuscripts means we cannot see patterns even within a single codex. Additionally, one aspect of the history of the book that is hard to study even in the best of circumstances is readership. With pages scattered to parts unknown, we cannot see notes a reader might have left in the margins throughout the book. Contemporary response in the margins, which makes some book collectors cringe, is priceless to historians.[57] They can provide an unfiltered look at what someone thought of a book at the time it was written. Something we consider a classic of literature today might indeed have been despised by the masses in the day it was published, and marginalia can give us clues to this reception.[58] In medieval manuscripts such as those Ege dispersed, marginalia often included philosophical notes added by multiple readers over the years, which traced the transmission and change of ideas over the course of time. Without complete codices, the opportunity for a systematic study of all of these paratextual details is lost. Missing bindings, page edges that would have included prickings, endpages, and more all help date manuscripts, and without them, we miss vital clues to telling the complete story of these codices. Indeed, Ege himself has been proven wrong in his analysis of materials, and his destruction of paratext makes it all the more difficult for experts to correct these details.

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[57] H.J. Jackson, *Marginalia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 2.
[58] Jackson, 6.

The dispersal of the pages is a problem in itself. While steps have been taken in recent years to locate many of the portfolio collections, some are privately owned. The pages of the ones in public universities and libraries can be digitized and compared, but those in private hands are generally off-limits. Collection one of the *Fifty Original Leaves of Medieval Manuscripts* had been missing for decades until it went up for auction at Christie's in December of 2020, where it sold to a private entity for 50,000 British pounds. People who pay that much for an item at auction often want sole ownership of their purchase. Collection one is considered to have the best examples taken from the manuscripts Ege took apart, with the pages in the best condition and some unique examples of illumination that are not seen on other leaves.[59] While the collection was purchased in Great Britain, there is not a good way to discover what has happened to it since. The one benefit of it being sold at an auction, however, is that sample pages of the collection were digitized for the ease of online bidding. For the first time, we are able to see these pages and get some insights from this private collection.

Another issue arising from some of these collections being private is that there is no knowing how the purchaser valued the collection. Did the buyer split the collection up to sell each leave individually, making a profit? One leaf of the Beauvais Missal, the pages of which are in the *Fifty Original Leaves* collections, was found at a yard sale in

[59] Christie's, "Fifty Original Leaves from Medieval Manuscripts," Live Auction 18888, Lot 9, December 8, 2020. https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-6296830

Maine, being sold for only $75 by someone who did not realize what it was.[60] This Missal originally had over three hundred pages, so the portfolios did not contain all of them, but it will be almost impossible to find out if this leaf was once part of them.

According to Barbara Shailor, the director of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University, "We can reflect that Ege's end purpose was, on a philosophical level, prompted by a generous spirit to share his enthusiasm for the world of early books and manuscripts, but by today's standards he certainly went about achieving his goal with questionable means!"[61] She goes on to comment that the damage Ege has done to manuscripts didn't just end with his death. "What is apparent is the essential nature of Ege's evangelism that resulted in the massive dismemberment and distant scattering of thousands of manuscript leaves, first across the United States, and eventually internationally."[62] Even though Shailor despises the end result of Ege's actions, she does acknowledge that he did a service to students by allowing them to touch a piece of history they never would have been able to otherwise.[63]

Canadian academic Peter Stoicheff acknowledges the many lessons a single page can teach. He discusses the architecture of the page and what it can tell us about a great many topics—from human society to book history itself. Pages have three

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[60] Shanti Escalante-de Mattei, "Maine Man Finds 700-Year-Old Medieval Manuscript Page at Estate Sale," *ARTnews*, September 26, 2022. https://www.artnews.com/art-news/news/medieval-manuscript-estate-sale-maine-1234640487/

[61] Barbara Shailor, "Otto Ege: His Manuscript Fragment Collection and the Opportunities Presented by Electronic Technology," *The Journal of the Rutgers University Libraries* 60 (2003), 10.

[62] Shailor, 12.

[63] Shailor, 9.

dimensions: length, width, and a thickness that varies with each type of parchment or vellum. A great many people put work into a single manuscript before a word is even inscribed on the page, from preparing the parchment to pricking the edges of the page to guide the scribe's lines.[64] Stoicheff comments that with Ege's collection, one can readily compare several manuscripts at once and is an excellent learning tool, but knowing the amount of labor that went into each manuscript only for it to be torn apart sets many on edge.

With a collection of leaves from fifty different sources, one can experience pages from different parts of the world, and feel how different the paper is, see the different ink and styles used, and other differences between the leaves. Having touched the fragments in the Otto Ege collection at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, I could tell firsthand that many different types of parchment were used. Some were thick, others so thin you could see through them. There were inks that were dark and rich, and others that seemed faded. Some leaves were soft, almost fluffy feeling, and others were smooth and crinkly. This is an experience one would never be able to have in a digital form, and it was made possible by Ege's biblioclasm.

A large problem Ege has left, despite his best intentions, is the proper identification and provenance of his leaves. A.S.G. Edwards states that "Ege was not the first person to cut up medieval manuscripts. But no one before him seems to have done it

[64] P. Stoicheff, "Putting Humpty Together Again," *Digital Studies* 12 (2008) http://doi.org/10.16995/dscn.146

in so thoroughgoing a way over so long a period involving so many manuscripts."[65] The manuscripts have changed hands so many times in some cases that identifying marks or tags have been lost. People need to guess if what they have is an Ege piece or not, which matters if one is trying to match up pages from a book he broke. The more the pieces are sold and scattered, the more delicate they become. Many have become even more damaged than they were to begin with.

