

EXHIBITION

A display of brilliance

The Weston Library's inaugural exhibition showcases original works from the world's best and brightest

By Andrew Robinson

When the Protestant zeal of the Reformation overtook Oxford University in the 1540s, it lost its library. In a purge of all traces of Roman Catholicism, its books were burnt or sold to local tradesmen for repurposing. Its principal library today, the Bodleian, was founded in 1602 by Sir Thomas Bodley. A graduate of Oxford who later served as an ambassador of Queen Elizabeth I, Bodley returned to Oxford in 1598 and offered to collect the university a new library at his own expense. Shortly thereafter, the philosopher Sir Francis Bacon presented Bodley with a copy of his newly published *The Advancement of Learning* (1605). Bacon's accompanying letter praised Bodley for having built "an Ark to save learning from deluge."

By the early 18th century, the Bodleian was legally entitled to receive one copy of any new book published in the United Kingdom. Today, its collections consist of more than 11 million printed items, in addition to 70,000 e-journals and vast quantities of materials in other formats. By far the largest library in the United Kingdom, the Bodleian is also one of the world's great libraries. With the opening of the Weston Library in March 2015, the Bodleian collections are now available to researchers through facilities designed for the digital age and to the public through both permanent and changing exhibitions.

Marks of Genius, the Weston Library's inaugural exhibition, consists mainly of world-changing books, maps, and manuscripts from the Bodleian collections, along with some paintings and sculptures. Each work can also be viewed in an accompanying catalog (1), stimulatingly contextualized by the exhibition's curator, Stephen Hebron, with occasional help from outside experts. The overall aim of the exhibition is to illuminate the indefinable—but indispensable—concept of genius across the humanities and sciences. "If the various forms the character of genius has taken over the centuries have anything in common," observes Hebron, "it is that they celebrate the variety and creativity of human beings."

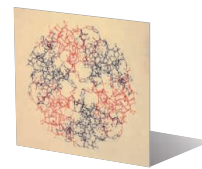
The scientific works on display include a beautifully illustrated translation of one of

the first books to appear in print: Pliny the Elder's *Historia Naturale* (Natural History), published in Venice in 1476. The exhibition features first editions of Johannes Kepler's *Astronomia Nova* (New Astronomy), published in Prague in 1609, which describes the elliptical orbits of the planets around the sun, and Isaac Newton's *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica* (Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy), published in London in 1687, which introduces the inverse square law of gravity and the three universal laws of motion. Featured manuscripts include Euclid's *Stoicheia* (Elements), the oldest manuscript of a classical Greek author to bear a date (888), and a draft of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, complete with corrections, revisions, and additions by her poet husband, Percy. An exquisite map of the insulin molecule with the atomic positions rendered in black and red, attributed to Dorothy Hodgkin and dated 1968, and a fine portrait of Galileo presented to the university in 1661 by his last pupil, Vincenzo Viviani, are also on display.

In 1931, Albert Einstein wrote a few lines

Marks of Genius Masterpieces from the Collections of the Bodleian Libraries

Stephen Hebron, curator
Weston Library, Oxford, UK.
21 March to 20 September 2015.
<http://genius.bodleian.ox.ac.uk>



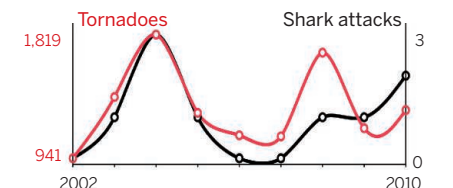
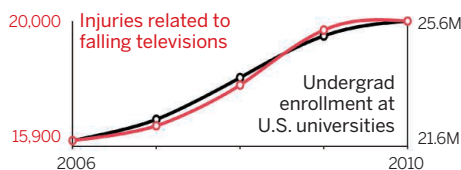
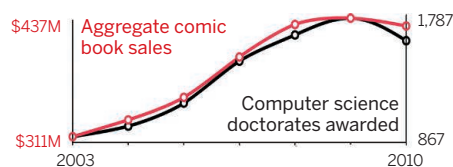
in German on a modest, unheaded sheet of paper, accepting Oxford's offer of an honorary doctorate. The note appears in the accompanying catalog alongside a blackboard chalked by Einstein while delivering three Oxford lectures about relativity in 1931. The blackboard is now a very popular exhibit at the nearby Museum of the History of Science. Less well known is a second, blank Einstein blackboard, kept in the museum's store. Its chalk "marks of genius" were erased by a cleaner: a fate that might have amused Einstein, given the dismissive reception of relativity by many physicists, universities, and the Nobel Prize committee.

10.1126/science.aab1331

REFERENCES

1. S. Hebron, *Marks of Genius: Masterpieces from the Collections of the Bodleian Libraries* (Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, Oxford, 2014).

The reviewer is the author of *Sudden Genius?* and *Genius: A Very Short Introduction*, both published by Oxford University Press. E-mail: andrew.robinson33@virgin.net

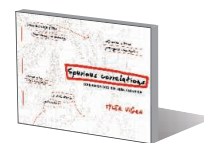


Correlations are critical in scientific analysis, but given enough data, it is possible to find things that correlate, even when they shouldn't. More examples of how not to use statistics can be found on the author's website, tylervigen.com.

STATISTICS

Spurious Correlations

Tyler Vigen
Hachette Books, 2015,
207 pp.



The number of civil engineering doctorates awarded in the United States between 2000 and 2009 was strongly correlated (95.9%) with mozzarella cheese consumption during the same period. Does that mean aspiring engineers should start stockpiling this delicious dairy staple? Of course not—the similarity in variance is purely a coincidence, identified by a technique known as "data dredging," in which one data set is blindly compared to hundreds of others until a correlation is identified. Presented as a series of graphs prepared from real data sets, *Spurious Correlations* serves as a hilarious reminder that correlation most certainly does not equal causation.

10.1126/science.aac5518