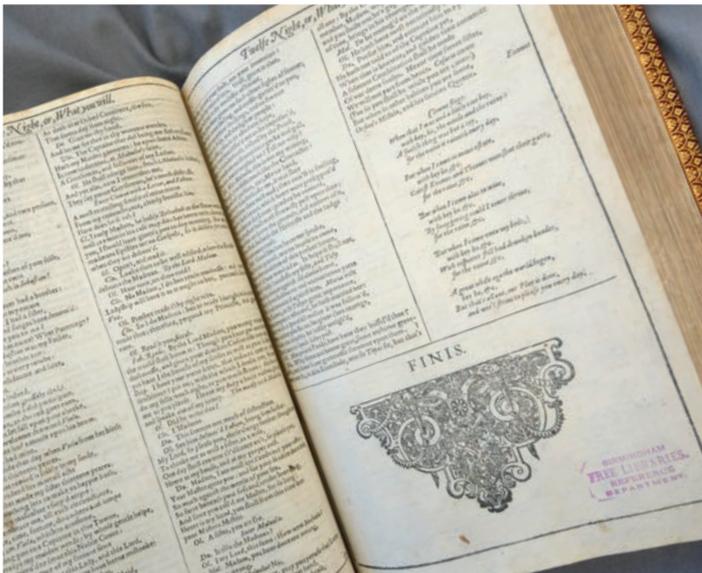
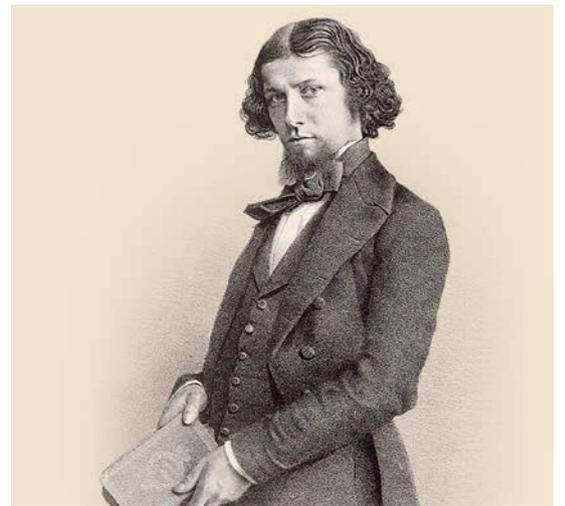
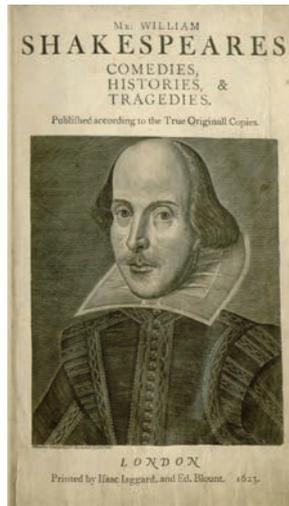
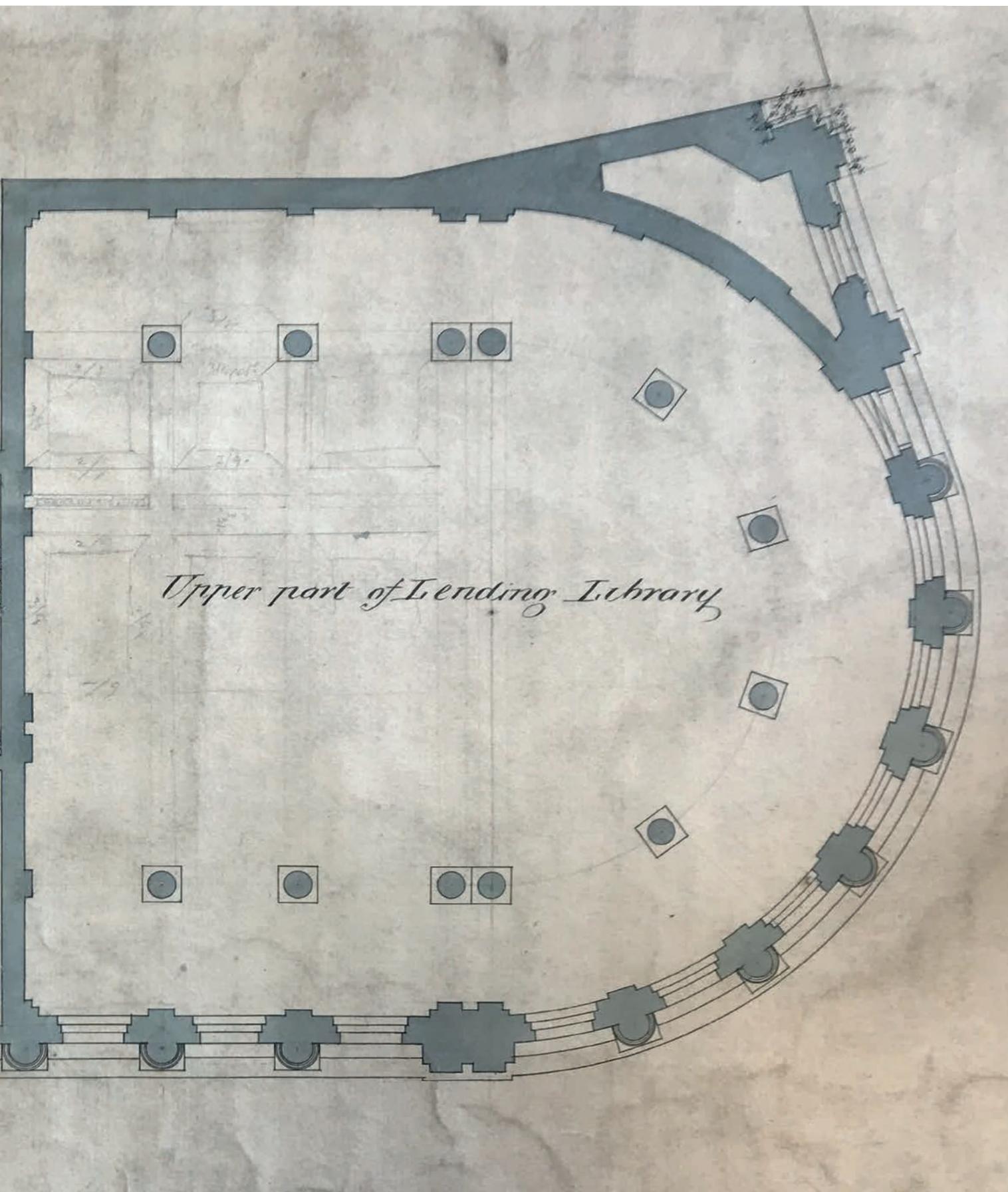




EVERYTHING TO EVERYBODY

Birmingham's Shakespeare Memorial Library





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Architectural woodwork in the Shakespeare Memorial Room

Foreword

Adrian Lester

*Patron of the Heritage Lottery-Funded
'Everything to Everybody' Project*



'The time has come to give everything to everybody'

George Dawson, founder of the Birmingham Shakespeare Memorial Library

I was born and bred in Birmingham. I started acting with the Birmingham Youth Theatre, right next door to the Library of Birmingham. I sang, as a boy chorister, in St Chad's Cathedral choir, just around the corner from the new Library.