In some cases, the problem is more deeply rooted. As mentioned above, several leaves in the portfolio collections have been mislabeled or the ages have been misjudged.[66] Because bindings and other markings were lost, it can be extremely difficult to give the leaves their proper attributes at times. While Ege studied medieval manuscripts and book collecting extensively, this is not something he was trained to do academically. Each of the *Fifty Original Leaves* collections has leaves from the same manuscripts in the same order and includes a card with each leaf which contains text Ege wrote explaining the history, location, text, and other pertinent information about the piece. Historians have questioned the accuracy of some of the descriptions over the years. In 2016, a medievalist at the University of Saskatchewan, Yin Liu, and her student discovered some inaccuracies with Ege's description of leaf 4 of the collection.[67] Ege stated this leaf from from a Psalter from late twelfth century France written in the

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[65] A.S.G. Edwards, "Otto Ege: The Collector as Destroyer," *Manuscripta* 53, no. 1 (2009), 11.
[66] Gwara, 5-6; Porcheddu, 10.
[67] Yin Liu and Ariel Brecht, "Leaf 4 in Otto Ege's *Fifty Original Leaves* Portfolio—A New Identification: Sermons by Philip the Chancellor," *Florilegium* 33 (2016), 167-191.

Caroline Minuscule script. Liu, an expert at deciphering medieval scripts, judged that the script was actually Protogothic, which will typically have some Caroline elements, but is a separate script. Because Ege and others generally used the script to assist with dating medieval manuscripts, this means his assessment of the date is incorrect as well. Rather than the twelfth century, Liu believes the leaf dates from a bit later, in the thirteenth century.[68] She gives other evidence to support this date from the leaf itself, such as the usage of chapter divisions. More troubling was Liu's discovery that the leaf did not belong to a Psalter at all but was a series of sermons by Philip the Chancellor. Liu asserts that Ege did not put effort into reading the leaf or examining the text to identify it.[69] After looking at leaf 4 in some of the other available *Fifty Original Leaves* collections, she believes the parent codex of this leaf was a collection of sermons about the psalms, rather than a psalter, a book containing psalms, itself.[70]

Ege clearly valued the visual appeal of these manuscript fragments over their text and actual content, which matches his background, yet does a disservice to those who want to learn other things from the texts. Christopher de Hamel summed the situation up succinctly with his comment, "Ege was immensely enthusiastic, but no great scholar."[71] Yet medievalist Scott Gwara disagrees, and claims "Ege should be absolved of such

[68] Liu and Brecht, 170.
[69] Liu and Brecht, 173.
[70] Liu and Brecht, 173.
[71] Christopher de Hamel and Joel Silver, *Disbound and Dispersed* (Chicago: The Caxton Club, 2005), 19.

charges."[72] Very few academics in Ege's time, especially in America, studied medieval manuscripts to the extent that he did. It is easy in hindsight to claim someone was not good at something, but a comparison would be to say Galileo was no great telescope maker since he could not see distant galaxies like we can today. It is not a fair statement.

One recent case at the Rochester Institute of Technology exemplifies the value in keeping manuscripts together. Students were examining the leaves of their school's *Fifty Original Leaves* collection and, with the use of ultra-violet light, discovered hidden writing on one of the sheets. This writing is in French and suggests perhaps the parchment had been used for a vernacular purpose before it was erased and then reused to write the fifteenth century book of hours. Palimpsests are not necessarily rare; it was a common practice to scrape and reuse parchment since it was expensive.[73] Having a full manuscript to see the extent of this writing would be valuable, as often these writings can provide first-hand information about day-to-day life in medieval times, something historians are always coveting.

Despite these issues, many people are hard pressed to say that Ege was entirely wrong in his actions. Even his harshest critics admit to admiring the passion of these words of his: "Surely to allow a thousand people to 'have and to hold' an original manuscript leaf, and to get that thrill and understanding that comes only from actual and

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[72] Gwara, 5.

[73] Luke Auburn, "RIT Students Discover Hidden 15th-Century Text on Medieval Manuscripts," *RIT News* (November 18, 2020). https://www.rit.edu/news/rit-students-discover-hidden-15th-century-text-medieval-manuscripts

frequent contact with these art heritages, is justification enough for the scattering of fragments. Few, indeed, can hope to own a complete manuscript book; hundreds, however, may own a leaf."[74] Porcheddu acknowledges that judgement of Ege's actions is complex. There is a strong impetus towards preserving all things medieval, and yet there are equal urges for ownership, display, and use, all of which can affect the artifacts in different ways. "[Ege's] central reasoning is quite clear: given the already fragmentary nature of so many medieval books, and given the number of people worldwide who might benefit from the transformative power of first-hand observation of such material, *why not* detach and disseminate manuscript pages?"[75]

A.S.G. Edwards concedes that while Otto Ege was a destroyer, he allowed many people to handle medieval manuscripts with pleasure rather than pure understanding, and he catered not to the collectors who would lock things away, but to enthusiasts. "Ege the collector was also Ege the destroyer, but a destroyer who created new possibilities for the wider appreciation of medieval manuscript culture."[76] Edwards continues, when referring to the leaves average people might have framed in their living rooms that were purchased at modest prices, "Such pleasure they may have afforded their owners provides the chief justification for the scale of Ege's destruction of medieval manuscripts."[77]

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[74] Ege, "Biblioclast," 518.
[75] Porcheddu, 6.
[76] Edwards, 11.
[77] Edwards, 12.

Yet something can still be reclaimed from Ege's destruction. In the digital age, it is not uncommon for historians, archivists, and others to reconstruct various leaves and fragments by computer. It is being done in Jewish history with fragments of parchment that were found in the Cairo Geniza, a hidden compartment in a medieval synagogue where people would traditionally dispose of used parchment that might have had sacred words on it. This geniza was a treasure trove of useful information about medieval Jewish society, but it consisted of hundreds of thousands of scraps. Academics around the world are working to put these scraps back together. Putting Ege's manuscripts back together again might be less daunting of a task. The locations of many of the portfolios he put together are well-known, and many of the collections, like the one at UMass, have been digitized and are available online. We have the tools to do this work, and we have many of the pieces to get started, but there remains the question, why should we?

