Germany- 42-line Gutenberg Bible, printed on vellum, and its contemporary documentary background

PART A – ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

The 42-line Gutenberg-Bible is the first book printed in Europe with movable types. From Mainz, the location of Gutenberg's printing office, the new technology spread all over Europe and the world. Of the originally 30 Bibles printed on vellum only four have survived in their complete form with all their 1282 pages. The Goettingen copy, being one of these four, stands out for its unique contemporary documentary context: The Goettingen Model Book is the contemporary source of the Bible’s illumination, the Notarial Instrument of Ulrich Helmasperger is the only surviving contemporary document that gives evidence of Gutenberg's invention. No other institution could claim to have three inter-connected outstanding documents which focus on the invention of printing in Germany. It is this connection which elevates the Goettingen vellum copy of the Gutenberg Bible into a rank that could not be achieved by any of the other complete copies.

1. Identity and Location

1.1 Name of documentary heritage
42-line Gutenberg Bible, printed on vellum, and its contemporary documentary background

1.2 Country
Federal Republic of Germany

1.3 State, province or region
Lower Saxony

1.4 Address
Niedersaechsische Staats- und Universitaetsbibliothek (SUB)
Platz der Goettinger Sieben 1
37073 Goettingen
Tel. 0551/395212
Fax 0551/395222 E-mail sub@mail.sub.uni-goettingen.de
Internet address: http://www.sub.uni-goettingen.de

1.5 Name of organization or institution (if appropriate)
State and University Library of Lower Saxony at Goettingen

2. Legal Information
2.1 Owner (name and contact details)
State and University Library of Lower Saxony (as above)

2.2 Custodian (name and contact details)
Prof. Dr. Elmar Mittler, Librarian (address see above)

2.3 Legal status (if different from 2.1)
(a) category of ownership (e.g. public, corporate or private)
Public

(b) details of legal and administrative provisions for the preservation of the documentary heritage
The Goettingen Gutenberg Bible is part of the collection of the State and University Library which has safe areas for books of value and specially trained staff in the Department of Rare Books and the Restoration Department.

(c) accessibility
The Gutenberg Bible is accessible to scholars of bibliography and of the history of printing and to the general public during exhibitions.

The Goettingen Gutenberg Bible is completely preserved in digital format in the Internet (http://www.gutenbergdigital.de) as well as on CD-ROM, together with the «Goettingen Model Book» and «Helmasperger’s Notarial Instrument». Interactive access to the actual text of the Bible is available in several languages. It is also possible to compare the Bible's illuminations directly with original patterns that were laid out in the «Goettingen Model Book». The digital edition has been accessible world-wide since 23 June 2000.

(d) copyright status
The library owns the copyright of this special copy.

2.4 Responsible administration
details should be given of the mechanism or organization already established, or to be established, to ensure the proper management of the documentary heritage

All problems of safe keeping and handling are dealt with by trained staff of the Department of Rare Books and the Restoration Department.

3. Identification
3.1 Description and inventory
The invention of printing with movable letters took place independently in Asia (Korea) and Europe (Germany). For the latter it was Johannes Gutenberg’s technique that was revolutionary for culture and society. His developed technique of serial production of movable metal types with the hand mould and printing with the press is nominated here as "Memory of the World", represented and illustrated by the following documents: One of four 42-line Gutenberg Bibles printed on vellum and without any pages missing; the only
perfectly complete copy in Germany; the Goettingen Model Book, the model book of the illuminations of this actual copy and the Notarial Instrument of Ulrich Helmasperger, the only contemporary document giving evidence of Gutenberg’s invention.

3.2 Bibliographic/Registration details

Shelfmarks

3.3 Visual documentation, if appropriate (for example, photographs or a video of the documentary heritage)

The complete 1282 pages of the Gutenberg Bible are available free of charge on the Web (http://www.gutenbergdigital.de) and on a CD-ROM (published by Saur Verlag in 2000), together with additional Gutenberg documents like «Helmasperger's Notarial Instrument» and the «Goettingen Model Book».