I left school without any real understanding of Shakespeare's work - a serious setback for me as I wanted to train as an actor and Shakespeare's plays seemed a vast, intimidating obstacle. I just didn't understand the writing when I tried to read the plays. I felt this element of our classical culture wasn't for me, or perhaps, for the likes of me. I was able to get over my aversion to Shakespeare by hard work. I had a look at a glossary to help translate some of the words. I read the synopses before the plays and then I sat down and read his plays over and over again. I made them mine and in time I began to appreciate how no other writer in the English language has continually reflected such detailed characters in incredible life-and-death circumstances. I was dealing with a gap in my knowledge and as I practised, I have ironically made a career for myself as a Shakespearean actor.

So you can imagine my excitement to discover that Birmingham, my home city –

so often underestimated as a cultural and historic centre – is the home of an internationally significant Shakespeare collection. Not only that, but a collection that was always intended for people like my younger self, who might otherwise find themselves excluded and disenfranchised in relation to this core part of English culture.

I was delighted to learn that Birmingham is home to what is the first great Shakespeare Library in the world and still remains a uniquely democratic Shakespeare collection, one intended for the use and development of everyone across the city.

This book will help revive the legacy of that great people's Shakespeare Library, connecting it to the forgotten history of Birmingham as a pioneering cultural centre. It initiates a much bigger project, which will seek to engage and involve ordinary people from all of the city's diverse communities with this fantastic cultural resource. I'm proud to be that project's patron.

'Everything to everybody,' urged the Library's visionary founder, George Dawson. What belongs to Britain, belongs to you. No obstacles, no gaps, no separation. It remains an inspiring and relevant challenge.

Introduction

Tom Epps

*Birmingham City Council Lead for
the 'Everything to Everybody' Project*



William Shakespeare is the world's most famous playwright. He was born in 1564, about 25 miles from Birmingham, in Stratford-upon-Avon.

After more than 400 years, his plays continue to be performed around the world. The stories he tells and characters he describes have influenced the way people think and the language we use. In the Victorian period, when Birmingham was rapidly growing into a major industrial city, Shakespeare's writing had a surprising impact on how the town developed and helped form the basis of the modern city.

In 1868, Birmingham was the first place in the world to open a public library dedicated to Shakespeare's works and ideas. Unlike most towns, Birmingham believed that absolutely everyone should be able to learn about Shakespeare and decide for themselves whether his stories helped them understand the world they lived in. At a time when most people took their lead from the Christian bible, the very notion that a local writer could also provide important lessons for life was a bold and very forward-thinking concept.

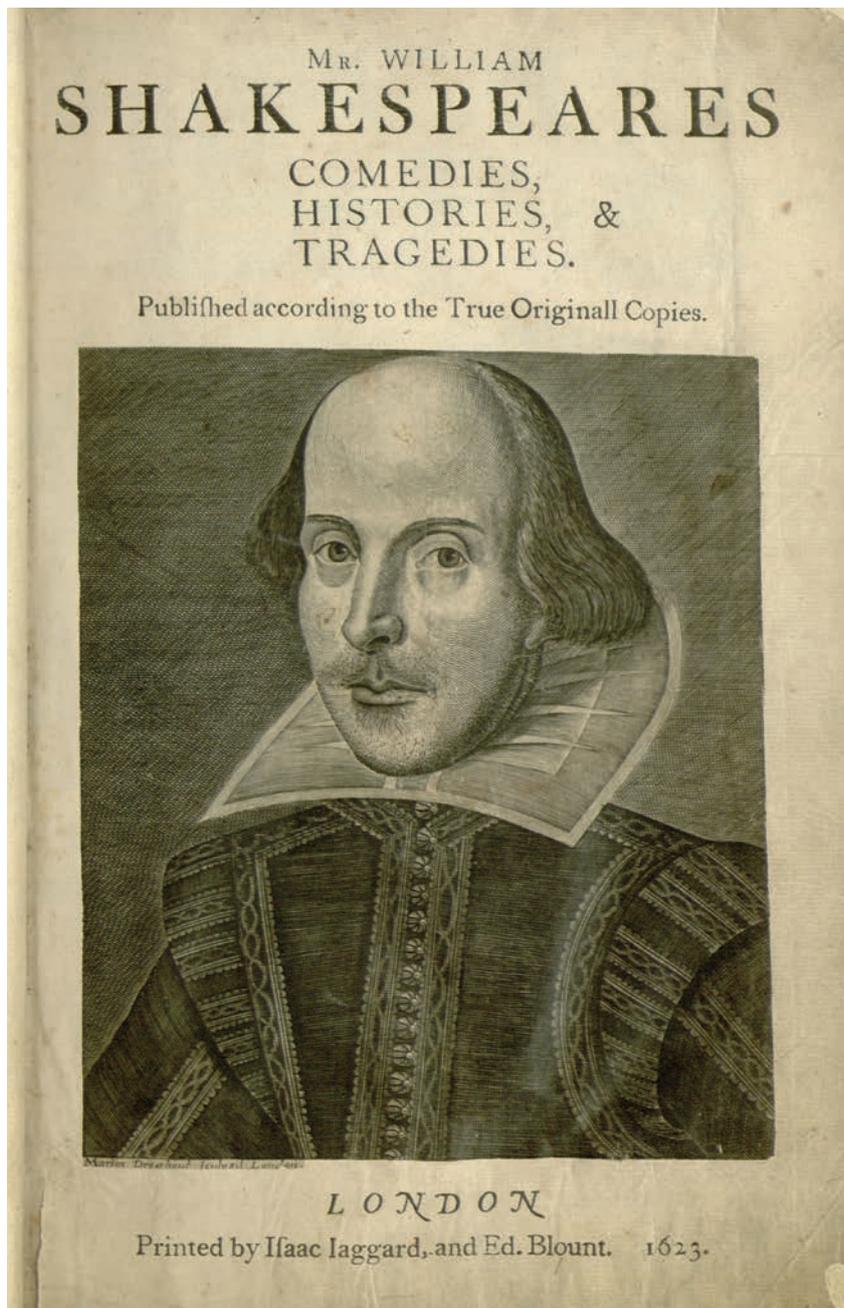
More than 150 years later, Birmingham's Shakespeare Memorial Library has grown into one of the world's largest and most significant collections of Shakespeare material. With about 100,000 items, including books, photographs, films, production posters, and theatre programmes,

the Library is one of Birmingham's – perhaps the UK's – most important cultural treasures.

This book starts to explain why in Birmingham the very first collected edition of Shakespeare's works – the famous First Folio – is proudly stamped as belonging to 'Birmingham Free Libraries'. And that says so much about Birmingham's commitment to a truly democratic culture. It begins to make sense of the fact that a Russian deputation from behind the Iron Curtain thought it worth their while to deposit three hundred gifts from Soviet territories even in the depths of the Cold War.

In the 1860s, public libraries were a very new invention. Some of the most powerful and influential people of the day questioned whether ordinary working men and women really needed access to information and new ideas.

In Birmingham, a radical young thinker called George Dawson led his adopted town in an ambitiously brave new direction. He believed that everyone, no matter what job they did or background they came from, should have the right to learn about everything. Dawson passionately argued that Birmingham Public Library should include the very best books, freely available to everyone.



To mark the 300th anniversary of Shakespeare's birth, Dawson and a group of his closest friends decided that Birmingham should be home to the greatest collection of Shakespeare books in the world. They insisted that a special room should be built for these books, the most beautiful room in Birmingham, and most importantly, it should be freely open to everyone.

