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REWRITING THE BOOK THE LIBRARY OF BIRMINGHAM

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Brian Gambles, Project Director, Library of Birmingham

Birmingham has always been a city that has valued libraries and the city's Central Library, built in 1974, was one of the biggest in Europe and welcomed a huge number of visitors through its doors every day - children and adults reading for pleasure, as well as students and adults hungry to learn.

The new Library of Birmingham is taking library services to a whole new level, redefining what a library can be in the 21st century. It will provide more and better services, which can be accessed not only by residents of Birmingham and the wider West Midlands, but, due to enhanced technology, by people across the UK and around the world. By partnering with other organisations, such as the Birmingham Repertory Theatre and the University of Birmingham, we are enhancing what we can offer to our visitors.

We believe the new library will become a major cultural destination for the city, where people are able to enjoy exhibitions, events, activities, performances and talks, as well as pick up the latest bestseller and research local history, drawing on the library's extensive collections. The Discovery Season, running from September to December 2013, sets a high standard for the range of installations, performances and events which the library will continue to host in the future.

We expect to welcome over three million visitors a year, with even more online – and very much hope you will be among them.

Brian Gambles
Director
Library of Birmingham

THE NEW LIBRARY OF BIRMINGHAM

The £188.8 million Library of Birmingham stands on Centenary Square, at the heart of Birmingham; an area of the city not far from New Street Station which is currently undergoing major refurbishment. It has been built on the site of a former car park and is joined with the neighbouring Birmingham Repertory Theatre.

Dutch architects Mecanoo designed the building, the award-winning support services and construction company Carillion was the principal contractor, and Capita Symonds was the project manager.

The new library has ten levels: nine above ground and one lower ground floor. The first to eighth floors of the building are wrapped by an intricate metal façade, reflecting the gasometers, tunnels, canals and viaducts which fuelled Birmingham's industrial growth.

Highlights of the new building include a studio theatre seating 300 people, a performance area and children's spaces, two outdoor garden terraces, an outdoor amphitheatre in Centenary Square, and a panoramic viewing gallery offering stunning views from one of the highest points in the city.

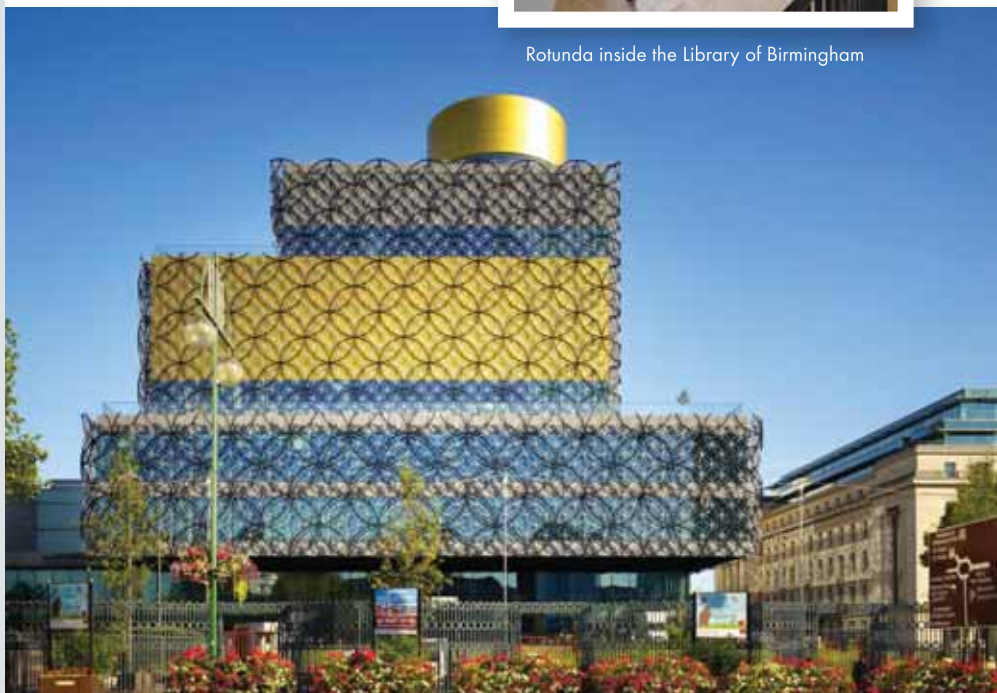
A 'Golden Box' of secure archive storage occupies two levels of the building, within which the city's internationally significant collection of archives, photography and rare books is housed. Through a programme of exhibitions, select parts of the collection will go on display, while a digital gallery is able to showcase the collections on large screens.

