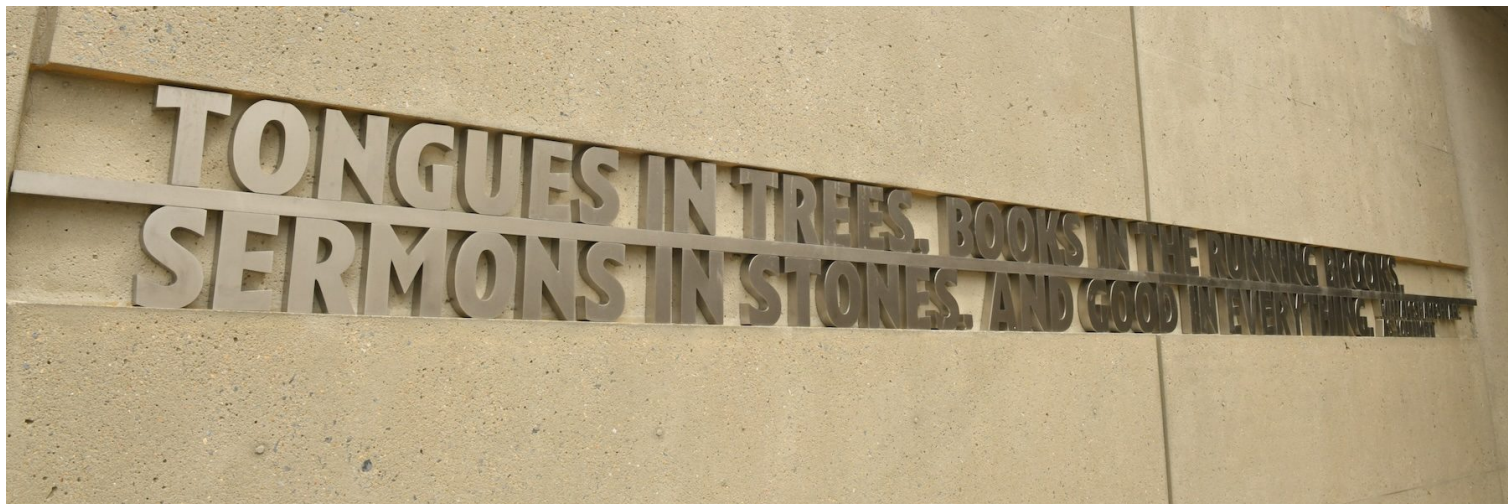




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Folger Shakespeare Library Reopens after Major Four Year Renovation

Press release: June 21, 2024 — Washington, DC

The home of the world's largest collection of Shakespeare materials aims to connect with 21st-century audiences with a radically more accessible and welcoming building

The Folger Shakespeare Library, which houses the world's largest Shakespeare collection, reopened today after a four-year renovation that transformed its historic home on Capitol Hill with a bold and accessible design. The private ribbon-cutting ceremony included numerous VIPs including Washington, DC Mayor Muriel Bowser, Librarian of Congress Dr. Carla Hayden, poet Kyle Dargan, Folger Director Dr. Michael Witmore, Board Chair D. Jarrett Arp, and other members of the Folger's Board of Directors. Dame Karen Pierce, British Ambassador to the United States, read a special congratulatory message from King Charles III. The ribbon was cut by Witmore, Bowser, DC Council member Charles Allen (Ward 6), Arp and board members Florence Cohen, Eugene Pickard, Jr., and Susan Sachs Goldman, with longest-serving

Press contacts

Colleen
Kennedy,
202.544.4600
x703 /
[ckennedy@fo
lger.edu](mailto:ckennedy@folger.edu)
(mailto:ckenn
edy@folger.e
du)

Garland
Scott,
202.675.0342
/

[gscott@folge](mailto:gscott@folger.edu)
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The Folger welcomes visitors of all ages and provides numerous opportunities to engage directly with its world-class collection and the works of William Shakespeare. For the first time, all 82 copies of the Folger's First Folios, the first published collection of all Shakespeare's plays, will be displayed together; the Folger's First Folio collection is the largest in the world, and First Folios preserved 18 of Shakespeare's plays—including *Macbeth* and *Julius Caesar*—that may have otherwise been lost forever.

"Our reimagined space allows us to bring out the wonders from our archives and provides a blueprint for visitors to engage with Shakespeare in new and interactive ways through the power of performance, the wonder of exhibitions, and the excitement of path-breaking research... all in *one* building," said Folger Director Michael Witmore.

The \$80.5 million building expansion, designed by the Philadelphia-based architectural firm of KieranTimberlake (<https://kierantimberlake.com/>), has made the historic building more accessible, welcoming, and dynamic for all, from teachers and students of Shakespeare to theater and literature lovers to those who are curious to know more.