It might be hard to believe now, but at the time Dawson's suggestions were completely revolutionary. It's thanks to

mavericks like him that we now have many of the freedoms we enjoy today.

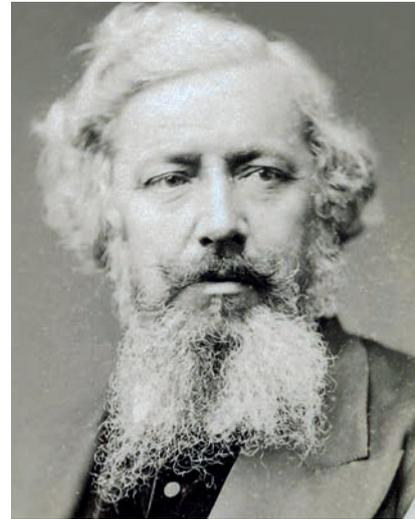
In 21st-century Birmingham, everybody understands that we all have the right to make our own decisions and have our own opinions. Democracy gives everyone a say in how their town and country is run. Everybody is free to enjoy art and culture, whether it is music, film, design, writing or fashion. It was in Victorian Birmingham that many of these modern freedoms were born. Birmingham showed other

cities that there were better ways of living together. Through a combination of Shakespeare's genius and Dawson's daring ambition, Birmingham helped define the modern world.

The Birmingham Shakespeare Memorial Library is something we can all be very proud of. It also challenges us today to be as inclusive and ambitious as we possibly can.

Above: First Folio title page, 1623

The ‘Our Shakespeare Club’



Left to right: Sam Timmins looking for Shakespeare’s footprints on the banks of the Rea; The Shakespeare Memorial Library in 1868, as shown in *Harper’s Weekly*; George Dawson

The Birmingham ‘Our Shakespeare Club’ was formed by George Dawson and his friend, the antiquarian Samuel Timmins. Other members included the architect John Henry Chamberlain, newspaper editor J. T. Bunce and the Liberal politician William Harris.

The group met regularly ‘to discuss and exchange views under the common bond of concern and celebration of all things Shakespearean’. The Club’s early discussions resulted in a proposal for a Shakespeare Library for the town.

The group believed that Birmingham, the biggest town in Shakespeare’s county of Warwickshire, was the natural home for this new library. Rather than a statue, they wanted a living monument, one which would act as a catalyst for the educational

and cultural development of Birmingham and its citizens. George Dawson outlined the idea in a letter to *Aris’s Birmingham Gazette* in 1861:

‘I wanted to see founded in Birmingham a Shakespeare Library, which should contain [as far as practicable] every edition and every translation of Shakespeare; all the commentators, good, bad and indifferent; in short, every book connected with the life or works of our great poet. I would add portraits of Shakespeare, and all the pictures etc illustrative of his works. This collection should have a room devoted exclusively to it; a small endowment and some trustees zealous for its preservation.’

To today’s way of thinking, that sounds like an academic research institute. But Dawson was determined to give the very best of human culture to everyone in

Birmingham, not just the privileged few. The Birmingham Shakespeare Memorial Library was officially founded in April 1864 to celebrate the 300th anniversary of Shakespeare’s birth.

Housed in a specially decorated room, which was completed in 1868, the Shakespeare Collection had pride of place in the town’s first free public library. Thanks to the enthusiasm and energy of Dawson and his friends, the collection grew to over 7,000 volumes by 1878.

Birmingham in the Early 19th Century

Early 19th-century Birmingham was a rapidly developing town. Over the course of the 18th century the population had grown from around 15,000 to 74,000, and by the 1830s it had nearly doubled again to 147,000.

However, its rapid growth had outstripped its infrastructure and services. Its housing, sanitation and education provision were simply not adequate to support its growing population and there was little in the way of local government or other public services to support and improve the lives of its citizens.

Before 1838 the main instruments of local government were the Street Commissioners. These were a committee of unpaid residents who were responsible for overseeing the cleaning, lighting and repair of the town's roads and the management of the weekly market.

Although the town finally gained parliamentary representation in 1832, with the election of Thomas Attwood and Joshua Scholefield as its first MPs, this did not solve the woeful lack of local government.

In 1838 the town achieved its charter of incorporation which established a town council with elected members. However, it was not until 1851 when the Street Commissioners were finally abolished that the council was able to exercise all its powers.

As a result of this piecemeal development the scope of local government during the period was ill-defined. When the town council was finally established the initial ruling 'economic' group was determined not to increase the rates and so to a great extent confined its activities to the same

limited role previously undertaken by the Street Commissioners.

However, radical and liberal politicians advocated for a much wider remit and a more extensive social mission. It was George Dawson who successfully developed this approach into what would eventually be celebrated as a radical new 'Civic Gospel'.

Below: Westley's East Prospect of Birmingham, 1732. Within a century the population of the town increased tenfold



George Dawson and the Civic Gospel

George Dawson (1821-1876) was key not just to the creation of the Shakespeare Memorial Library but also to modern ideas of citizenship and local government which he promoted through his challenging and inspiring sermons, lectures and writings.

Born in London in 1821, he attended university in Scotland. As a nonconformist he was barred from Oxford and Cambridge.

In 1844 he moved to the rapidly expanding industrial town of Birmingham to become minister of the Mount Zion Baptist Chapel.

A charismatic and influential speaker, his sermons soon attracted a large following. But he refused to uphold the dogma of the Baptist church, which he left to become minister of the Church of the Saviour. This new church was erected for him by members of his congregation, most of whom had followed him from Mount Zion. Dawson refused to see himself as a priest; he spoke from a lectern, instead of a pulpit; he compiled his own hymn book, including political songs and settings of secular poetry; and he insisted on the unconstrained right of all members of his congregation to think freely. He preached on Shakespeare, Islam and evolution, as well as more traditional themes.

Above all, he developed the idea of the Civic Gospel. He called upon his congregation to join him in the struggle 'to improve conditions in the town and the quality of life enjoyed by its citizens'.



George Dawson
as a young man

Dawson inspired many of Birmingham's most important citizens, including Jesse Collings, George Dixon, J. A. Langford, Robert Martineau, Samuel Timmins, William Harris, A. F. Osler, and the Kenrick family. In all, 17 members of his congregation were elected to the Town Council, and six of these went on to serve as Mayor.

In his sermons and his public lectures and articles, Dawson urged Christians to actively participate in local government to transform the town for the benefit of its inhabitants. One of those who answered his call was the screw manufacturer Joseph Chamberlain who went on to become first a town councillor and then a visionary reforming Mayor.



The Church of the Saviour in Edward Street, Birmingham

Dawson was as concerned with the social and intellectual wellbeing of the population as he was with the often appalling physical conditions they endured.

He was a passionate advocate of free education, strongly supported by the Congregational spokesman Dr. R. W. Dale, and by

J. T. Bunce, influential editor of the *Birmingham Daily Post*. All three served on the Birmingham School Board.

Dawson was famous during his lifetime for lecturing on a wide range of subjects including Shakespeare, German poetry, and social reform and revolution.

He became a national figure; Charles Kingsley described him as 'the greatest talker in England'. He was a friend of Thomas Carlyle and he walked the barricades of Paris after the Revolution in 1848 with the celebrated American writer, Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Dawson also lectured on English literature at the Birmingham and Midland Institute, where he taught a Shakespeare class. His address at the opening of the Birmingham Reference Library in 1866 is the most famous statement of what the Civic Gospel meant to the Victorian municipal activists:

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... that a great town is a solemn organism through which should flow, and in which should be shaped, all the highest, loftiest, and truest ends of man's intellectual and moral nature...

