

‘So long lives this’:
A Celebration of Shakespeare’s Life and Works, 1616–2016

Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, Toronto,
 January 25–May 28, 2016

THE THOMAS FISHER Rare Book Library of the University of Toronto is providing an opportunity this spring that occurs once in the proverbial blue moon. There is only one copy of the First Folio of Shakespeare’s plays in Canada, and it resides at the Fisher. The library also owns copies of the Second, Third and Fourth Folios. All four are currently on display in an exhibition marking the 450th anniversary of Shakespeare’s birth and the 400th anniversary of his death.

The introductory words of the exhibition’s title are from Sonnet 18, which begins, “Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?” and ends with “So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see, / So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.” The words are fitting for the title of this exhibition.

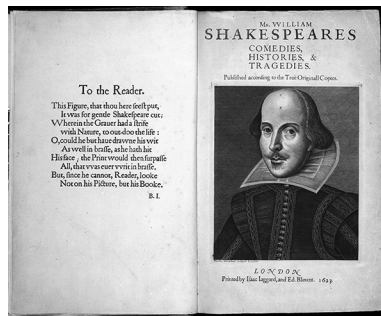
This exhibition should be seen by all, but especially by those interested in the history of printing and publishing. There are three ways to experience this exhibition. First, there are the books to be seen in the library’s display cases. Second, if you cannot visit the Fisher to see the exhibition itself, you can download an audio tour narrated by the curators from the library’s website (fisher.library.utoronto.ca).

Over the course of 50 minutes, this audio tour offers an in-depth look at the exhibition. This is more than a sound bite! You hear the voices of the curators introducing the different display cases that house the constituent parts of the exhibition. I was engaged by their excitement and enthusiasm. This is an excellent place to start for anyone thinking of visiting the exhibition. It is also a place to return after your visit.

Since you can download it, you can also bring it along with you and listen as you look. It is set up such that the listener who wants to hear the discussion about the contents of a particular case can go there immediately. The library’s website also provides a briefer YouTube video of the exhibition narrated by Scott Schofield, the lead curator, which includes pictures of the exhibition.

The third way to experience the exhibition is through the exquisite catalogue designed by Stan Bevington and printed by Coach House Press. It is a joy to take home and read (I’ll come back to this).

The curatorial team for this exhibition consists of Scott Schofield, Peter W.M. Blayney, Alan Galey and Marjorie Rubright. All bring impressive credentials to this



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The famous First Folio (1623).

project. They have mined the rich resources of the University of Toronto to create an engaging series of collections in each display case. The first two cases present visitors with *Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories & Tragedies. Published according to the True Originall Copies (1623)*. This is the First Folio. Next to it are the Second, Third and Fourth Folios, published in 1632, 1664 and 1685, respectively. With them are the siblings of the First Folio, books that were on the presses of the Jaggard family at the same time as the First Folio.

Many of us assume that printers did not start printing another book before finishing the first one. That notion is a mistake. Printers frequently had several books on the go at the same time on the same presses. Visitors will discover among the siblings of the First Folio William

Burton, *The Description of Leicester Shire*; André Favyn, *The Theater of Honour and Knight-hood*; Augustine Vincent, *A Discoverie of Errours in the First Edition of the Catalogue of Nobility*, published by Raphe Brooke; and Thomas Wilson, *A Christian Dictionary*. Such a range among one printer's activities at one moment in time!

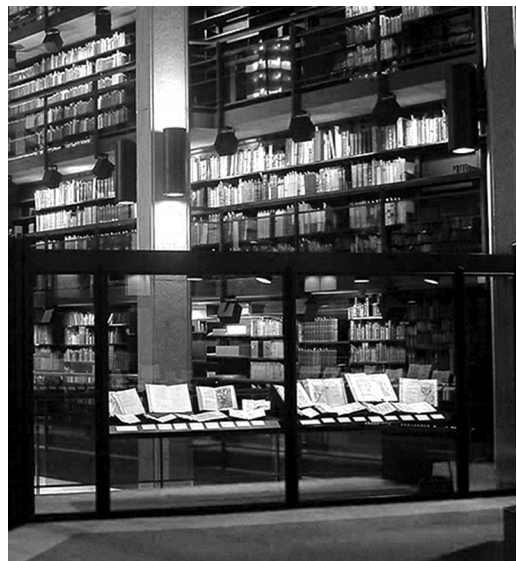
The third case holds other works printed or published by the Jaggard family, further broadening the picture of a printer's projects. Case four holds books that were among the sources Shakespeare used, including Holinshed's *Chronicles*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romanes*.

Case five contains books that show the borrowing of language in Shakespeare's time. Case six is centred on the Mediterranean world, where many of Shakespeare's plays were set and with which England at the time was becoming more engaged. The seventh and eighth cases, as well as the Maclean Hunter Room downstairs, show the publication of Shakespeare's plays from the 17th to the 20th century. Among the 20th-century items are Barbarian Press's *Play of Pericles*, plus some of the preliminary sketches for pages in that book.

The catalogue that accompanies this exhibition is substantial, checking in at 96 pages. It includes essays by the four curators, all experts in their fields. Anne Dondertman, associate chief librarian for special collections and director of the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, supplies an introduction that, among other things, tells the story of Fisher's First Folio.

The first essay is "The Publication of Shakespeare," by Peter W.M. Blayney. Next come two essays by Scott Schofield: "Inside the Premises: William Jaggard and the Intricacies of Printing in Early Seventeenth-Century England" and "At Work: Imagining Shakespeare's Textual Engagements." Next, two essays by Marjorie Rubright: "Shakespeare's Tongues: Henry v and the Babel of English" and "Shakespeare's Global Imagination: The Stranger 'of here and everywhere,' Othello, the Moor of Venice." The final essay is "Mediation and Imagination: Shakespeare and the Book Since the Nineteenth Century," by Alan Gayley.

The essays are illustrated with several items in the exhibition, making the catalogue



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Display cases in the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto.

a companion volume well worth the visitor's time to read (complete with helpful notes). Then comes something too often omitted from exhibition catalogues: a list organized by display case of the items in the exhibition. Closing the volume, after the photo credits and notes about the authors, is a colour-coded timeline illustrating works printed and published by the Jaggards (1594–1627) that lists year, genre, printer, publisher, physical format, first edition and author.

The catalogue is as handsome a production as we have come to expect from the Fisher, not to mention Stan Bevington and Coach House Press. Gracefully acknowledging the folios present in the exhibition, Bevington has used folio sheet dimensions for the catalogue format. In addition to the usual softcover (\$30), there is also an issue in hardcover of 100 copies (\$90) with the added bonus of Sonnet 18 printed letterpress by Coach House Press on a Saint-Armand mould-made laid paper.

This exhibition is well worth the trip to the Fisher. And regardless of whether or not you can attend, do not miss the audio tour and printed catalogue.

~ REVIEWED BY CHESTER GRYSKI