A new website and social network presence will allow the new Library of Birmingham to provide access to its world-class resources to everyone, no matter where they are in the world, or what the time of day.

The Library of Birmingham in Centenary Square



Rotunda inside the Library of Birmingham



THE HISTORY OF BIRMINGHAM'S PUBLIC LIBRARY



The Shakespeare Memorial Library, c 1885



Architect John Madin (2nd right) with model of Central Library, c 1972

A decade after the Free Libraries Act was put in place in 1850, Birmingham ratepayers agreed that they wanted a public library, and a Free Libraries Committee was set up. The committee wanted a central reference library with reading and newsrooms, a museum and art gallery and four distinct libraries. The resulting Central Lending Library and Art Gallery opened on 6 September 1865, with the Reference Library opening just over a year later.

George Dawson, the great nonconformist preacher and 'inventor' of the civic gospel, which advocated the responsibility of local government for improving the lives of the inhabitants of towns, spoke at the opening of the library, saying:

'The opening of this glorious library, the first fruits of a clear understanding that a great town exists to discharge towards the people of that town the duties that a great nation exists to discharge towards the people of that nation...We are a Corporation, who have undertaken the highest duty that is possible to us; we have made provision for our people - for all our people - and we have made a provision of God's greatest and best gifts unto Man.'

The new Central Library was a great success and soon expanded. However, disaster struck when on 11 January 1879, a fire was sparked during maintenance work. The fire spread rapidly and the building was destroyed. Only 1,000 of its stock of 50,000 items were saved, despite many people helping to bring out books, including the Mayor, Alderman Jesse Collings, who was one of the first to arrive and rescued some of the Shakespeare Collection:

'His worship showed the greatest presence of mind, and himself broke the glass of some of the Shakespeare cases, and helped to get out the books. The Mayor would have stayed longer, but it would have been at great personal peril, and the firemen arriving at the time forcibly brought him out.'

Amongst those books saved were 500 volumes from the Shakespeare Collection, an original edition of Don Quixote, and the medieval manuscript 'The Gilde of St. Anne of Knowle'.

In 1882 the second Central Library was opened in its place and this remained the city's main library until 1974. On 12 January of that

year the Rt Hon Harold Wilson, MP (at that time Leader of the Opposition), opened the famous Brutalist-style Central Library designed by architect John Madin. At the time, the building was thought to be the largest non-national public library in Europe.

This library remained open until summer 2013 and saw major changes in library services, with the introduction of films, music, ebooks and public internet access. It remained one of the largest and busiest public libraries in Europe until its phased closure, attracting around 4,000 visitors a day. Changes in demand and technology meant that by the early 21st century Birmingham City Council recognised the need for a new library and the Library of Birmingham opened its doors on 3 September 2013.

The Shakespeare Memorial Room

One room links these previous incarnations of Birmingham's Central Library with the new building. When the first Central Library was rebuilt after the fire, a Shakespeare Memorial Library was opened to house the beginnings of what would come to be a world-class collection of materials relating to Shakespeare. In 1986 the previously dismantled Shakespeare Memorial Library was re-erected in the 1970s-built Central Library and the room has been restored and moved in its entirety to the new building.

The Shakespeare Memorial Room is now situated in a rooftop rotunda on the new library. It retains the wooden panelling, glass cabinets and elaborate ceiling with its elegant visual references to Shakespeare's own Elizabethan age, which were all found in the original Victorian room.



Detail of the newly restored Shakespeare Memorial Room

The Library of Birmingham is home to internationally renowned archives and collections, which are stored in a specially designed and environmentally secure 'Golden Box', visible from the outside of the building on Centenary Square.

The collections include not only one of the world's largest Shakespeare collections, but also the Parker Collection of Children's Books and Games, the Early and Fine Printing Collection and the Boulton and Watt archive.

The archive storage is state-of-the-art – from the gold coloured anodised aluminium panels on the outside, to the high-performance insulation and air-management system on the inside.