Dawson died suddenly at Kings Norton on 30 November 1876. He was mourned across the city, and he is buried in Key Hill Cemetery.



A few years later a memorial statue was erected in what now is Chamberlain Square, under a canopy designed by J. H. Chamberlain which featured the face of Shakespeare. It stood in this location, close to the Central Library, until 1951.

Above left: Dawson Memorial
Left: Key Hill Cemetery

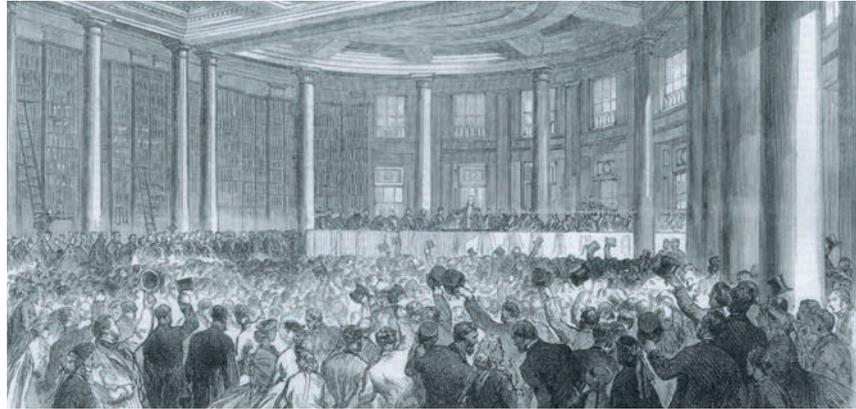
The Birmingham Free Library

Dawson was a passionate advocate of working-class education and self-improvement and he campaigned energetically for the creation of a public (or 'free') library for use by all of Birmingham's citizens. The first Central Library was built in Ratcliffe Place (now Chamberlain Square), just to the west of the Town Hall.

E. M. Barry was the architect for the original BMI building and it was hoped he could be retained as the architect for the adjoining library. However, the Corporation decided that his costs were too expensive and so in 1862 they instead commissioned the firm of Martin & Chamberlain for a tender price of £8,600.

The Lending Library was opened on 6 September 1865 and the Reference Library just over a year later on 26 October 1866. Initial use of the library was so heavy that the need for an extension soon became apparent, with work commencing in 1878.

The site had been acquired from the Birmingham and Midland Institute (BMI) in 1860 after the construction of its own building on the corner of Paradise Street in 1857. The BMI originally intended to construct its own library but ran out of money and following the Corporation's adoption of the Public Libraries Act in 1860, a referendum was held which permitted the creation of a municipal library.



Birmingham Free Library opening , 1865



The Birmingham & Midland Institute with the Free Library in the background on the right-hand side

The 1879 Fire

On 11 January 1879 disaster struck when a fire swept through the library, destroying both the building and most of the stock.

The Shakespeare Collection was decimated, with only 500 of the 7,000 volumes rescued from the flames. The Mayor, Jesse Collings, apparently in full evening dress, was one of a number of citizens who broke the glass of the Shakespeare cases, enabling at least some of the books to be retrieved. A dismayed Samuel Timmins was said to have been seen sobbing at the destruction. George Dawson was spared the fire, having died three years earlier aged only 55.



Top to bottom: Burnt page from Shakespeare's *Henry VI*, Part 3, which was rescued from the fire
 Painting of the Free Library fire by George Wallis (1811-91)
 The burnt-out shell of the Free Library after the fire

After the Fire – The Shakespeare Memorial Room

Plans to rebuild the library after the fire were approved in May 1879 and the architect appointed to undertake the design was once again the firm of Martin & Chamberlain. J. H. Chamberlain (1831-1883) was renowned for his Gothic style of architecture decorated with natural motifs, inspired by *The Stones of Venice*, John Ruskin's influential work on medieval Italian architecture.

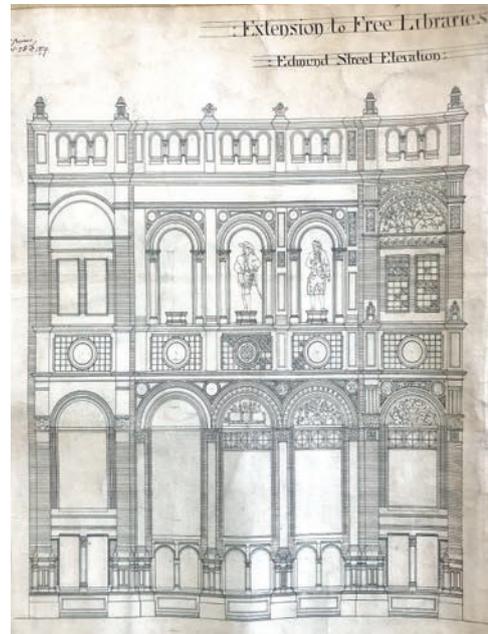
He was also a committed supporter of Dawson's Liberal vision for Birmingham. Together with his partner William Martin (1828-1900), Chamberlain became the architect most closely associated with the Civic Gospel in Birmingham. The pair were particularly well known for designing numerous schools for the Birmingham School Board, the best known of which is the former Oozells Street School, now the Ikon Gallery.

Other major commissions included Joseph Chamberlain's home, Highbury (1879), and perhaps their finest achievement, the Municipal School of Art in Margaret Street (1885).

Whilst Chamberlain retained the bulk of Barry's original surviving classical façade for the main part of the library, the fire-gutted interior was transformed with the creation of a tall clerestoried Reading Room. Also very different, Chamberlain's new Edmund Street extension was built in an extravagant Lombardic Renaissance style decorated with encaustic tiles, moulded terracotta and a mosaic cornice by Salviati.

The new library opened to the public on 1 June 1882, and cost £54,975.

1882 Architectural drawing of Chamberlain's new Edmund Street extension



Municipal School of Art, Margaret Street, designed by J. H. Chamberlain (left)



On the first floor of the new extension, behind the Lombardic Renaissance façade, Chamberlain created a bespoke room for the Shakespeare Collection - the Shakespeare Memorial Room.

The room's striking Elizabethan Revival style featured Chamberlain's trademark use of flowers, foliage and birds executed in carved wood, marquetry and metalwork. The oak joinery was by William Barfield of Leicester and the metalwork by the famous Birmingham firm of John Hardman & Co – both of whom were regular collaborators on Chamberlain's projects.

The spectacular decoration reflects the natural vitality of Shakespeare's work. The Birmingham Shakespeare Memorial Library was never meant to be about dusty scholarship. It was meant to enhance and enable life.

Ironically, the loss of so much Shakespeare material in the 1879 fire had a galvanising effect on the collection itself. The destruction of the library was reported internationally and thanks to the generosity of donors, many from overseas, the collection was soon growing again at a much faster rate than before.

By the time the new library opened in 1882 the collection numbered 4,000 volumes, including copies of the First and Third Folios.

Clockwise: The 1882 Library by Martin & Chamberlain; Shakespeare Memorial Room Ceiling; Commemorative plaque marking the reopening of the Library; the Reference Library Reading Room

The 20th Century

By 1906 the Shakespeare Collection was so big it had outgrown the Shakespeare Memorial Room and a new storage space had to be created on the floor below, reached via a spiral staircase.