3.4 History

The Goettingen B42 Bible is one of the four extant completely preserved copies on vellum. A hand-written comment on the margin of the Goettingen Bible indicates that this copy originally belonged to a monastery which was probably located in Calenberg-Goettingen, a part of the Guelph territory. From 1587 on, the Bible was in the possession of Duke Julius of Brunswick. The Bible then came into possession of the University Library at Helmstedt together with the older Wolfenbuettel Library. The Helmstedt Library was dissolved in 1812 – at the time of the Kingdom of Westphalia – and from there the Bible found its way to Goettingen. In Goettingen that same year, the Paulinerkirche had just been renovated for use as a library room by adding an additional floor. It is in this newly renovated historical hall that the Bible will now be presented to an interested public.

3.5 Bibliography: Please indicate up to three published sources describing the proposed documentary heritage.


3.6 Names, qualifications and contact details of up to three independent people or organizations with expert knowledge about the values and provenance of the documentary heritage

The library has close connections with the leading experts on Johannes Gutenberg and on early printing history, among them Dr. Lotte Hellinga, The British Library (e-mail:
Another institution that devotes its efforts to the history of writing and printing is the Gutenberg Museum of the city of Mainz which was founded in 1900 on the occasion of Gutenberg's 500th anniversary. Besides owning and presenting manuscripts, early printed books, and graphic art, the museum also has in its collection several printing presses of different epochs, among them a reconstruction of a printing office from Gutenberg's times with a workable press. The Gutenberg-Museum endeavours to direct its research and its collections at printing history in a broader and more global sense, where Gutenberg's invention is not the starting point, but rather a focal point in a development that starts centuries earlier. Printing began in China from wooden stocks in the 7th century AD and printing with movable types has been documented in China since the 11th century AD. Gutenberg's central achievement, however, was the serial production of metal types with the hand mould and printing with the press. The museum represents all these aspects in its collections, through exhibits and by issuing special publications. The Gutenberg Museum has co-operated with Goettingen University Library on several occasions just as the library gave valuable loans to the museum for their exhibition on Johannes Gutenberg last year.

The library aims at establishing a network of and co-operation with other institutions who present their copies of the Gutenberg Bible in digitised form, like Cambridge University Library, the British Library in London and the Gutenberg Museum in Mainz. This network will enable the scholar to compare and study copies of the bible, creating new approaches to the study of the history of printing.

4. Management plan – see below Annex 1

The Goettingen Gutenberg Bible is well preserved and in combination with the «Goettingen Model Book» it is a unique example of the invention of printing and book history. It is completely preserved in digital format in the Internet (http://www.gutenbergdigital.de) as well as on CD-ROM, together with the «Goettingen Model Book» and «Helmasperger's Notarial Instrument». Interactive access to the actual text of the Bible is available in several languages. It is also possible to compare the illuminations directly with original patterns that were laid out in the «Goettingen Model Book». The digital edition has been accessible world-wide since 23 June 2000.

5. Assessment against the Selection Criteria

5.1 Assessment of the documentary heritage against each criterion described in Annex 2.

Criterion 1-Influence:
The very first European printed book in a complete copy on vellum; the most important document on the invention of printing with movable types by Gutenberg, which changed book production and the information world completely for the following centuries.

**Criterion 2-Time:**
Gutenberg’s invention led to a momentous change in world affairs and had an immediate influence on his own times.

**Criterion 3-Place:**
From Mainz, the location of Gutenberg's printing office, the new technology spread all over Europe in less than 50 years. The SUB Goettingen as a leading research library in the world holds unique additional Gutenberg documents, like Helmasperger's Notarial Instrument and the Goettingen Model Book.

**Criterion 4-People:**
Gutenberg's invention is exemplified in the first printed bible in a perfect form. His achievement was recognized by the fact that he was appointed “Man of the Millenium” in 1999.

**Criterion 5-Subject/Theme:**
The Gutenberg Bible is the first book that illustrates the beginning of printing with movable types in Europe. The illumination of the Goettingen Bible is especially well documented by the additional «Model Book». Helmasperger's Notarial Instrument is the only surviving contemporary document which gives direct information about Gutenberg and his invention «das Werk der buecher» («the work of books»).