The archives and heritage collections will be more easily available than previously, through the digitisation of items, enabling them to be viewed online, and the public display of items in exhibitions around the library. The purpose-built new Search Room will enable those who are interested to readily request and access items from storage.

Library collections which can be accessed include:

The Boulton and Watt Archive

The Boulton and Watt Collection is the most significant collection related to the Industrial Revolution in the world. In total it comprises around 29,000 engine drawings, about 550 volumes of letters, books, order and account books, and upwards of 20,000 letters received from customers, dating from the formation of their company in 1774 to its closure in the 1890s. Items include a drawing from the patent specification of the steam engine and a notebook key by James Watt, which contains his drawing of the kettle and details of his experiments on latent heat.



Letter to Matthew Boulton from the Royal Bank of Scotland, 1799

This archive and the associated James Watt Papers and Matthew Boulton Papers comprise an unparalleled resource for economic and scientific historians of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. While Boulton and Watt are most famous for the invention of the steam engine, from 1788 they also ran the Soho Mint in Birmingham, manufacturing currency for the UK and other countries around the world.

The Sir Benjamin Stone Collection

The Sir Benjamin Stone Collection consists of 22,000 photographs, over 600 stereoscopic prints, 2,500 lantern slides, 1,700 glass negatives and over one hundred albums and scrapbooks. Sir Benjamin Stone was a Victorian Birmingham industrialist and MP for Birmingham East, who was famous for his photographic documentation of England and the English, creating a record of the English and their environment. His work has inspired more contemporary photographers whose works the library has acquired,



Horn Dance at Abbots Bromley, Staffordshire, 1899.

© Birmingham City Council, Library & Archives Service

including Daniel Meadows and Homer Sykes, enabling the library to map the relationship between Stone and subsequent generations of British documentary photographers.

The Library of Birmingham is unique amongst public libraries in holding a national photography collection of international importance, with over two million photographic stills.

The Parker Collection

This unique collection of games played by children and families over 150 years ago was donated to Birmingham Central Library in 1950 by Bewdley residents Mr and Mrs JF Parker, who collected Victorian children's books and games. It features an array of fun games with which Victorian children would have whiled away their afternoons, including a beautifully illustrated game called The Young Naturalist, designed to encourage children to learn about the world around them, Every Day Things, a Victorian word game, and Race to the Ocean Coast, which challenges players to race from Paddington to Penzance, Birkenhead or Fishguard. A number of school and adventure stories have since been added and the collection now contains rare books and games dating from 1538 to the present day.



The Young Naturalist game

© Library of Birmingham

The Archives of the Birmingham Repertory Theatre

The Library of Birmingham also houses the archives of the Birmingham Repertory Theatre and of the REP's founder Sir Barry Jackson. The REP celebrates its centenary this year, and is one of the country's most famous repertory theatres. Items in the collection include photographs of well-known names who started their careers in Birmingham, such as Laurence Olivier, Paul Schofield and Dame Peggy Ashcroft, as well as remnants and memorabilia from performances at the REP over its prestigious 100-year history.

Tracing Individuals – John Baskerville

Through the library's various collections it is possible to piece together the lives of significant individuals such as John Baskerville (1705/6 – 75), a local figure with a worldwide reputation. He made eighteenth-century Birmingham a city without typographic equal, changed the course of type design and emancipated printers the world over. The typeface which bears his name is still used today. Items connected to him which can be found in the library archives include books that he printed, letters, ephemera, booksellers' catalogues, news cuttings, a piece of his shroud and the Baskerville slate, which advertised Baskerville's early career as a stone carver.

Literary Collections

As well as the historic collections in the Library of Birmingham's archives, the library is also home to world-class collections of Literature, Books, Early and Fine Printing.

The Literature Collection is one of the most distinguished and extensive held by a public library. It includes war poetry and children's books as well as one of the world's most comprehensive Shakespearean collections, which comprises 43,000 books, including copies of the First, Second, Third and Fourth Folio editions and many rare, early and valuable editions of individual plays published before 1709.

The library's Early and Fine Printing Collections incorporate over 8,200 books printed before 1701, including splendid examples of early atlases, bookbinding from the 15th century, 4,500 examples of fine printing, outstanding hand-coloured illustrated books and two 17th century parish libraries. Of particular note in this collection are J J Audubon's *Birds of America*, one of the world's largest books, only 200 copies of which were ever printed, and three perfect copies of *Cordiale* or the *Four Last Things* printed in 1479 by England's first printer William Caxton.

