

Is This Harvard Magazine Article Incorrect?

Article By:

Keith Paul Bishop

There have been numerous news reports about the discovery of an original Magna Carta at the Harvard Law School Library, including this [article](#) in *Harvard Magazine*. According to these reports, a document previously categorized as a “copy” of the famous charter has recently been determined to be the seventh known original of King Edward I’s 1300 Magna Carta.

Over the years, I have published several posts about Magna Carta, including [Section 11 Class Actions And The Magna Carta](#), [Non-Disparagement, The Magna Carta And Yelp](#), [You Might Be Surprised By These Words In Magna Carta](#), and [Why The Wall Street Journal Is Wrong About The Magna Carta](#).

I do have two cavils regarding *Harvard Magazine*’s article. The article asserts:

A group of rebellious barons forced King John to sign it, establishing fundamental rights such as due process and *habeas corpus*, a legal concept that guarantees freedom from illegal imprisonment.

Not true. King John, aka John Lackland, did not actually sign the charter. He authenticated the charter by affixing his seal.

Second, the article uses the definite article “the” when referring to the charter. The charter was written in Latin, which does not use articles. This mistake can even be found in the California Education Code Section 33540 which requires that the [Instructional Quality Commission](#) “consider” incorporating “The Magna Carta” into the history-social science framework developed by the History-Social Science Curriculum Framework and Criteria Committee.

© 2010-2025 Allen Matkins Leck Gamble Mallory & Natsis LLP

National Law Review, Volume XV, Number 136

Source URL: <https://natlawreview.com/article/harvard-magazine-article-incorrect>