

manuscript and the 1825 manuscript that followed—was not only in service to Jefferson, but was done rather in a semi-official capacity for the university. In other words, the timing of Trist's commission to compile the 1823 catalog was driven primarily by Jefferson's interest in developing a final list of books that would form the University of Virginia's first library. In the event, Trist declined the payment, explaining that his "motive in undertaking it was to gratify Mr Jefferson ... and as part of that gratuitously done by him for the Un[iversit]y."<sup>68</sup>

A further clue regarding the origin and purpose of the 1823 Trist catalog hides in plain sight in Gilreath and Wilson's 1989 account: their observation that the catalog was for many years "mistakenly labeled as a catalog of the library at the University of Virginia." Closer examination of the catalog's provenance and the manuscript itself reveals that this association was not a "mistake," but rather was based on a clearly traceable history that connects the catalog to the university rather than to Jefferson's personal estate. If Trist's manuscript had been privately prepared for Thomas Jefferson, it would most likely have been retained by Jefferson's family among Jefferson's other personal papers and ultimately consigned to the Massachusetts Historical Society along with the rest of the Coolidge Collection—including the 1783 catalog. This was not the case. As Gilreath himself writes in the introduction to his edited collection *The Judgment of Experts*, "provenance is the one unfailing guide when used in conjunction with a critically intelligent examination of the physical properties and text of any document ... when considered along with other methods of checking a document, it will certainly improve the reliability of any conclusion."<sup>69</sup>

Our early examination of the 1823 Trist catalog was conducted using a scan of the document, but when we later examined the manuscript in person we found what is perhaps the catalog's most tantalizing piece of provenance evidence. On the front pastedown in the original binding, the number "41" appears penciled in the upper left corner (fig. 19a). This number matches the method and placement of shelf-marking used in the University of Virginia's first library (see fig. 19b), suggesting that the number indicates the book's subject chapter and shelving location in the Rotunda or in Pavilion VII—a structure on the University of Virginia's quadrilateral "lawn" that housed the university's books before the Rotunda was completed and the books installed under its dome.<sup>70</sup> While the 1823 Trist catalog would likely have been classified in Chapter 40, "Bibliography," the penciled "41" could be the result of human error: Chapter 40 contained only five titles prior to 1826. In contrast, the adjacent Chapter 41, "Philology," contained over 100 titles. In installing the constituent volumes of these two chapters onto their shelves and labelling them, books from Chapter 40 could have been easily

68. "Nicholas P. Trist to James Madison, 5 October 1826," *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/99-02-02-0762>.

69. Gilreath, "Introduction," *The judgment of experts: essays and documents about the investigation of the forging of the Oath of a freeman*, ed. Gilreath (Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 1991), 5.

70. On early shelf marks that survive at the University of Virginia, see Samuel V. Lemley, Neal D. Curtis, and Madeline Zehnder, "Historical Shelf Marks as Sources for Institutional Provenance Research: Reconstructing the University of Virginia's Rotunda Library," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 118, no. 1 (March 2024): 79-101.