

Media Release



Much ado about Shakespeare & Cervantes revealed 396 years after their deaths!

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Marking the death of two literary giants Shakespeare and Cervantes on **23 April**, the State Library of NSW is staging a 'fan day' to celebrate their extraordinary legacy and retell the incredible story of how 18 of Shakespeare's original plays were nearly lost forever!

"Plays back in the 16th century and early 17th century, including Shakespeare's plays, weren't considered important enough to publish," says Maggie Patton, State Library rare books expert.

"Shakespeare's fellow actors John Heminge and Henry Condell were determined to commemorate Shakespeare's significant productions and organised for his collected works - commonly known as the First Folio - to be published in 1623, seven years after his death," says Ms Patton.

"It's unimaginable to consider works such as *The Tempest* or *Twelfth Night* not being part of our language and literary history."

The State Library of NSW holds the only known copy of the rare First Folio in Australia – titled *Mr. William Shakespeares comedies, histories, & tragedies*. This rare volume along with the Second, Third and Fourth Folios, also held by the State Library, will be on show for the event.

"There are no original manuscripts in the Bard's hand so this volume is the closest a reader can get to the original source," says Ms Patton.

Spanish writer, Miguel de Cervantes will also be honoured for his acclaimed *Don Quixote* novel. Cervantes is credited as the writer of the first modern novel and the State Library of NSW holds the largest known collection of the author's material in Australia, including our oldest English translation edition from 1620.

An impressive publication of *Don Quixote* illustrated by Salvador Dali is among the State Library's collection of over 1,000 editions, housed in the stunning Friends Room.

The 'fan day' will be held in the State Library's Shakespeare and Friends Rooms from 11am to 3pm on Monday 23 April. Free, no bookings required.

This event is part of the National Year of Reading in 2012 – an initiative of the Australian Library and Information Association and State and public libraries across Australia.

Maggie Patton is great media talent and available for interviews.

For more information, and interviews please contact:

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