**Criterion 6-Form and Style:**
Taking the stylistic and formal characteristics of the hand-produced books of his time, Gutenberg managed to invent a technology that allowed for an almost perfect reproduction of books in a much faster and easier way.

**Criterion 7-Social Value:**
The invention of printing led to numerous social changes, above all a hitherto unknown proliferation of knowledge.

**Secondary Criterion 1-Integrity:**
Of all extant copies of the Gutenberg Bible (49), 12 are printed on vellum, but only four complete copies have survived of which the Goettingen copy is the only one on German soil.

**Secondary Criterion 2-Rarity:**
Because of its illumination that is modelled after a contemporary source (the Goettingen Model Book) this copy of the Gutenberg Bible is a unique example of the early book culture.

5.2 Contextual assessment including an assessment of the importance of a series of documents, the importance of a series of documents in a particular setting, and the assessment against other documentary heritage.
The invention of printing took place parallel in Asia (Korea) and Europe (Germany). From Mainz, the location of Gutenberg’s printing office, the new technology spread all over Europe and the world in a surprising short time-span.
Gutenberg’s supreme achievement was the printing of a 42-line Bible in two volumes. This was indeed the first book in Europe that was printed with movable types. Out of a print run of an estimated 180 copies he printed 30 copies of the bible on vellum. Today only 49 complete and incomplete copies are extant. The following 19 institutions are the proud owners of complete copies which do not lack any of the 1282 pages of the Gutenberg Bible:

Austria:
Vienna, Austrian National Library

France:
Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine
Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale (vellum)

Germany:
Frankfurt am Main, State and University Library
Goettingen, State and University Library of Lower Saxony (vellum)
Munich, Bavarian State Library

Great Britain:
Cambridge, University Library
Edinburgh, University Library
Eton, College Library
London, British Library
London, British Library (vellum)
Manchester, Joh, Rylands Library
Oxford, Bodleian Library

Portugal:
Lisbon, Biblioteca Nacional e Instituto do Livro

USA:
Austin, Texas, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center
Cambridge, Mass., Harry Elkins Widener Memorial Library
New Haven, Conn., Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
New York, N.Y., Pierpont Morgan Library
Washington, D.C., Library of Congress (vellum)

As can be seen from this list, the Goettingen copy is one of only four completely preserved copies on vellum. Its illumination is modelled after a contemporary 15th century source which is also part of the collections of State and University at Goettingen. This manuscript, the Goettingen Model Book, describes in detail the production of colours and of illuminations that decorate the Goettingen copy of the Gutenberg Bible.

Besides the Gutenberg Bible and the Goettingen Model Book, the Library owns the only surviving contemporary document that gives evidence of Gutenberg's invention: the Notarial Instrument of Ulrich Helmasperger of 1455 (see Appendix). No other institution in Germany and, for that matter, elsewhere in the world, could claim to have three interconnected outstanding documents which focus on the invention of printing. It is this connection which elevates the Goettingen vellum copy of the Gutenberg Bible into a rank that could not be achieved by any of the other complete copies.
Because of this unparalleled value of its copy, the Goettingen State and University Library was the first library world-wide to make the complete Gutenberg Bible available in digital format in the Internet (http://www.gutenbergdigital.de) as well as on CD-ROM: Gutenberg digital: Goettinger Gutenberg-Bibel, Musterbuch und Helmaspergersches Notariatsinstrument. / Hrsg. von Elmar Mittler. Muenchen: Saur, 2000. 2 CD-ROM.: farb. ; 12 cm + Behaeltnisbegleith. ([3] S.)

Interactive access to the actual text of the Bible is available in several languages. It is also possible to compare the Bible’s illuminations directly with original patterns that were laid out in the »Goettingen Model Book". The digital edition has been accessible world-wide since 23 June 2000.