Stoicheff explains that we humans have a natural urge to put things back together again. We want to put the pieces of the puzzle together to make a whole. He attributes this to our "fetish of the book." But he acknowledges that "not all Ege leaves are worth putting back together again."[78] So many of the pieces are not unique and would not tell us something new if they were whole. Some academics suggest the Beauvais Missal is an exception, which Stoicheff and others have been studying extensively. But for the most part, academics like Stoicheff, Shailor and others acknowledge there would

[78] Stoicheff, 2008.

not be much gained by putting these leaves together again. There is no obvious answer to the question of how much we should invest in putting the books together again. Some people think Ege and his like are in hell being ripped apart like their books, and others compare Ege's tearing of these particular manuscripts to someone ripping a Penguin edition of Charles Dickens. The value seems to be in the eye of the researcher.

De Hamel states in his famous "Cutting Up Manuscripts" lecture, "If we take a really long-term cosmic view of the world…all manuscripts will be destroyed. Disasters do happen, and works of art suffer."[79] He is also careful to offer the disclaimer that the deliberate destruction of works of art "can only be regarded as unforgiveable vandalism."[80] Yet Benjamin Mauk takes a different view. "Since dispersed pieces of manuscript stand a better chance than complete books of surviving fires, floods, and war, breaking books actually prolongs their survival."[81] This seems an odd justification for Ege's actions. It might be easy with hindsight to find the positive side, but it does not help to clarify the question of whether Ege was right or wrong in breaking these books. Ege did not have preservation in mind when he compiled his portfolios, he did it so people would have access to them. But do they? In the next chapter I will explore how accessible Ege's portfolios really are.

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[79] Christopher de Hamel, *Cutting Up Manuscripts for Pleasure and Profit* (Charlottesville: Book Arts Press, 2000), 23.
[80] De Hamel, 21.
[81] Ben Mauk, "Scattered Leaves," *The New Yorker* (January 6, 2004) https://www.newyorker.com/business/currency/scattered-leaves

CHAPTER 3

ACCESSING THE *FIFTY ORIGINAL LEAVES* PORTFOLIOS

Otto Ege conceived his *Fifty Original Leaves from Medieval Manuscripts* project to make the leaves of medieval manuscripts accessible to everyone. He started compiling the collection around 1947 and, using manuscripts he had collected over the last forty years, researched to write cards to go with every leaf to identify the piece, where it came from, when it was produced, and what script the scribe used. He put each leaf into a protective sleeve, and all fifty leaves were then compiled into a buckram-covered box. There were forty of these collections in all. When Ege suddenly died in 1951, his wife took over the project and it was she who arranged the sales of the collections to various libraries and collectors. Each portfolio sold for $750.[82]

Because the sales took place after Ege's death, we cannot know for certain whether the project fulfilled his original goals. Most of Ege's assets at the time of his death were in his manuscript and book collection; he had very little else of value.[83] It is difficult to ascertain how much Ege himself would have sold the collections for. The possibility exists that he had already made the decision on price while creating the portfolios. The price is higher than other portfolios he sold, but this collection was the culmination of years of work and collecting; painstaking research (though not always correct, there is no evidence that Ege did not do his best); as well as planning. Ege

[82] Gwara, 44-45.
[83] Gwara, 26; Porcheddu, 5.

wanted the portfolios to contain examples of the major scripts used in medieval times, with the intent they should be comprehensive. Ege would have want to make some money from the project, as well as recoup his investment costs. It is also not easy to tell if every portfolio sold for $750, or if some were donated or discounted depending on the type of institution they went to. The paper trail either does not exist or has been forgotten with only a few exceptions.

Most of the known portfolios of the *Fifty Original Leaves* collections are now housed in the special collections and archives of universities. Four are in public libraries, and a couple others are in museums that charge admission. Three portfolios are known to be in the hands of private collectors, which leaves twelve portfolios that have unknown locations. These could be in private hands, they could have been divided up and sold, or they could be lost forever. Nevertheless, these portfolios are one of the easiest to trace of Ege's projects; he created them with the purpose of being accessible, and so I will use them as a measure for whether Ege accomplished his mission of allowing thousands of people to touch these leaves.

The question of access becomes tricky when trying to ascertain someone's intentions. Did Ege only want these to be in the hands of educators and students, or did he mean the public in general? We cannot know for certain, as his thoughts are less accessible than any medieval manuscript, and we cannot, as researchers, put words into his mouth. The records of Ege that do exist, as well his history and background, show that he himself would not have been inspired to go into this trade had it not been for certain people like Mengel and growing up in places that valued working people who might not have had the opportunity for higher education. Ege was trained and went on to train industrial artists who made the arts, printing in particular, their trade. It seems an obvious conclusion, then, that he wanted those same people to have access to the leaves he compiled, yet there is no hard evidence to confirm this. Rather than attempting to look at the situation through Ege's eyes, I will look at where the *Fifty Original Leaves* are today and discuss who has access to them and who might not. I will then explore ways of increasing access to these manuscript leaves to a wider population, to make the best use of these disembodied leaves.

Geography and Access

To get a clearer picture of where Ege's *Fifty Original Leaves* were in relation to population demographics, I created a map using Esri's ArcGIS program. With data from the US Census and the American Community Survey, I mapped the percentage of people with bachelor's degrees or higher by county. I then pinned the known locations of *Fifty Original Leaves* portfolios, differentiating between types of institutions: universities, public libraries, and museums. As can be seen in Figure 10, almost all the known collections are in universities, and those universities are in counties with higher levels of education among their populations than other counties. While most of the collections reside in public universities that are, in theory, open to the residents of their states, barriers still exist between the public, especially those without college educations, and Ege's manuscript leaves.

