

## MAGNA CARTA TO GO ON VIEW WEDNESDAY, APRIL 21 AT THE MORGAN LIBRARY & MUSEUM

*EXHIBITION IS UNEXPECTED RESULT OF THE TRANSPORTATION DISRUPTION IN EUROPE*

**Great Symbol of Liberty Is Part of the Manuscripts Collection of England's Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, which Made Generous Offer to the Morgan**

**New York, NY, April 20, 2010**—One of the earliest original manuscripts of Magna Carta dating to 1217 goes on exhibition Wednesday, April 21, at The Morgan Library & Museum. This extremely rare and important document came to New York for a special event for Oxford University but could not be returned to Britain because of the disruption to air traffic caused by the recent volcanic ash cloud. The Bodleian Library generously offered the Morgan the opportunity to exhibit Magna Carta while new arrangements were being made to transport it back to England. The document is on view at the Morgan through May 30.



Magna Carta, reissued November 1217 in the name of King Henry III; official engrossment sent to Oxfordshire. Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

This particular manuscript is one of four original versions of Magna Carta held by the Bodleian Library, and it had never before left Britain since being issued almost eight hundred years ago. Magna Carta or “Great Charter of English Liberties” was signed by King John at Runnymede on June 15, 1215 and was reissued throughout the thirteenth century by England’s rulers. It is considered one of the most important legal documents in the history of democracy and includes such fundamental rights as habeas corpus.

“This is a great and unexpected opportunity to put one of the Bodleian Library’s original Magna Carta manuscripts on public display in New York for the first time,” said Richard Ovenden, Keeper of Special Collections for the Bodleian. “Once we realized that our travel plans had to change because of unforeseen circumstances, we immediately got in touch with our friends at The Morgan Library & Museum who were glad to make available their state-of-the-art, high security exhibition facilities. We extend our gratitude to

the Morgan for agreeing to display Magna Carta on such short notice and to keep it securely for us until it can return safely to Oxford.”

In total, there are seventeen surviving original manuscripts of Magna Carta dating from 1215 to 1297. They are “engrossments,” not copies, meaning they bear the Royal seal. The influence of Magna Carta in America is great and can be seen in such fundamental documents as the Bill of Rights.

“We are deeply grateful to our colleagues at the Bodleian Library for permitting the Morgan to display Magna Carta while new arrangements are made to return it to Oxford,” said William M. Griswold, director of The Morgan Library & Museum. “This is an extraordinary and fortuitous event for the people of New York, who will now have the opportunity to see an original version of what is without a doubt one of the most important legal documents in history.”

The Bodleian Libraries of the University of Oxford form the largest university library system in the United Kingdom. They include the principal University library—the Bodleian Library—which has been a library of legal deposit for 400 years; major research libraries; and libraries attached to faculties, departments and other institutions of the University. The combined library collections number more than 11 million printed items, in addition to 30,000 e-journals and vast quantities of materials in other formats. The Old Bodleian is also a major visitor attraction, drawing over 300,000 visitors a year. More information about the Bodleian Libraries and their activities can be found at [www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk](http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk).

### **The Morgan Library & Museum**

A complex of buildings in the heart of New York City, The Morgan Library & Museum began as the private library of financier Pierpont Morgan, one of the preeminent collectors and cultural benefactors in the United States. Today it is a museum, independent research library, musical venue, architectural landmark, and historic site. More than a century after its founding, the Morgan maintains a unique position in the cultural life of New York City and is considered one of its greatest treasures. With the 2006 reopening of its newly renovated campus, designed by renowned architect Renzo Piano, the Morgan reaffirmed its role as an important repository for the history, art, and literature of Western civilization from 4000 B.C. to the twenty-first century.

### **General Information**

The Morgan Library & Museum  
225 Madison Avenue, at 36th Street, New York, NY 10016-3405  
212.685.0008  
[www.themorgan.org](http://www.themorgan.org)

### **Hours**

Tuesday–Thursday, 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.; extended Friday hours, 10:30 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Sunday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.; closed Mondays, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and New Year’s Day. The Morgan closes at 4 p.m. on Christmas Eve and New Year’s Eve.

**Admission**

\$12 for adults; \$8 for students, seniors (65 and over), and children (under 16); free to Members and children, 12 and under accompanied by an adult. Admission is free on Fridays from 7 to 9 p.m. Admission is not required to visit the Morgan Shop.

**Press Contacts**The Morgan Library & Museum

Patrick Milliman

212-590-0310, pmilliman@themorgan.org

Sandra Ho

212-590-0311, sho@themorgan.org

Bodleian Libraries

Sarah Henderson

44(0)7920-522808, sarah.henderson@bodleian.ox.ac.uk

Oana Romocea

44(0)1865-277627, oana.romocea@bodleian.ox.ac.uk