

Judith's PhD and the forgeries

Judith is a fellow PhD student at the University of Barchester investigating the nature of certain exhibits in several different international museums: the way they were conserved and the extent to which they can be regarded as authoritative sources for practices in the past. The objects are extremely valuable.

However, early in the fieldwork she confides to you that she has formed the view (with some convincing evidence) that many of these exhibits are not what they were claimed to be: some seem to be forgeries and most of the rest are described in exaggerated terms.

It was not Judith's intention to determine the authenticity of these objects. She innocently discovered this information, but the evidence she has found, you feel, sounds compelling. You are very concerned on her behalf.

The Department has set great store by developing its relations with the major national museums, the Director of one is due to receive an honorary degree in the next few months and Judith's work cannot be sustained without their co-operation. But, if it were to be shown and widely known that these exhibits are not what they were claimed to be, there would be an international outcry and the insurance policies of the museums would be rendered null and void. The costs in several respects could be massive. And (you reflect) it could not only prevent further co-operative research projects with these and probably many other museums but also destroy the rationale of her PhD topic.

Judith reminds you that several of the museums have allowed access on the condition that she sign a declaration to allow them to scrutinise her findings before they are included in her thesis.

Team task

- 1. Discuss the ethical and political issues involved, and, on the acetate provided,**
- 2. Indicate the key points in your advice to Judith**