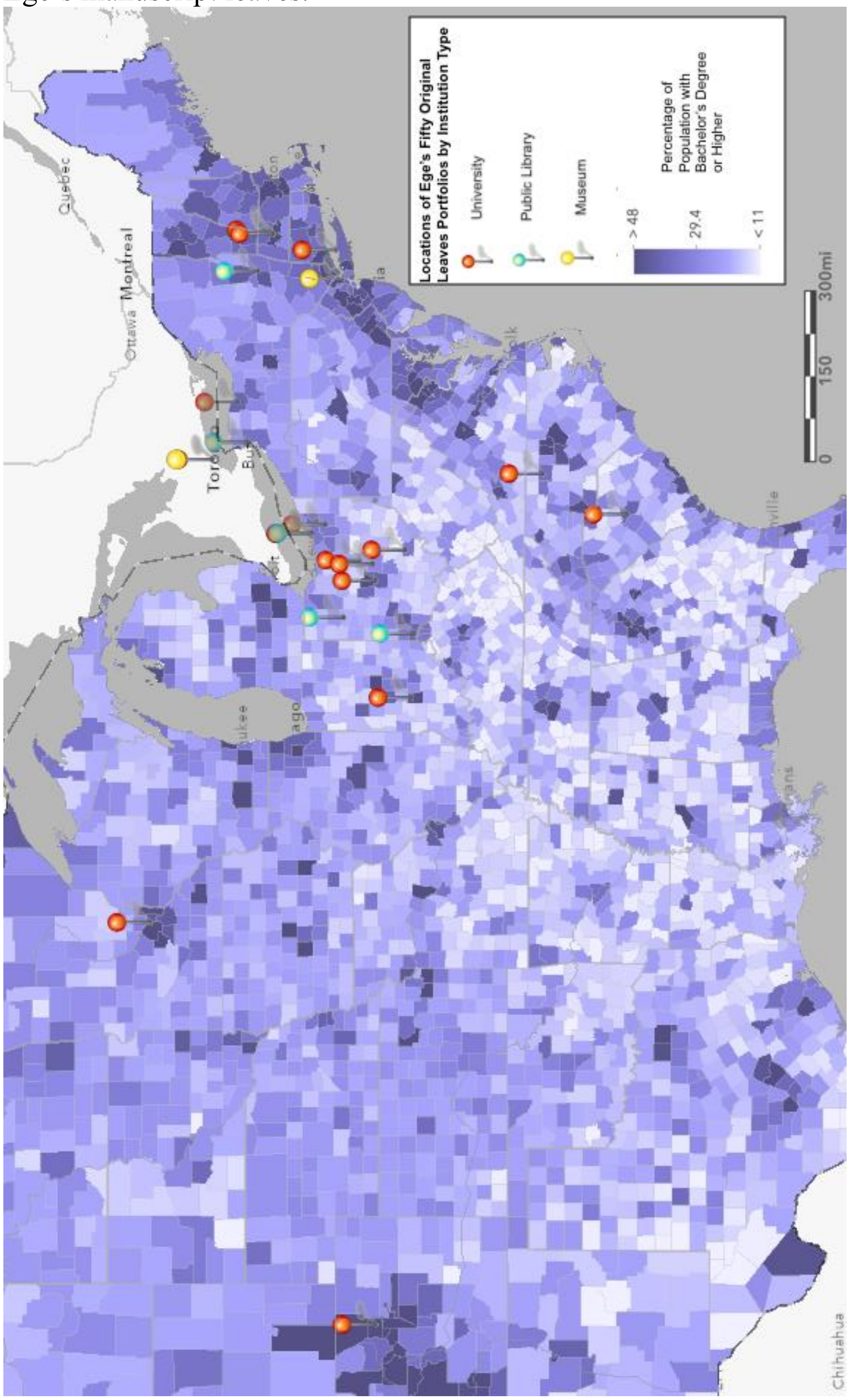

Figure 10 Map of the Locations of Ege's Fifty Original Leaves Portfolios vs. Percentage of Population with Bachelor's Degrees

Most people feel an element of discomfort when they are somewhere they think they do not belong. Things like race, class, gender, and sexual orientation are some of the first things that come to mind when we think of what might set someone apart and make them "out of place." For example, if someone were to go to a store where everyone else was the same race or gender, and they were the only outlier, it would seem reasonable if they might feel a sense of discomfort. The same is true for social or economic status, as well as educational level. People tend not to want to go to places where they are the minority, and this is supported by social theory. Randall Collins's interaction chain theory postulates that people enjoy being with others as a collective because they gain a sense of belonging and common purpose. There is a sense of emotional energy associated with these gatherings and events that provide a charged feeling, which comes from having done things with this group before.[84] For example, when people go to a concert of their favorite musician, they will often feel energized by the crowd. They are all there for the same reason, and it is something they feel passionate about. It is the same reason a large franchise or cult favorite film has a different atmosphere on opening night than a showing of the same film a week later. The die-hard fans go on opening night and create a collective energy, which Emile Durkheim refers to as collective effervescence.[85] These people get the inside jokes, the shared gestures, and seem to have their own way of communicating about their shared experience. They applaud, cheer, and laugh where others who are in the same situation but not part of the group would not. The emotional energy from this experience makes people feel like they are in good company, but also

[84] Randall Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 3.
[85] Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (New York: Free Press, 1965), 262.

that they are doing something valuable and important. When someone has experienced this, they want to repeat it.[86]

In contrast, if one has been to a movie they are not a big fan of on opening night and has been surrounded by superfans, they might have experienced awkwardness and discomfort, perhaps even annoyance, at the lack of the sense of belonging other people had. This is the result of being out of place in a social sense. But people experience being out of place in a physical sense as well. Place, by definition, is imbued with emotion by the people who have experienced it. This is what separates place from a mere space. A place has meaning to at least one person; they have formed an attachment to it in an emotional sense and have associated a type of feeling to it.[87] We are surrounded by places, and since places contain this sense of meaning, as we move through them, we are always interpreting them.[88] Different groups imbue different spaces with different meanings, and this in turn introduces an element of social inequality. When a person moves into a place they are not attached to, they are at a disadvantage compared to those to whom that place "belongs."[89]

