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First Folio Press and Promotion

First Folio! The Book that Gave Us Shakespeare

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Much Ado About the First Folio at Boise State

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In the afternoon of Sat, Aug 20, the Ron and Linda Yanke Family Research Park building was alive with the First Folio in Idaho Grand Opening Carnival.

“First Folio” refers to a collection of William Shakespeare’s plays that were printed and published in 1623. The Folger Shakespeare Library, located in the District of Columbia, has collected 82 of the 235 known Folio’s in the world.

Now, in recognition of the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare’s death in 1616, the Folger Library is celebrating the playwright’s legacy by lending out their copies of the First Folio to be viewed at one place in every state in the U.S.—including the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Idaho’s copy was sent to Boise State.

The entrance to the exhibit was opened after a grand ribbon cutting ceremony. Visitors filed in to see the nearly four-hundred-year-old book, which, behind thick glass, was open to the pages that contained one of the most famous passages of Shakespeare: Prince Hamlet’s monologue.

Although the First Folio's appearance at Boise State has been quite celebrated, proving eligibility to the Folger Library was no small task.

"It was a quite a concentrated application process," said Gwyn Hervochoon, librarian and archivist with Albertsons Library. "We started working on it in July of 2015 and we submitted it in October."

Boise State had to prove its eligibility to the Folger Library through an intense application. For example, the exhibit room had to be maintained at a specific temperature and humidity level for an extended period of time, among many other things.

The work paid off and the event attracted many students and community members alike, including Chris Kletke, a Boise State Alumnus, and Brian Kreis, a sophomore history major.

"I was really energized by seeing the exhibit," said Kletke. "I'm a big antique buff, seeing something like this was really interesting." This feeling was shared by Kreis. "This exhibit is really unique, seeing as Idaho doesn't have a lot of European exhibits dating back to the Renaissance. It was great to see it," Kreis said.

Shakespeare lovers like Kletke and Kreis stood in line for quite some time to see the exhibit. Despite the wait, more and more visitors came to stand in line.

Outside, the opening for the viewing was kicked off with a carnival, complete with music, Shakespeare readings and even a band of Renaissance pirates. This group, aptly named the "Shipwrecked Pirates," volunteered their time to entertain and even cool off crowd members by way of soaked sponges for those who were willing to put themselves in the stockades.

"We do it for our passion for history, as well as just for the fun of it," said the leader of the group, who plays Captain La Poo Poo. He and the rest of his crew were joined by sword fighters, weapons crafters and all sorts of Renaissance enthusiasts, who filled the carnival space with tents and booths.

"It's incredibly exciting to see this many people here," said Hervochoon. "Even when we first found out that it would be coming here, we had students approaching us about it. So we've definitely seen a reaction from students here on campus."

The exhibit is open to the public for viewing at the Yanke Research Park building until September 21, at which point it will return to the Folger Library in the District of Columbia.

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