Highlights from the Collections

The Shakespeare First Folio

The first collected edition of many of Shakespeare's works was published in 1623 and includes 36 of his plays. Around 750 copies were first printed and it originally sold for £1. Today it is worth in excess of £2m, making it one of the Library of Birmingham's most valuable books.

James Watt's Notebook, 1765-1814

The papers of James Watt, held in the Library of Birmingham, include a number of his experiment notebooks. They show that Watt's enquiring mind continued to remain curious about the world around him. His experiments on the possibilities of steam power were meticulously documented up until his death in 1819.

Drawing of John Baskerville

What happened to Birmingham printer John Baskerville after his death was even more remarkable than his life. He died in 1775, but was dug up in 1820 and put on display. The drawing made of his remains by Thomas Underwood on 15 August 1829, which is in the Library of Birmingham's collections, is accompanied by a portion of Baskerville's shroud, which is said to be cursed after a surgeon from Newhall Street, who cut the section of shroud from around Baskerville's body and placed it in his coat pocket, died a few days later.



Drawing of John Baskerville and a fragment of his shroud

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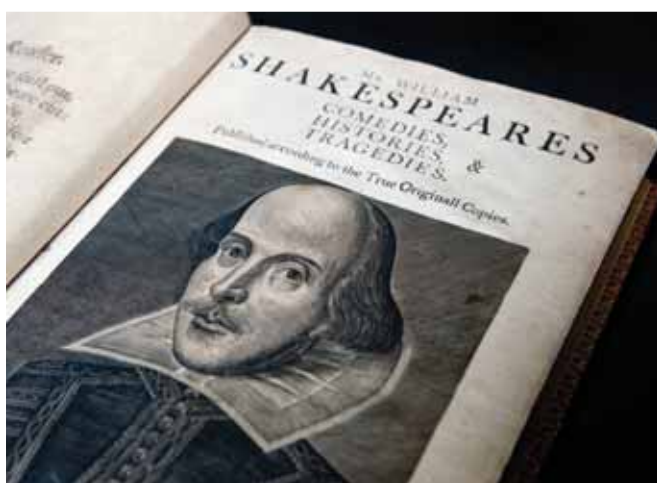
Golden Eagle from J J Audubon's *Birds of America*

Birds of America was the creation of naturalist John James Audubon. It features 435 colour engravings of every American bird species. The eagle's unusual position is because of Audubon's desire to portray all the birds at life-size, and also explains why the finished volume measures 1.3m by 2m when opened.



Colour engraving from *Birds of America*

© Birmingham City Council, Library & Archives Service



Shakespeare First Folio

© Library of Birmingham

© Birmingham City Council, Library & Archives Service



Mr. Henry Matthews (afterwards Lord Llandaff) addressing the electors at Nechells Green, Birmingham, General Election of 1892

The Library of Birmingham's collections provide a wealth of information for those wanting to find out more about Birmingham and the West Midlands, whether they're looking for information about their ancestors, want to see what their district was like a hundred years ago, or find out about significant events in the area's history. The archives are home to public records, back issues of Birmingham newspapers and a vast array of unique documents donated by individuals to the library over the years. All of the library's collections give a glimpse of the region in their own way, whether they are photographs of the city in the photographic archive or sheet music for silent movies used in a Birmingham theatre a century ago.



The Library of Birmingham's new 'Dozens and Trails' App

Digital access to the library's collections

A number of items from the library's collections have been digitised, so that you can browse the collections wherever you are – in Birmingham or Bangalore, at home, at work, or on the bus! The library is also exploring other ways of accessing the collections online. For example, a new 'Dozens and Trails' mobile app shares the expert knowledge of library staff through 'Dozens' - groups of 12 connected items representing the library in some way, and 'Trails' - theme-based tours of 12 illustrated sites mapped around the city. More innovations like this will be developed over the coming years.

Matthew Tye, a 'Face' and ambassador for the Library of Birmingham, writes about using the library's collections:

'One of the great assets of the new Library of Birmingham is its full collections of reference material such as the volumes of the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. I used this collection numerous times during my work as a researcher assisting the production of Volume 32 of the *Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman*, a key historical figure in the life of Birmingham and the UK. This is one of the largest collections of letters that exist in the English language and still today letters are discovered all over the world.