A university is a prime example of place: it is defined by its students, faculty, and staff, as well as by the community in which it is located. Faculty teach and research; students study, make friends, and come of age within its boundaries. Universities intentionally create a sense of belonging and camaraderie with mascots, sports teams, and social groups. Most students on a campus are around the same age, and they are all there

[86] Collins, 39.
[87] Tim Cresswell, *Place: An Introduction* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 12.
[88] Tim Cresswell, *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology, and Transgression* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 13.
[89] John R. Logan, "Growth, Politics, and the Stratification of Places," *American Journal of Sociology* 84, no. 2 (Sept 1978) 404; John A. Agnew, *Place and Politics: The Geographical Mediation of State and Society* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987) 34.

for presumably the same purpose: to prepare for a future career. These students are "in place." They know the rules and strata of the university, and they can comfortably navigate them. When someone who is not a part of this group enters the place of the university, even if they are not recognizably out of place, socially, it would not be unusual for them to feel like they do not belong—to experience a sense of othering—because of the dynamic of the in-group. There is a clear line of who belongs and who does not, even if the university is open to the public.

Even though Ege wanted his collections to go to places where many people could experience them, because they mostly went to universities, there is a large population of people who, while technically are allowed to see them in the university's special collections, might not feel welcome to visit. In particular, the very people Ege grew up around in industrial cities like Reading, the working class who might have an interest in learning but who did not have the means or opportunity to pursue higher education, have a high potential for feeling out of place surrounded by younger people who all belong to the "in group." This feeling of alienation or otherness would not make them feel welcome on a university campus. Many members of the public don't know the unspoken cultural rules of a university and are not comfortable with experimenting to learn them. While most universities have maps and directions on their websites, and most libraries have a centrally located information or circulation desk to welcome visitors, other variables are at play as well. Most special collections and archives, where Ege's *Fifty Original Leaves* portfolios most often reside, are only open from 9AM to 5PM on Mondays through Fridays, which are hours most people need to work during. Parking is often an issue on busy public university campuses. Open parking spaces are hard to find, and when they are, they often metered. Navigating the space on campus can be confusing as well. At the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, for example, there is no parking that directly accesses the library, though the garage is relatively near. Other schools have a considerable walk from parking to their libraries, and that walk might not be on a direct path.

Archives and Access

Archives and special collections are usually aware of the issues surrounding accessibility to the public. Outreach is a popular topic at archives and public history conferences. While it has not always been the case, enticing the public to visit, use, and support archives is now considered something most institutions need to do, not only to validate their service missions but to survive financially and gain new donors. Public programming is one form this outreach can take, but in reality, it can be anything that draws in an archive's target audience, whether that is students, customers and investors, or people at large.

Sigrid McCausland describes the role of public programming in archives as being core to their function. While this has not always been true, in the latter part of the twentieth century, once the foundations of modern archival theory and practice were set, many archives began to see the value in audiences that went beyond just academic researchers. The advent of digital technology made this even more clear, and also provided new ways to reach these users. While outreach and its role in archives is still contested, most archives now have websites as well as a social media presence in some capacity in order to reach potential users. McCausland states that while public programming seems to develop in fits and starts, and its use and the understanding of its best practices is still very inconsistent, because archives need support and use from diverse populations and need to communicate their collections with users, it is something that will never go away.[90]

Discussion of public programming and outreach, while starting in the previous decade, really took hold in the early 1990s. Timothy L. Ericson commented in his oft-cited 1990 article that archives badly needed to do public outreach, yet there hadn't been a consensus as far as how to do this sort of programming. He found that more often than not, institutions saw outreach as a series of individual exhibits or events. His suggestion is that archivists need to see outreach as an ongoing function of their everyday activities. It should be built into every part of their routine—from appraisal to preservation to description, with no beginning or end. Efforts need to be constantly reassessed to see what is working and what needs to be improved. Because some people might not even know why archives might be useful to them, some of this programming might be as basic as what archives are and how the general public can access them. Once audiences are drawn in for one event, they may well stay for others; therefore it is important to have a plan for this. Archives should anticipate people coming for one thing and then returning to do something else at the archive—perhaps even donating money or a collection of their own. Ericson makes the point that if people don't know why or how archives are valuable to their lives, it is because they have not interacted with them in a way that is meaningful to them. Unless archivists reach out to those people, they won't feel welcome and will be lost as potential users. It is not enough to simply "do" outreach; an institution must

[90] Sigrid McCausland, "Archival Public Programming," in *Currents of Archival Thinking*, ed. by Heather McNeil and Terry Eastwood (Santa Barbara: Libraries Unlimited, 2017), 225-244.

evaluate its efforts to be sure they are being done well and effectively, in ways that are meaningful to users.[91]

Blais and Enns want to take what might be seen as a radical approach to this. They want to interweave public programming and outreach as part of the daily core functions of archives, laying out the four concepts of image, awareness, education, and use as the foundation for this new realization. Because the public supports the archives through donations of money and collections, Blais and Ennis believe that archival practice should be tailored around its needs. Archives need to make themselves attractive to these users, making sure users are aware of their holdings and value as well as how to use the collections. Rather than catering to their own needs, archivists need to appeal more to the public. The authors acknowledge that archives are not organized in a way that is intuitive to many users, so they advocate for a systematic way of teaching this, including the concepts of provenance and original order. They believe that archives are not functional unless they are used, and so every effort must be made to have archives accessible and useful to as many people as possible, including the rather controversial step of changing finding aids to be more responsive to users and their research needs. The structure of archives, according to Blais and Enns, must be focused on users and use in order to be truly accessible. Once archivists understand who is using their collections and why, then they can be of better service, and can shift procedures within acquisition, appraisal, selection, arrangement, and description to better fit with their public programming.[92]

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91 Timothy L. Ericson, "'Preoccupied with Our Own Gardens': Outreach and Archivists," *Archivaria* 31 (Winter 1990-1991), 114-122.
92 Gabrielle Blais and David Enns, "From Paper Archives to People Archives: Public Programming in the Management of Archives," *Archivaria* 31 (Winter 1990-1991), 101-113.