The success of the Shakespeare Collection mirrored that of the library service as a whole and as public library usage continued to grow during the first part of the 20th century the City Council concluded that a new library was needed. However, the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 meant that it was not until the 1960s that plans were drawn up for a modern new Central Library nearby on Paradise Circus.

The scheme involved the proposed demolition of the 1882 library to make way for a section of the new Inner Ring Road. Despite a campaign to try to save it, the then Minister for the Environment, Anthony Crosland, allowed the old library building to be demolished in 1974.

The Shakespeare Memorial Room with the spiral staircase - just visible behind the desk - down to the floor below



However, he did rule that the Shakespeare Memorial Room must be preserved and made accessible to the people of Birmingham. The room was therefore carefully dismantled and put into store while its future location was decided.

The city's third Central Library, designed by another local architect, John Madin, opened

in 1974. The Shakespeare Collection was housed in the new building but Madin's modernist design did not incorporate the Shakespeare Memorial Room. Instead, after a delay of more than a decade, it was finally reconstructed as part of the Birmingham Conservatoire complex, which was built adjacent to the library and opened in 1986.



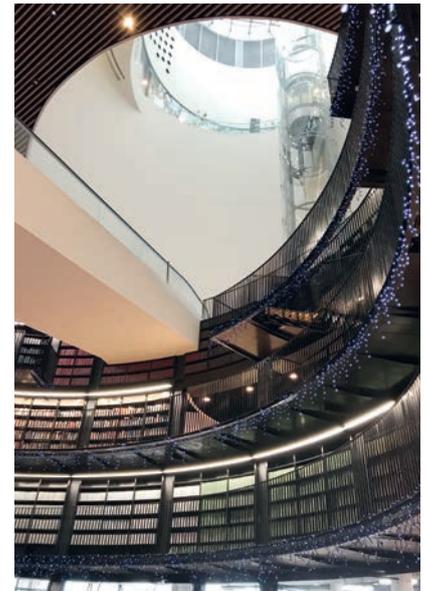
The 1882 library was demolished in 1974. Excavating the foundations for the new library with the 1882 extension behind

The 21st Century

By the end of the 20th century it had become clear that the 1974 library was no longer fit for purpose. The digital age had arrived, national standards for protecting archives had become more stringent, and people had different expectations of their city library. The City Council also wanted to release the site for redevelopment and in 2007 decided to replace Madin's building with a new Library of Birmingham, to be built on Centenary Square.



The architect of the new library, Francine Houben of Mecanoo, was asked to include the Shakespeare Memorial Room in her design. She placed it in a golden rotunda at the very top of the new building.



Construction began in 2010. The room was dismantled, cleaned, hoisted into position and carefully reassembled using specialist craftspeople. Local firm A. E. Edmonds reinstated the wooden panelling and the Victorian Cornice Company, also from Birmingham, recreated the plasterwork ceiling to the original design.

Although the Shakespeare Collection is no longer kept in this room, it is nonetheless a remarkable survival and the one tangible link with J. H. Chamberlain's lost library building.



Clockwise: John Madin's 1974 Central Library; Interior of Library of Birmingham; Restoring the Shakespeare Memorial Room; The Library of Birmingham

Ol. Get him to bed, and let his hurt be look'd too.

Seb. I am sorry Madam I have hurt your kinsman: But had it beene the brother of my blood, I must haue done no lesse with wit and safety. You throw a strange regard vpon me, and by that I do perceiue it hath offended you: Pardon me (sweet one) euen for the vowes We made each other, but so late ago.

Di. One face, one voice, one habit, and two persons, A naturall Peripetie, that is, and is not.

Seb. *Antonio*: O my deere *Antonio*, How haue the houres rack'd, and tortur'd me, Since I haue lost thee?

Ant. *Sebastian* are you?
Seb. Fear it thou that *Antonio*?
Ant. How haue you made diuision of your selfe, An apple cleft in two, is not more twin Then these two creatures. Which is *Sebastian*?

Seb. Do I stand there? I neuer had a brother: Nor can there be that Deity in my nature Of heere, and euery where. I had a sister, Whom the blinde waues and surges haue deuour'd: Of charity, what kinne are you to me? What Countryman? What name? What Parentage?

Di. Of *Messaline*: *Sebastian* was my Father, Such a *Sebastian* was my brother too: So went he suited to his watery tombe: If spirits can assaue both forme and suite, You come to fright vs.

Seb. A spirit I am indeed, But am in that dimension grossely clad: Which from the wombe I did participate. Were you a woman, as the rest goes euen, I should my teares let fall vpon your checke, And say, thrice welcome drowned *Viola*.

Vi. My father had a moale vpon his brow.

Seb. And so had mine.

Vi. And did that day when *Viola* from her birth Had numberd thirteene yeares.

Seb. O that record is liuely in my soule, He finished indeed his mortall acte That day that made my sister thirteene yeares.

Vi. If nothing lets to make vs happie both, But this my masculine vsurp'd attyre: Do not embrace me, till each circumstance, Of place, time, fortune, do co-here and iumpe That I am *Viola*, which so confirme, Ile bring you to a Captaine in this Towne, Where lye my maiden weeds: by whose gentle helpe, I was preter'd to serue this Noble Count: All the occurrence of my fortune since Hath beene betwene this Lady, and this Lord.

Seb. So comes it Lady, you haue beene mistooke: But Nature to her bias drew in that, You would haue bin contracted to a Maid, Nor are you therein (by my life) deceiv'd, You are betroth'd both to a maid and man.

Di. Be not amaz'd, right noble is his blood: If this be so, as yet the glasse seemes true, I shall haue share in this most nappy wracke, Boy, thou hast saide to me a thousand times, Thou neuer should'st loue woman like to me.

Vi. And all those sayings, will I ouer sweate, And all those swearings keepe as true in soule,

As doth that Orbed Continent, the fire, That fowers day from night.

Di. Give me thy hand, And let me see thee in thy womans weeds.

Vi. The Captaine that did bring me first on shore Hath my Maides garments: he vpon some Aduenture Is now in durance, at *Maulolo's* suite, A Gentleman, and follower of my Ladies.

Ol. He shall enlarge him: fetch *Maulolo's* suit, And yet alas, now I remember me, They say poore Gentleman, he's much distract.

Enter Clowne with a Letter, and Fabian.
A most extracting sense of mine owne From my remembrance, clearly banisht his. How does he fi-rah?

Cl. Truly Madam, he holds *Betsabub* at the floure colde, well as a man in his case may do: has heere writ a letter to you, I should haue giuen't you to day morning. But the madmans Epistles are no Gospels, so it skilles not when they are deliuer'd.

Ol. Open't, and read it.
Cl. Looke then to be well edified, when the Foole deliuers the Madman. *By the Lord Madam.*

Ol. How now, art thou mad?
Cl. No Madam, I do but reade madnesse: and your Ladyship will haue it as it ought to bee, you must needs vex.

Ol. Præthee reade it by right wits.
Cl. So I do Madona: but to reade his right wits, I reade thus: therefore, perpend my Princesse, and gaine care.

Ol. Read it you, sirrah.
Fab. R.gads. By the Lord Madam, you wrong me: the world shall know it: Though you haue put me in darknesse, and given your drunken Coliure rule over me, yet haue I the benefit of my senses as well as your Ladyship. I haue your owne letter, that induced mee to this semblance I put on; with the which I doubt not, but to do my selfe much right, or you much shame: thinke of me as you please. I leaue my duty a little vntoucht, and speake out of my iniury. *The madly vs'd Madman.*

Ol. Did he write this?
Cl. I Madame.

