

Australia's only Shakespeare First Folio heading to Kiama

16/6/2016

Local Shakespeare fans can get up close and personal with Australia's only original copy of the first publication of the Bard's plays - known as the First Folio 1623 – when it visits Kiama Library on Monday 20 June 2016.

“Many people are surprised that the State Library holds such a rare global treasure in its renowned collection, and I am always thrilled to say that the Library in fact holds the nation's only complete set of Shakespeare's First, Second, Third and Fourth folios,” says NSW State Librarian & Chief Executive, Alex Byrne.

As part of the Library's Shakespeare 400 celebration, commemorating the 400th anniversary of the Bard's death in April 2016, the Library has released a fully digitised version of the First Folio and its website. The First Folio will also visit a selection of regional libraries this year including Kiama, Dubbo and Lismore.

The First Folio, featuring 36 plays, was donated to the Library in 1885 by two English brothers, Richard and George Tangey, who were said to be “greatly struck by the fine collection of works in the [then] Sydney Free Public Library...” during a recent visit (*European Mail*, 1885).

Apart from the Bible, the First Folio is considered the most influential book ever published in the English language. While 750 copies are believed to have been printed, only 234 are known to survive today and very few of these are available to access online.

The First Folio was published in 1623, seven years after Shakespeare's death, by his fellow actors John Heminge and Henry Condell who wanted commemorate his significant productions.

According to the State Library's rare book expert Maggie Patton, 18 of Shakespeare's early plays, including *The Tempest* and *Twelfth Night*, could have been lost forever!

“Plays back in the 16th and early 17th century, including Shakespeare's plays, weren't considered important enough to publish,” says Ms Patton.

“There are no manuscripts of these plays available in the Bard's own hand so the First Folio is the closest a reader can get to the original source.

“Unlike modern editions, the plays in the First Folio have very few stage directions. And no two folios are alike due to inconsistencies in the proofing of pages – people will come across numerous mistakes when they access our folio online, but that just adds to its uniqueness.”



Media Release

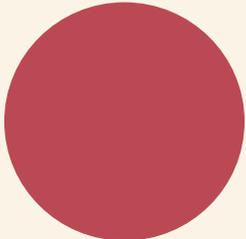


The Library's collection of four folios and other extraordinary Shakespeariana will be on public display in its Amaze Gallery for the month of April, as part of the Library's major Shakespeare 400 celebration. From June 2016 the First Folio will visit select public libraries in regional NSW.

Maggie Patton are available for interviews.

For more information, interviews or images, please contact:

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Shakespeare