Terry Cook reacts strongly to this plan, saying that such a focus would undermine archival theory and would weaken the collections themselves, making them less dimensional. He says that focusing solely on users and use, having a client-based philosophy, would set a dangerous precedent, making archives into a corporate venture rather than one of information. He warns against giving in to the pressures of Reaganomics and McDonaldization, and says we should not look to make archival users into "one-minute experts." Archives are not organized by subject or theme for a good reason, and to change this would be to take away a level of value the archives hold: the ability for researchers to discover connections between things without the intercession of an organizational structure telling them what belongs together. Archives function because of the network of context and creation in the collections. These things—in other words, provenance, respect des fonds, etc.—are foundational to understanding a collection as more than just "information." If archives only collect what users want right now, for example, future researchers will be lost. How many researchers have come into an archive and "discovered" something that had not been thought to be relevant until then? Rather than making archives something they are not, Cook argues, archivists should be working to help the public understand what they are. Rather than just giving researchers the exact item they want, lead them to more of the context of that item as well. Use public programming to teach the how's and why's of archives so users can understand and appreciate why collections are arranged as they are.[93]

Social media has gained much popularity as a way to accomplish many of the goals of outreach, but one of the large challenges archives face is how to use it

[93] Terry Cook, "Viewing the World Upside Down: Reflections on the Theoretical Underpinnings of Archival Public Programming," *Archivaria* 31 (Winter 1990-1991), 123-134.

effectively. Duff et al., in their 2013 study of archives who used social media, saw that most archives, while the saw social media's potential, were making little use of it. Most of the archives in their survey thought that social media allowed for the democratization of the archives and increased the level of the public's engagement with their collections, yet either they didn't know how to use it well, or they were not seeing the results they wanted to. Part of the reason for this, the authors discovered, might be because most of the archives who try to engage with the public, to get their feedback and to contribute content, still heavily moderate these contributions to be sure they reconcile with the archivists' views, and to be sure that the user-contributed content is not confused with or conflated with that of the archivists. This tended to discourage contributions, whereas places that didn't moderate got much more engagement. Archivists also, according to this study, didn't always feel their time was well-spent on social media, even though they also felt it would be valuable if it increased attendance or awareness. Other things archivists in the study found valuable about social media was that it could allow more voices to be heard on a subject, creating a fuller picture of an event or person a collection focused on. Having the public comment on things removed a level of gatekeeping in archives, and therefore could make archives less intimidating. The participants in this study saw social media as being valuable in many ways, yet this potential was not being realized by most archives at that time, due to time and staff limitations, knowledge of how social media worked, or confidence in community collaboration.[94]

Hagar did a similar study, focusing solely on Facebook as an outlet for outreach activities. He wanted to see if Facebook was an effective tool for archivists, and how

[94] Wendy M. Duff et al., "Reaching Out, Reaching IN: A Preliminary Investigation into Archives' Use of Social Media in Canada," *Archivaria* 75 (Spring 2013), 77-96.

their usage of it could improve. While he did not find any general consensus for how to use Facebook to reach users, he did collect useful data on why archives would want to use Facebook. Many archives used Facebook because they felt they had to, that it was the thing to do. They didn't have a specific purpose in mind other than conforming to that expectation. Most also wanted to increase their visibility to the public and wanted to do specific outreach based on their collections. By raising awareness of their archive and its collections, they hoped to not only get more public engagement, but donors as well. Facebook allowed them to meet new users where they were. Archivists thought that since so many people were using social media, this would be a good place to find them. Hagar found that Facebook could be an extremely effective outreach tool if archivists shared their collections visually using images, worked collaboratively with other departments at their institutions and in their communities, created content that was interesting to their existing audience, and focused specifically on their collections in order to maintain core followers.[95]

Specialty archives might need to do different things in order to reach their core audiences. Universities have a special challenge to do outreach to their undergraduate students as well as to the community at large. Fleming and Gerrard's research found that special events hosted by the university archives were an effective form of outreach that not only increase attendance and use, but also donations and support among the public. They looked at successful examples of fundraising, "friend"raising, and educational events that were tied to collections to see what worked and what did not, as well as how these events were coordinated and executed. Donors and the general public were more

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[95] Joshua D. Hagar, "To Like or Not to Like: Understanding and Maximizing the Utility of Archival Outreach on Facebook," *The American Archivist* 78, No. 1 (Spring/Summer 2015), 18-37.

likely to attend fundraising events and events aimed at gaining supporters than they were to educational programs. One challenge universities faced when trying to attract the public was the layout of the campuses themselves, which aren't always the most accessible to outsiders. For example, many libraries are not accessible on street-level, and parking can be difficult to find. Therefore, having maps and clear directions and signage is necessary. Getting outreach support from other related departments and the administration of the university itself increased the success of these events. While university archivists recognized the value of these events, like other types of archives, they found themselves constrained by time, staff, and money.[96]

If getting the public onto campus presents difficulties, what about engaging with the students themselves? Wendy M. Duff and Joan M. Cherry examined the student outreach side of university archives by looking at archival orientation programs geared toward undergraduates with the goal of increasing their awareness and use of the archives. They saw that four activities were generally used to increase student engagement with the archives: interactions of students and reference archivists, tours of the facilities, one-time sessions to discuss archives and sources, and full-term classes that train students in research skills. Duff and Cherry were interested in assessing the impacts of these activities, including social impact (inclusion and overcoming exclusion of individuals based on socioeconomic factors), economic impact (contribution of users to the local economy), and learning impact (contribution to the knowledge base of individuals and communities). They found that having an in-depth orientation session where students were taught how to use the archives, what they had in their collections,

[96] Kevin S. Fleming and Morna Gerrard, "Engaging Communities: Public Programming in State Universities' Special Collections and Archives," *Archival Issues*, 36, no. 1 (Nov. 1, 2014), 7-26.

and were able to handle primary sources increased these students' confidence in using the archives and actually led to an increase in the use of the archives.[97] If this is true for undergraduate students, perhaps the same might hold for members of the public as well.