6. Consultation

6.1 Details of consultation about the nomination with the:

(a) Owner
(b) Custodian
   Prof. Dr. Elmar Mittler
(c) Relevant Regional or National Memory of the World Committee (if appropriate)

German Nomination Committee for the Memory of the World Programme

7. Nominator

7.1 Name
   German Nomination Committee for the Memory of the World Programme
   German Commission for UNESCO
   Colmantstrasse 15
   D-53115 Bonn

7.2 Relationship to documentary heritage
   German Commission for UNESCO

7.3 Contact person (if appropriate)
   Prof. Dr. Joachim-Felix Leonhard
   (President of the German Nomination Committee)

7.4 Contact details

Appendix: The Helmasperger Notarial Instrument

1. INTRODUCTION

On 6 November 1455, Ulrich Helmasperger, clerk of the Bishopric of Bamberg, royal notary and certified public recorder at the Court of the Archbishop of Mainz wrote the Instrument which bears his name. This is the only contemporary account of the business relations between Gutenberg and Fust and of Gutenberg's invention, the "Work of the Books". This account of the legal proceedings documents that the citizen of Mainz, Johannes Fust, swore the following under oath:

He had lent Gutenberg the sum of 1550 guilders which he himself had had to borrow at an
interest rate of 6%. In his view the money he lent Gutenberg which was not used for their mutual benefit for the Work of the Books was a loan and thus he demanded that the interest on this loan be refunded to him. The Instrument briefly discusses the first legal complaint - the demand for repayment of the money - and describes the judgement which was unfavorable for Gutenberg. The Instrument does not mention the final judgement - Fust's demand that the partnership with Gutenberg be dissolved and the consequences of this.

The Helmasperger Instrument was donated to the University Library in 1741 by Johann David Köhler, a Göttingen historian. In the same year, on the basis of this document, Köhler provided some new insights into Gutenberg research and contributed to the vindication of Johannes Gutenberg as the inventor of letterpress printing. Later, the manuscript was forgotten and first rediscovered in 1886 by Karl Dziatzko.

For a look at the digitized version please turn to http://www.gutenbergdigital.de/gudi/eframes/helma/not_g/notganz.htm

2. THE CONTENTS OF THE NOTARIAL INSTRUMENT

(Source: F. Geldner, Das Helmaspergersche Notariatsinstrument in seiner Bedeutung für die Geschichte des ältesten Mainzer Buchdrucks, Stuttgart 1972.)

2.1. FUST'S COMPLAINT

With reference to the "Written Agreement" - which Rudolf BLUM has convincingly interpreted as a preliminary loan contract - Johann Fust raises the following charge against Johann Gutenberg: he loaned J. Gutenberg 800 golden guilders to carry out the work - it being of no concern whether the work cost more or less than this sum - on which Gutenberg was to pay 6 percent interest. Fust claims to have borrowed the 800 guilders himself against interest, which interest now amount to the sum of 250 guilders. But since Gutenberg was not satisfied with the 800 guilders, he loaned him a further 800 guilders, on which he was to pay 140 guilders interest. Since Gutenberg never paid this interest, Fust had to pay it himself, resulting in compound interest to the sum of 36 guilders, so that Gutenberg now owed him a total of 2020 guilders. According to Fust's version, there were two loans of 800 guilders each, both subject to 6 percent interest - the different amounts of interest payable being due to the different periods of the loans (see below). He claims the printing equipment was pledged him as collateral and denies any partnership in a joint undertaking.

2.2. GUTENBERG'S ANSWER

Whereas according to Fust's complaint, the 1600 guilders he claims to have lent were purely a loan, subject to interest at 6 percent, Gutenberg's answer sheds more light on the financial transactions between Fust and Gutenberg, correcting Fust's statements to a considerable degree. Gutenberg begins by claiming that Fust did not pay first 800 guilders in full and not at once. This money was intended for the manufacture of his geczuge (printing apparatus), which was to be pledged to Fust as collateral. And although the contract stated that these 800 guilders were subject to 6 percent interest, he claims that Fust waived their payment in a verbal assurance. The second 800 guilders, on the other hand, which were intended for the work on the books, were not an interest-bearing loan but a capital contribution by Fust for execution of the work on the books. Fust is claimed to have promised to pay this second sum of 800 guilders in yearly installments of 300
guilders (for servants' pay, domestic costs, parchment, paper, printer's ink, etc.). He states his willingness to account for these 800 guilders. Should their agreement come to an end, he is to pay back the (first) 800 guilders to Fust after which his printing equipment should cease to be collateral. He claims to owe no interest or compound interest.