Du. This fauours not much of distraction.
Ol. See him deliuer'd *Fabian*, bring him hither: My Lord, so please you, these things further thought: To thinke me as well a sister, as a wife, One day shall crowne th'alliance on't, so please you. Heere at my house, and at my proper cost.

Du. Madam, I am most apt to embrace your offer: Your Master quits you: and for your seruice done him, So much against the merrile of your sex, So farre beneath your soft and tender breaſt, And since you call'd me Master, for so long: Heere is my hand, you shall from this time bee your Masters Mistresse.

Ol. A sister, you are she.
Enter Maluolio.

Du. Is this the Madman?
Ol. I my Lord, this same: How now *Maluolio*?

Mal. Madam, you haue done me wrong: Notorious wrong.

Ol. Haue I *Maluolio*? No,
Mal. Lady you haue, pray you peruse that Letter. You must not now denie it is your hand, Write from it if you can, in hand, or phrase,

Birmingham First Folio, proudly stamped as the property of 'Birmingham Free Libraries'

Twelve Night, or, What you will.

all one: By the Lord Foole, I am not mad: but do you remember, Madam, why laugh you at such a barren rascall, and you smile not he's gag'd: and thus the whirlegigge of time, brings in his reuenges.

Mal. He be reueng'd on the whole packe of you?
Ol. He hath bene most notoriously abus'd.

Du. Pursue him, and entreate him to a peace: He hath not told vs of the Captaine yet, When that is knowne, and golden time conuents A solemne Combination shall be made Of our deere soules. Meane time sweet sister, We will not part from hence. *Cesario come* (For so you shall be while you are a man:) But when in other habites you are seene, *Orsone's* Mistris, and his fancies *Queene.*

Exeunt

Clowne sings.

When that I was and a little rine boy,
with hey, ho, the winde and the raine:
A foolish thing was but a toy,
for the raine it raineth every day.

But when I came to mans estate,
with hey ho, &c.
Gainst Knaves and Theeves men shut their gate,
for the raine, &c.

But when I came alas to wine,
with hey ho, &c.
By swagging could I neuer thrive,
for the raine, &c.

But when I came vnto my beds,
with hey ho, &c.
With t'posseter still had drunken heades,
for the raine, &c.

A great while ago the world began,
hey ho, &c.
But that's all one, our Play is done,
and wee'l strive to please you every day.

FINIS.



BIRMINGHAM
FREE LIBRARIES.
REFERENCE
DEPARTMENT.

The Shakespeare Memorial Library Collection



For many people who visit the Library of Birmingham, one of the highlights is J. H. Chamberlain's magnificent 1882 Shakespeare Memorial Room on the 9th floor.

But what visitors may not appreciate is that the few books that adorn its shelves are simply for display purposes, and that the actual Shakespeare Memorial Library Collection is preserved elsewhere in the building. Whilst this is in part due to the fact that some of the material requires specialist environmental storage, the main reason is because it is far too large to fit into this small room.

Today the Collection consists of more than 40,000 volumes, 17,000 production photographs, 2,000 music scores, hundreds of British and international production posters, 15,000 performance programmes, 10,000 playbills, and large collections of illustrations, scrapbooks, annotated scripts, prompt-books as well as television adaptations and radio plays. Other elements include newspaper cuttings, unique archival material relating to the greatest Shakespeareans from Ellen Terry to Laurence Olivier, and remarkable works of art such as Salvador Dalí's *Macbeth* illustrations.

Today the Shakespeare Memorial Library Collection is stored in environmentally controlled conditions in the Library of Birmingham. The boxes pictured house some of the 17,000 production photos in the Collection

The First Folio

Amongst many outstanding items in the Collection is Shakespeare's First Folio. Without this first collected edition of his plays, some of Shakespeare's greatest works would have been lost. It is arguably the most important secular book in Western literature.

After Shakespeare's death in 1616 two of his closest friends and colleagues, John Heminge and Henry Condell, set out to print an accurate version of his plays in one volume. As shareholders and actors in Shakespeare's own company, they edited his handwritten scripts and company prompt-books. They edited 36 plays and divided them into Comedies, Histories and Tragedies – categories still used today.

The First Folio was published in London in 1623 by William and Isaac Jaggard and their partner Edward Blount. The title page image is by Martin Droeshout and is one of only two portraits of Shakespeare widely considered authentic.

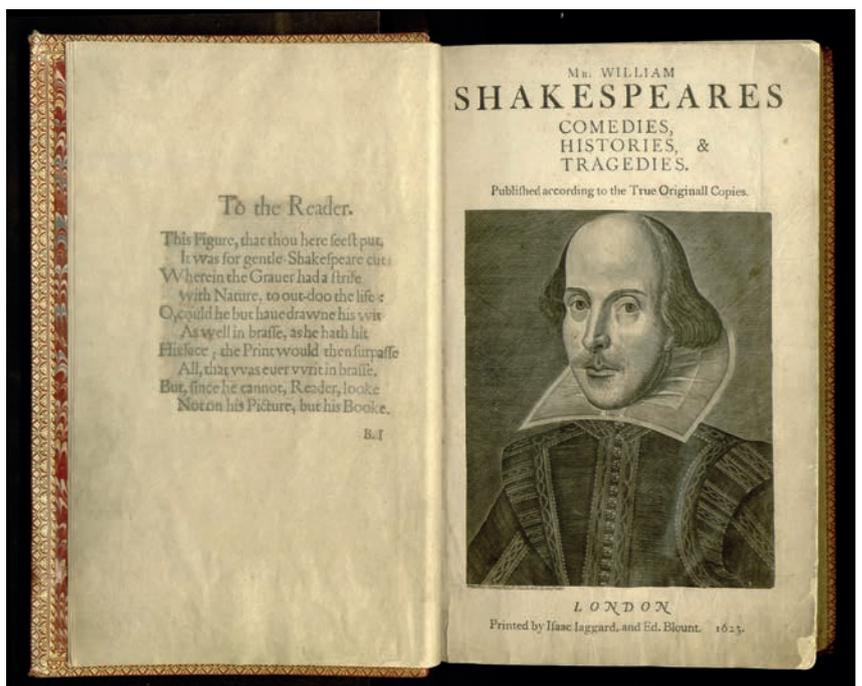
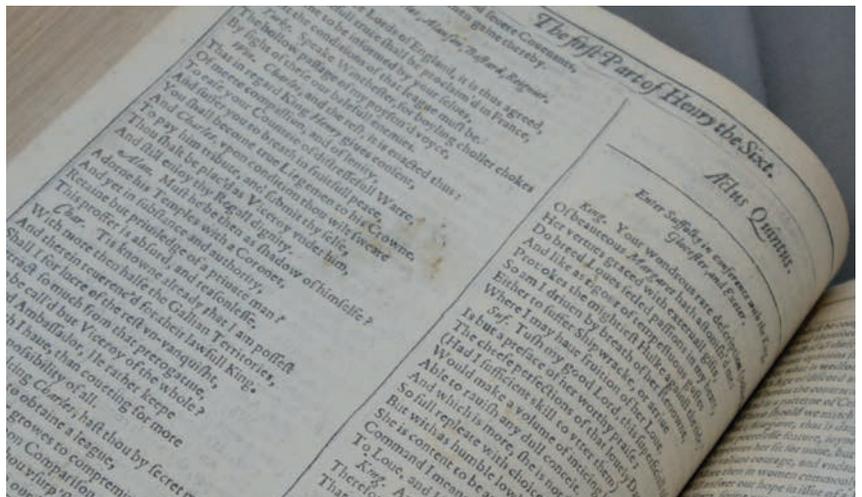
A proposal to acquire a copy of the First Folio for Birmingham was initially made in April 1870. £200 had been raised by 1873,

Above right: A unique feature of Birmingham's First Folio is what appears to be some muddy cat paw-prints running across the penultimate page of *King Henry VI, Part 1!*

Right: First Folio title page featuring Martin Droeshout's famous portrait of Shakespeare

and a copy was identified for purchase, but in the event no action was taken – fortuitously - until after the 1879 fire. Another First Folio was subsequently bought from the famous book dealers Quaritch at a cost of £240 in time for the reopening of the library by local MP John Bright in 1882.