As the democratization of archives grows, in order for it to have a true impact, the importance of outreach will increase as well. Research like that I describe above is vital to know what steps need to be taken to improve outreach and public programming, as well as to understand what to avoid and why. Being able to measure impacts and knowing why some things work and some things do not is a key factor in these programs' success. In the next section, I will discuss some measures that might help bring awareness to Ege's *Fifty Original Leaves* in particular.

Moving Forward

As seen from some of the sources above, even if an archive or special collection wanted to share things with the public outside of their immediate user base, it can be difficult to create awareness of a collection to begin with. Many factors contribute to this, from a lack of funding, staff, and other resources of the institution, to a lack of training in outreach techniques. When an institution's resources in time and staff are stretched to the limit, it can be extremely difficult to prioritize public outreach. Keeping up with the processing and conservation of materials, digitizing collections, and meeting researcher needs is often all an institution can keep up with, and even then, there often seems to be a perpetual backlog. Public engagement, however, plays a vital role in the vitality of archives and special collections, especially with the ongoing discourse about archives' role in social justice. The past couple decades have seen challenges to archives to step out

[97] Wendy M. Duff and Joan M. Cherry, "Archival Orientation for Undergraduate Students: An Exploratory Study of Impact," *The American Archivist* 71 (Fall/Winter 2008), 499-529.

from their safe role as portals to the past and engage with current social justice challenges concerning the environment, social inequality, globalization, representation, identity, and more.[98] Many institutions have risen to this challenge, creating positions for outreach archivists and increasing opportunities for public engagement. How to get people through the doors, however, poses a question many archives have a difficult time answering. In this section, I will use the Otto Ege *Fifty Original Leaves from Medieval Manuscripts* collection as a way to show how archives and special collections can use one collection to entice the public to come explore more of their holdings. In this way, not only will the *Fifty Original Leaves* collections see use as Ege intended, but both the public and the institution will benefit from the creation of a sense of community that might not have existed before.

Based on my survey of the literature cited above, there is an issue of getting the public to come to archives and special collections, which suggests that perhaps the key lies in getting the archives and special collections to the public. While institutions might struggle to get followers from outside their pre-established user-base (for example, a university attracting followers that are not students, faculty, or researchers), there are associated entities that do have audiences that have a high crossover potential, like public libraries, high schools, and community centers. By forming partnerships with these other institutions, an archive's reach could increase. A public library could share posts from the archive on social media and vice versa. This could create awareness of the archive with an audience that might otherwise not even know such a place was accessible to them, and in turn, by sharing relevant resources from the public library or other institution, the

[98] Wendy M. Duff et al., "Social justice impact of archives: a preliminary investigation," *Archival Science* 13 (2013), 319.

archive would assist them with their outreach to a different audience. With the advent of digital resources, this partnership could be particularly strong, because people can explore the collections of an archive from the comfort of their homes. Through partnerships with community organizations and public institutions, archives and special collections can also give orientations to the public as to how to access their collections to make people more comfortable with their use.

The Ege leaves provide a unique opportunity to attract new users to an archival institution where they might not ordinarily go otherwise. Medieval manuscripts are objects of curiosity to many people. A public library might not have such things in their collections, making the opportunity to see them up close and firsthand in a way that is accessible to a wide swath of socioeconomic demographics rare. As shown above, certain demographics might feel out of place at the type of institution that would have these assets. With a partnership between a public library and a university's special collections, this discomfort could be made minimal. A program could be designed where a group of people could meet at a public institution where they are comfortable and feel welcome. This group and a leader from that community institution would then take a field trip, as it were, to the university, where they would be welcomed by the staff at the archives and special collections, receive a brief overview of what the institution is about, and then be able to experience the Ege manuscript leaves directly. This would also be a good opportunity to have other items from the collections out that might be of interest to the community, such as local interest pieces. The leader from the public institution could offer insights beforehand as to what pieces might be the most appealing. This could pique the public's interest in perhaps another visit in the future, either as a group or as individuals, now that they have received an introduction and hopefully feel welcome. While this experience would cost in terms of work hours and staff resources, it would present what could be the chance of a lifetime for many people. It could inspire new patronage, donations of collections or funds, and of course, a new sense of community.

In order to have a successful outreach program, each institution should examine what will work best for their unique situation, so resources are used wisely. Things like contests, open houses, social media events, livestreams, tours, and crowdsourcing have all proven successful, but not everything will work for all institutions. Theimer suggests institutions examine what audience they are trying to reach, how, and what their end goals are.[99] It is perfectly acceptable, for example, to have an initiative that is not targeted toward any one particular group of people, but this should be a conscious choice. History, after all, belongs to everyone, and people of all backgrounds can and do enjoy seeing medieval manuscripts, or collections of historical photos of their home city, or realia of everyday life from days gone by.

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[99] Kate Theimer, *Outreach: Innovative Practices for Archives and Special Collections* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), ix.

Conclusion

More often than not, whenever I start to explain Otto Ege's life and legacy, I am met with groans. It is inconceivable to many that someone would cut apart codices that were hundreds of years old, no matter what the reason was. Otto Ege's legacy might be of broken books, but it offers an opportunity for a great many people to experience medieval manuscripts in the United States who might never otherwise have. In order for this to become a reality, we must overcome the obstacles that geography puts into play, namely tearing down boundaries between the institutions that hold these manuscript leaves and the people who would benefit from seeing them.

