

## **“STOLEN BOOKS” AT THE BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY**

**Boston, October 26, 2005**—SAFE | Saving Antiquities for Everyone will host a panel of distinguished speakers to discuss the growing problem of the illicit rare book trade.

On Saturday, October 29, at 10 AM in the Rabb Lecture Hall of the Boston Public Library join a panel of lawyers, scholars, librarians and book dealers who will discuss issues related to stolen rare books. The discussion will cover topics such as who bears the responsibility of policing the world of rare books, and what does the growing problem of stolen rare books tell us about the economics of our cultural heritage.

Though the black market for rare books has existed as long as books have been considered rare and valuable, evidence and trends suggest the problem is a growing issue that threatens our ability to protect and learn from the precious and finite books of another time.

According to INTERPOL, detectives in 181 countries are currently seeking to recover nearly 1700 stolen or missing rare books. Such precious loot includes a first edition *Tres Epistolae de Maculis Solaribus* by Galileo Galilei, published in 1612, and a 1538 volume of *Aesop's Fables*. Many of the stolen books are valued at millions of dollars; for instance, in 2001 a 1623 first folio of Shakespeare's works worth over \$2 million was stolen from the Durham University library.

*The Guardian* recently reported that lay people, wary of the temperamental nature of the stock market, have begun purchasing rare books for reliable investments. This broadening market for rare books has caused prices to soar, and thieves have capitalized on the lucrative trade. All of this means precious written historical artifacts are at risk, and many printed works of art are already lost to the black market.

The panel will include experts on the issue: Nicholas Basbanes, Ken Sanders, Jeff Spurr, David Szewczyk and Michael Thompson. SAFE member Matthew Battles will moderate the panel.

After the lecture guests are invited to a special tour of the Department of Rare Books and Manuscripts at the Boston Public Library, and will be allowed to view a collection of books including the personal library of John Adams, and the library of Thomas Prince. The collections, two of the earliest and largest private library collections in America, suffered losses and thefts before coming to the library.

Attendance is free, and pre-registration for the tour is required. For more information please contact: [itarsis@savingantiquities.org](mailto:itarsis@savingantiquities.org)

### **About SAFE**

SAFE | Saving Antiquities for Everyone creates educational programs and media campaigns to raise public awareness about the importance of preserving cultural heritage worldwide. SAFE is a coalition of professionals in communications, media, and advertising working alongside experts in the academic, legal and law enforcement communities. SAFE has no political affiliations and is sponsored by the New York Foundation for the Arts (NYFA), a 501(c)(3) corporation.