2.3. FUST'S "REPLY" AND GUTENBERG'S "REJOINDER"

In his transition to the verdict (Having heard address, answer, reply and rejoinder, which consisted of these and many other words) the notary public Helmasperger admits that his report on the proceedings is abridged, with drastic consequences for Gutenberg research: apart from the probability that he abbreviated Fust's complaint and Gutenberg's answer, not even giving a particularly clear rendition, he completely omitted Fust's reply and Gutenberg's rejoinder, although both must have been of considerable length (with these [words] refers to Fust's "address" and Gutenberg's "answer", [with] many other words refers to the reply and the rejoinder). The reason for this is quite clear: U. Helmasperger was completely incapable of giving any kind of meaningful summary of what Gutenberg and Fust were arguing about, since apart from the dates involved, they were dealing with the central problems of early book printing: technical errors, improvements, innovations made by others, maybe the printing of letters of indulgence, and certainly the printing of other major works - the possibilities are endless. Since they didn't speak openly on these matters, using coded terms and references, Helmasperger's failure to record the details is understandable. This means subsequent generations have been deprived of the chance to hear Gutenberg's own voice, even through an imperfect medium, speaking about himself and his invention. The reason which prevented U. Helmasperger from going into detail on the reply and the rejoinder was almost certainly also responsible for the judge's decision to pass verdict on the first article of Fust's complaint only, restricting himself to financial matters. The court did not consider itself competent to rule on the second article (and any others there may have been).

2.4. THE VERDICT

It was probably rare that a court in Mainz had to reach a judgement in such a complicated case. Insofar as we can form a valid opinion today, without access to Fust's reply and Gutenberg's rejoinder, it seems the court performed this task to the best of its knowledge and in good faith. In a wise display of restraint, it only passed judgement on the first article of Fust's claim, evidently taking into consideration Gutenberg's response to Fust's complaint, which was doubtless further explained and expanded on by Gutenberg in his rejoinder (now lost). In his reply to Gutenberg's answer, Fust presumably had to admit that there was a fundamental difference between the loan (the first 800 guilders, if we stick to the sum originally named by Fust), intended for the manufacture of the printing equipment, which was to be pledged to Fust as collateral, and the capital contribution (the second 800 guilders paid by Fust in installments) intended for the work on the books (the work to their common good). Concerning the second 800 guilders, the court began by judging:

Once Gutenberg had fulfilled his offer by accounting for all expenditure and revenue resulting from the joint undertaking, any positive balance should be added to the 800 guilders (the court clearly assumed that such income had already been generated by sales of printed matter). The court was obviously of the opinion that whatever Gutenberg acquired with these 800 guilders plus any other revenue (i.e. the work of the books), belonged to the two partners in equal parts, as was customary in such partnerships if nothing was agreed to the contrary.

If these accounts showed that Fust had given Gutenberg money above and beyond 800 guilders which had not been used to their common advantage, then Gutenberg was to pay
this sum back too. And if Johannes Fust proved by oath or witnesses that the aforementioned sum was not taken from his own capital but borrowed against interest at his own expense, then Gutenberg was also to pay this interest.

The aforementioned sum not used to their common good refers to the 800+\(x\) guilders which Gutenberg considered as an interest-free loan and which were intended for the manufacture of the pledged printing equipment. The court obviously considered the various sums of money given by Fust to Gutenberg as a single item (as did Fust). The money not used for their joint project was to be paid back with interest, insofar as Fust could prove that he had paid interest on it himself. This decision seems justified. But in practice, how was a decision to be reached on what Gutenberg had needed for his equipment and what had been spent on work to their common benefit, if, for example, Gutenberg used his own new type printing equipment (sein geczuge) for their joint book project (werck der bucher)? It was not easy to determine the degree to which the newly created moveable types belonged to the joint project, as Fust had continued to make payments with no clear distinction between loan and capital contribution. The judgement was final - and not interlocutory as ZEDLER thought - but it was only a part judgement, subject to certain restrictions."