APPENDIX

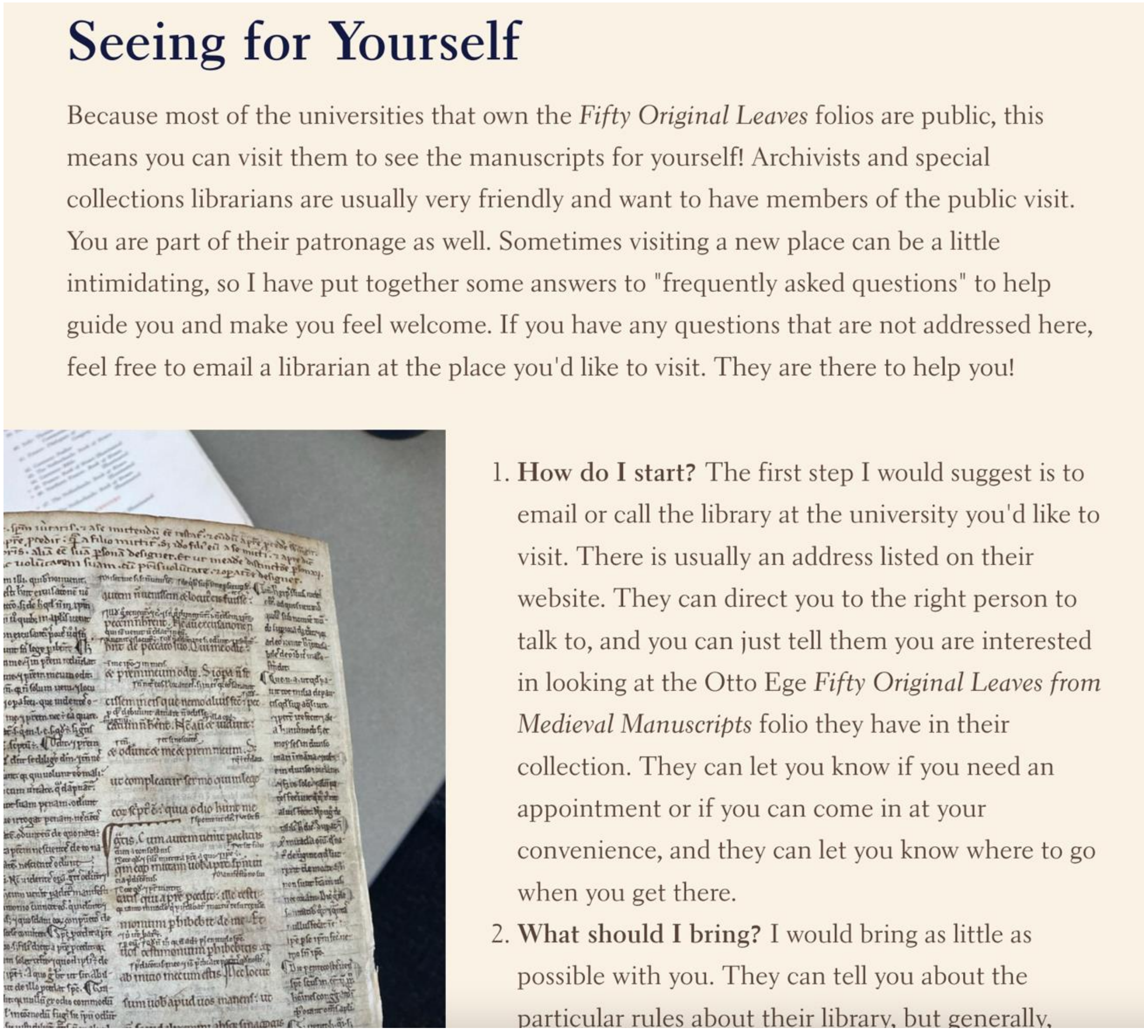
In order to put some of the ideas I set forth in this thesis into action, I created an online informational exhibit about Otto Ege's legacy and how the public can access a portfolio that is in a collection near them. I used Esri's ArcGIS StoryMaps program in order to make a pleasant looking site that could host features like images and maps.

Figure 11 Landing page for website sample

Figure 11 shows the landing page for the site. There is a menu to help viewers navigate between sections of the site so people can find what is relevant to their interests and can quickly find things they want to reference. The website begins with a biography of Otto Ege, a brief overview of his legacy. Then there is an interactive map (Figure 12) where users can click on an icon to reveal a text box with more information about each site. This will allow the public to have a sense of where the closest *Fifty Original Leaves* portfolio is.

Figure 12 Interactive map

Finally, the website has a section for first-time users of archives and special collections, encouraging them to email the place they would like to visit and providing them with a list of frequently asked questions. (Figure 13).



Seeing for Yourself

Because most of the universities that own the *Fifty Original Leaves* folios are public, this means you can visit them to see the manuscripts for yourself! Archivists and special collections librarians are usually very friendly and want to have members of the public visit. You are part of their patronage as well. Sometimes visiting a new place can be a little intimidating, so I have put together some answers to "frequently asked questions" to help guide you and make you feel welcome. If you have any questions that are not addressed here, feel free to email a librarian at the place you'd like to visit. They are there to help you!

1. **How do I start?** The first step I would suggest is to email or call the library at the university you'd like to visit. There is usually an address listed on their website. They can direct you to the right person to talk to, and you can just tell them you are interested in looking at the Otto Ege *Fifty Original Leaves from Medieval Manuscripts* folio they have in their collection. They can let you know if you need an appointment or if you can come in at your convenience, and they can let you know where to go when you get there.
2. **What should I bring?** I would bring as little as possible with you. They can tell you about the particular rules about their library, but generally,

Figure 13 Frequently asked questions

The actual website can be visited at https://arcg.is/qXGSv0 .

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