Highlights of the renovation include:

- A new public wing, the Adams Pavilion, with 12,000 square feet of space, houses two modern, state-of-the-art exhibition halls: the **Shakespeare Exhibition Hall** and the **Stuart and Mimi Rose Rare Book and Manuscript Exhibition Hall**.
- Three commissioned artworks by contemporary artists offer visitors creative entry points through which to consider Shakespeare and the early modern world.
 - An intricately-designed black mirror from renowned artist **Fred Wilson** (<https://www.pacegallery.com/artists/fred-wilson/>) titled *God me such uses send, Not to pick bad from bad, but by bad mend* reflects upon the play *Othello*, is installed opposite a famous portrait of Queen Elizabeth I, and archival materials associated with 19th-century Black actor Ira Aldridge
 - A 15-foot-long paper and light sculpture, featuring more

Peter Eramo,
Jr.,
202.675.0344
/
peramo@folger.edu
(mailto:peramo@folger.edu)

Karen Baratz,
240.497.1811 /
karen@baratzpr.com
(mailto:karen@baratzpr.com)

than 250 pieces of handcrafted paper, entitled *Cloud of Imagination* from innovative German artist Anke Neumann (<https://www.lichtpapier.de/index.html>)

- A new poem by US poet Laureate and Pulitzer Prize-winner Rita Dove (<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/rita-dove>) welcomes visitors to the Folger and encourages them to “Clear your calendars. Pocket your notes.” as they follow the garden path down to the West Entrance
- Lush new gardens— designed by landscape architecture firm OLIN (<https://www.theolinstudio.com/>) that include native plants and plants referenced in Shakespeare’s works—lead to new below-ground entrances on both ends of the building.
- Coming soon is a new café, *Quill & Crumb*, located in the Folger’s historic Great Hall and managed by Constellation Culinary Group, that will offer coffee, lunch, grab-and-go options, and a full-service bar and light bites in the evening.
- An expanded gift shop offering mementos and merchandise inspired by the Folger and its collections.
- The Reading Room features new ergonomic furniture designed by Luke Hughes (<https://www.lukehughes.co.uk/us-custom-bespoke-furniture>)
- Enhanced accessibility and upgrades throughout the building including: accessible new entrances on the east and west sides of the building for visitors using mobility devices and families using strollers; new ramps up to the plinth where visitors can see the Shakespeare bas reliefs and other historic details up close; inside, elevator service to all public spaces; new and expanded all-gender restrooms; and state-of-the-art new HVAC systems.

Imprints in Time, the inaugural show in a new special exhibitions gallery, is drawn entirely from the peerless collection of Dayton, Ohio based collectors Stuart and Mimi Rose. The 52 works on display at the Folger represent the breadth of Rose’s impressive collection, documenting some of the greatest achievements of writing and creativity across many centuries. Among the works that visitors will encounter are an Egyptian Book of the Dead from the first century BCE; a first edition of Nicolaus Copernicus’ *De revolutionibus* (1543), which first proposed the heliocentric view of our planetary system; a first edition of the most notorious banned book of the 17th century—Galileo Galilei’s *Dialogo*, which defended Copernicus’ view of the solar system and was inscribed

by Galileo himself; a first trade edition of *Winnie-the-Pooh*, inscribed by author A. A. Milne to his son; J.R.R. Tolkien's page proofs, corrected in his hand, for *The Lord of the Rings*; an advance press copy of Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech; and a section of the Apollo 11 flight plan that Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin had with them on the Moon.

How to visit:

After an event-filled opening weekend (<https://www.folger.edu/whats-on/programs/grand-reopening/>), the Folger's regular operating hours for the building will begin:

Monday: closed

Tuesday: 11 am–6 pm

Wednesday: 11 am–6 pm

Thursday: 11 am–9 pm

Friday: 11 am–9 pm

Saturday: 11 am–9 pm

Sunday: 11 am–6 pm

Hours may be extended Sunday, Tuesday, and Wednesday if performances are scheduled in the theater. Tours will be offered at Noon and 4pm Sunday–Wednesday, with an additional tour offered Thursday–Saturday at 7pm.

The Folger recommends visitors use **timed-entry passes** (<https://www.folger.edu/visit/plan-your-visit/after-our-building-reopens/#admission>) to ensure entry into the Folger's new exhibition halls at the time of their choosing. Passes may be booked up to three months in advance. Admission to the Folger is free, though a donation of \$15 per person is suggested to support operating costs.

The Reading Room reopens on Tuesday, June 25, with its own **hours of operation** (<https://www.folger.edu/research/use-the-library/>).

A full press kit with additional background information about the Folger and images can be found **HERE**

(<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/9etku6xw3owfid03tu9sg/AEABS3KiV2KR2nSBa6cxHA4?rlkey=uu3yzn0fup7fkzfsy0d2gin1o&e=1&st=sfdqdb5&dl=0>).

About Folger Shakespeare Library

The Folger Shakespeare Library makes Shakespeare's stories and the world in which he lived accessible. Anchored by the world's largest Shakespeare collection, the Folger is a place where curiosity and creativity are embraced, and conversation is always encouraged. Visitors

to the Folger can choose how they want to experience the arts and humanities, from interactive exhibitions to captivating performances, and from pathbreaking research to transformative educational programming. The Folger welcomes everyone to connect in their own way—from communities throughout Washington DC to communities across the globe. Learn more at [folger.edu](https://www.folger.edu/) (<https://www.folger.edu/>).

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201 East Capitol Street, SE
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