Of the 750 copies of the First Folio that were originally printed, only around a third survive today. In 1623 the cost of a First Folio was around £1. Today it is worth several million. The fact that Birmingham owns a copy that was purchased for the benefit of all of its citizens is a tribute to Dawson's vision for an inclusive civic culture.

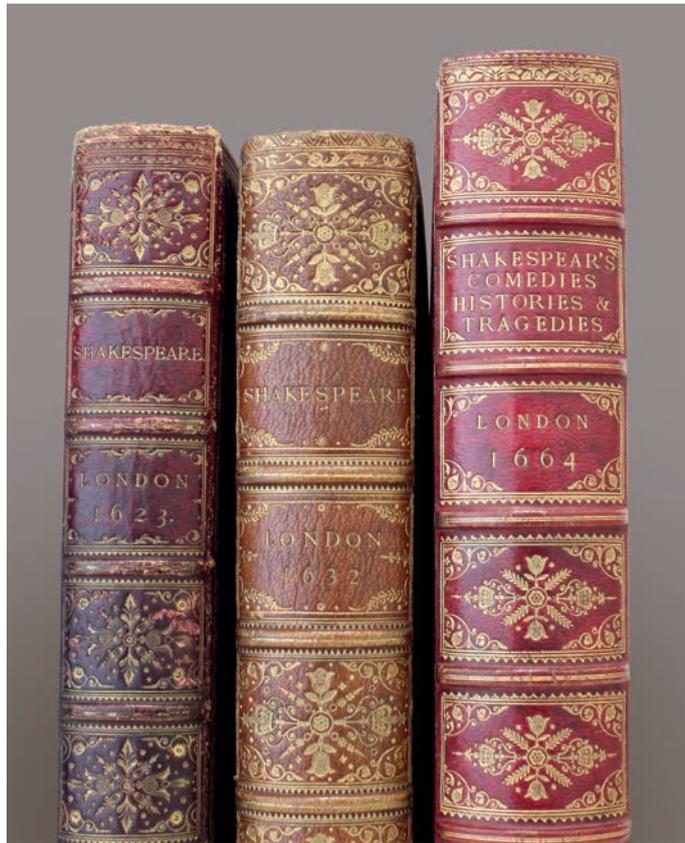


Later Folios

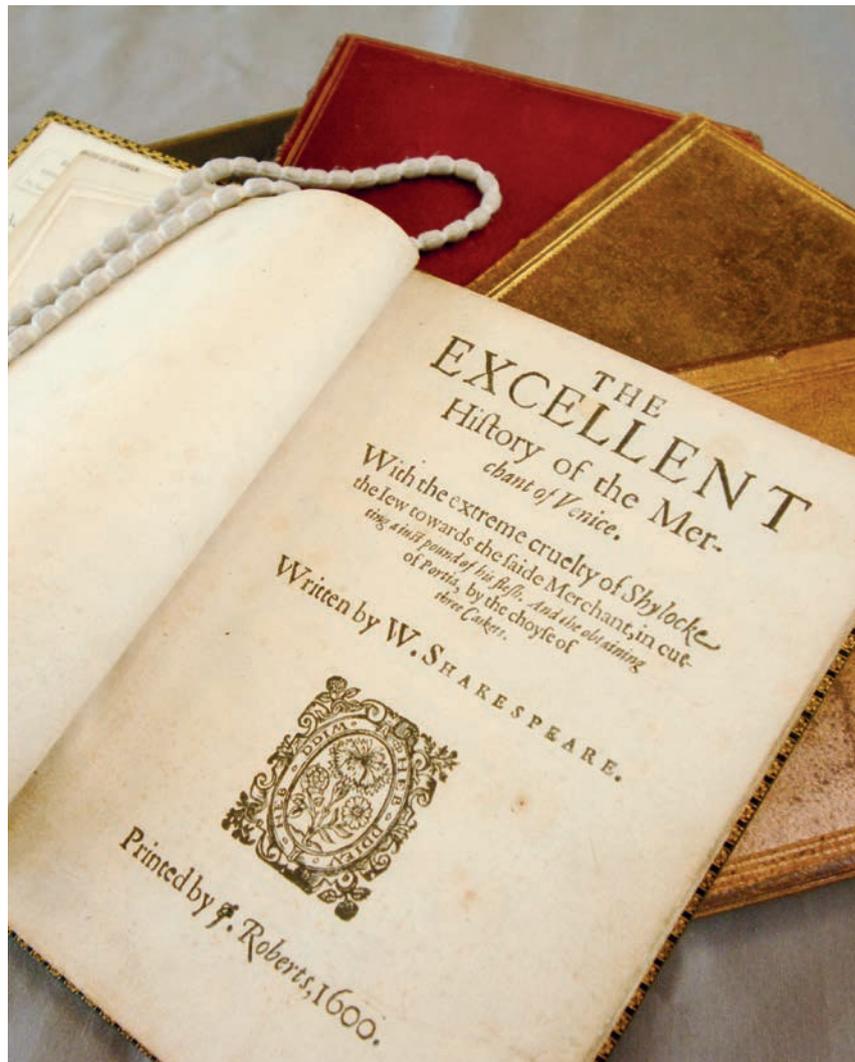
The Library also has copies of the three further Folios which were printed in 1632, 1664 and 1685. These include multiple revisions and changes to the language and grammar of the original Folio. The Second and Third Folios also include *Pericles*, as well as a range of plays which are no longer straightforwardly attributed to Shakespeare. The Third Folio of 1664 is particularly rare. Many copies were destroyed in the Great Fire of London in 1666.

The Folios were preceded by what are now known as the Pavier Quartos or 'False Folio' of 1619. These ten plays were the result of a dubious collaboration between the London publisher Thomas Pavier and one of the printers of the First Folio, William Jaggard. They were sold separately but also bound together, as though they constituted Shakespeare's collected works. Some of them bear false dates, and not all are now thought to be by Shakespeare.

These early editions are of great importance in the study of English literary history, and they are highly valuable. The Library holds four Pavier Quartos in its collection: *The Merchant of Venice*, *Henry V*, *The Whole Contention*, *Henry VI* parts 2 and 3, and *The Whole Contention*, *Henry VI* part 2.



First, Second and Third Folios



Right: Pavier Quartos – early bootlegs of Shakespeare's work

Theatre Playbills

Over the centuries Shakespeare's plays have been performed countless times in theatres across the world. Before the 20th century, theatres advertised their productions with printed playbills. These announced the performance and performers and were posted in public places.