'On 12 January 1846 Newman wrote to his contemporary John Bloxam: 'Before I left Birmingham, I gave directions to the Birmingham Banking Company, Bennett's Hill, agent Mr Beaumont – with whom my account lies, not with the Old Bank, Oxford – to receive Crawley's payment in my absence ... I also gave full directions for the Bank's paying you back the rest of the £300.' Today, there is no trace of a Birmingham Banking Company on Bennett's Hill. A Barclays and Nationwide exist and the old Midland Bank building is occupied by an architect's firm. The local

history section of the library turned up all the details and filled in the context. Having access to this collection greatly facilitated the research, fact verification and cross-checking.

'The ongoing digitisation programme of the archives as part of the new library is, in my opinion, one of the most significant steps of the whole project because this opens up previously heavily access-restricted material to new audiences and enables new modes of engaging with the documents. It also preserves the archives for generations to come. What makes this project so much more exciting is that the new Library of Birmingham offers an unparalleled learning and discovery environment unseen before. The whole experience of visiting an archive has been completely redefined and I would encourage you to make full use of it.'

Matthew is one of 26 Faces of the Library of Birmingham who represent the breadth and range of the library's collections and services.

www.libraryofbirmingham.com/lobfaces



Matthew Tye, one of the 'Faces' of the Library of Birmingham

THE WRITTEN AND SPOKEN WORD COME TOGETHER



© Robert Day

The Importance of Being Earnest at Birmingham REP

The new Library of Birmingham brings together the written and spoken word in one venue. It is physically linked to the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, as well as being home to a new purpose-built 300-seat auditorium and new internal and external performance spaces, including the amphitheatre in Centenary Square.

The two cultural venues will work in partnership to host joint activities showing how the written and spoken word can come together through drama, poetry and performance.

The 300-seat studio theatre significantly expands the range and number of dramatic works that the REP can produce and present, and the two organisations will collaborate on community events and activities, including learning and participation activity, community engagement, family events and joint commissions. Projects undertaken to date include storytelling, drama workshops and family events, and in 2011, more than 100 unused books from Birmingham Central Library were put centre stage when the REP needed to find over 100 heavy bound periodicals and books to use in their productions of *The Importance of Being Earnest* and *Travesties*, both of which are set in a library.

Recent collaborative projects include Neighbourhood REP which will bring theatre, performance and creative writing opportunities to six of the city's community libraries and the REP 100 project which will mark the theatre's centenary through digitisation of its archive, an exhibition and a series of related community projects.

The opening season at the REP includes the National Theatre's production of Alan Bennett's latest play, *People*; the world premiere of *The Legend of Mike Smith*, written by and starring the Birmingham-born award-winning musician Soweto Kinch; and a world premiere first production of Kate Tempest's new play *Hopelessly Devoted*.

Discovery Season Brings Collections to Life

To celebrate its opening, the new Library of Birmingham is hosting a four-month 'Discovery Season' from September to December 2013. The season, supported by Arts Council England, will include a varied programme of installations, events, performances, workshops, music

and dance, all inspired by the library's internationally-important archives and heritage collections.

Curated by West Midlands-based arts producer Capsule, it will be a unique opportunity to enjoy top-class arts and entertainment at the same time as exploring the state-of-the-art new library.

Highlights of the Discovery Season will include:

- A pavilion designed by award-winning artist **Morag Myerscough** that will play host to a rolling programme of **creative residencies** inspired by the theme of Discovery
- A Discovery Trail of artworks situated across the library including:
 - **Laura-Kate Chapman's** illustrations inspired by the Parker Collection of Children's Games
 - a series of figures planted in the flower and vegetable beds of the third floor Discovery Terrace created by **Juneau Projects**
 - The Theatre Jukebox, created by **Stand & Stare** using the library's **Wingate Bett Transport Ticket** collection
- **Discover New Music** – a series of cutting-edge live music performances featuring Birmingham bands and internationally-renowned artists
- **Reference Works** – a display of the work of four photographers - Michael Collins, Brian Griffin, Andrew Lacon and Stuart Whipps – who have created new works in response to the Library of Birmingham



© Brian Griffin

Photography project – Reference Works

For the full programme details go to www.libraryofbirmingham.com/discoveryseason