There are over 10,000 playbills in the Library's collection. Many date from the 18th and 19th centuries and promote famous productions, theatres and actors, including Ellen Terry (1847-1928) and Sarah Bernhardt (1844-1923), a famous female Hamlet.

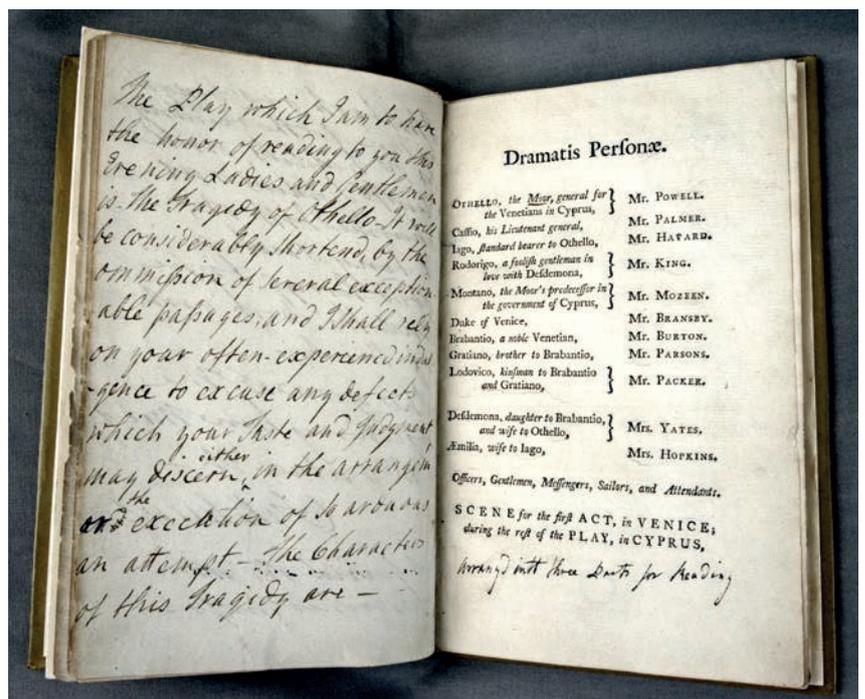
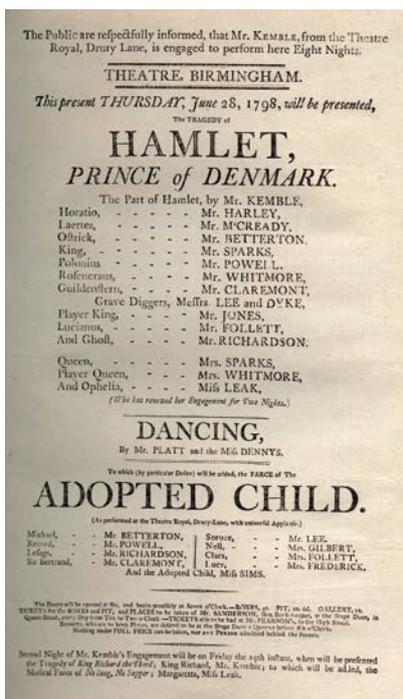
Sarah Siddons (1755-1831) was the most celebrated female Shakespeare actor of her time, and a tremendous and stately Lady Macbeth. So convincing was she 'in role' that her stage-manager had to intervene and assure one terrified member of the audience that she wasn't really dead.

Just as they do today, newspapers would advertise and report on productions and the Collection includes numerous cuttings from national and international publications from the middle of the 19th century onwards. In the absence of film and other modern media, these give a wonderful insight into theatres and actors through history and how performances changed over time.



Above: Portrait of Sarah Siddons

Below: *Hamlet* playbill; Sarah Siddons' personally annotated copy of *Othello*

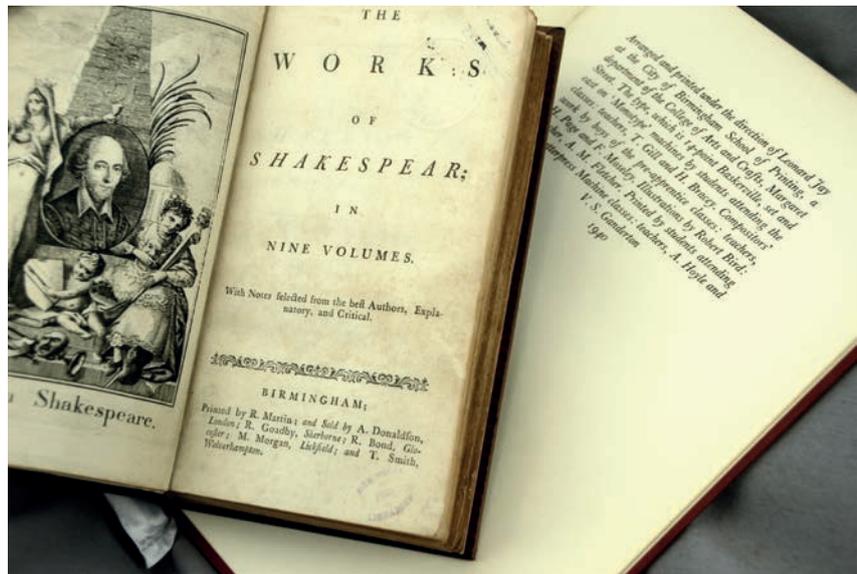


Books

Some of the most interesting items in the Collection date from the 18th century. They include the first illustrated edition of Shakespeare's works, published in 1709 by Nicholas Rowe. There is also a 1765 compilation of Shakespearean commentary by Samuel Johnson, one of the greatest English writers and the subject of a well-known lecture by George Dawson.

During the 19th century Shakespeare became ever more popular. Some 800 editions of Shakespeare's complete works were published during this period, including a version called 'The Family Shakespeare'. This omitted 'words and expressions which are of such a nature as to raise a blush on the cheek of modesty'.

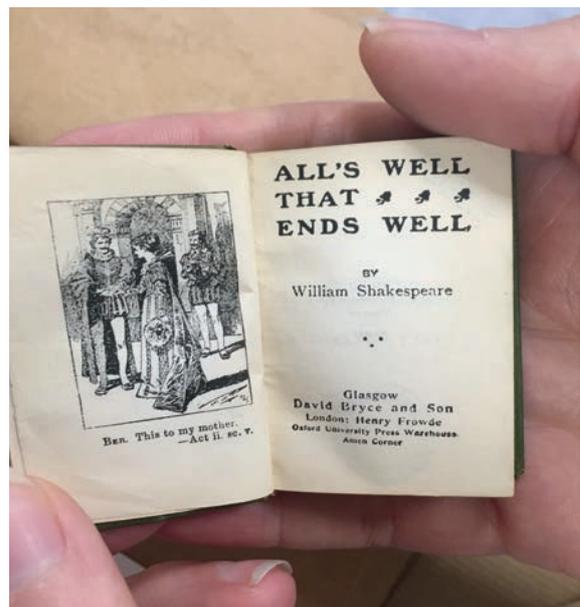
It is easy to think of a Shakespeare Library as a less than visually enthralling assemblage of old



books, but this collection in fact includes a number of beautifully illustrated editions from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Some of these feature the work of renowned artists and illustrators including Sir John Gilbert RA and Arthur Rackham.

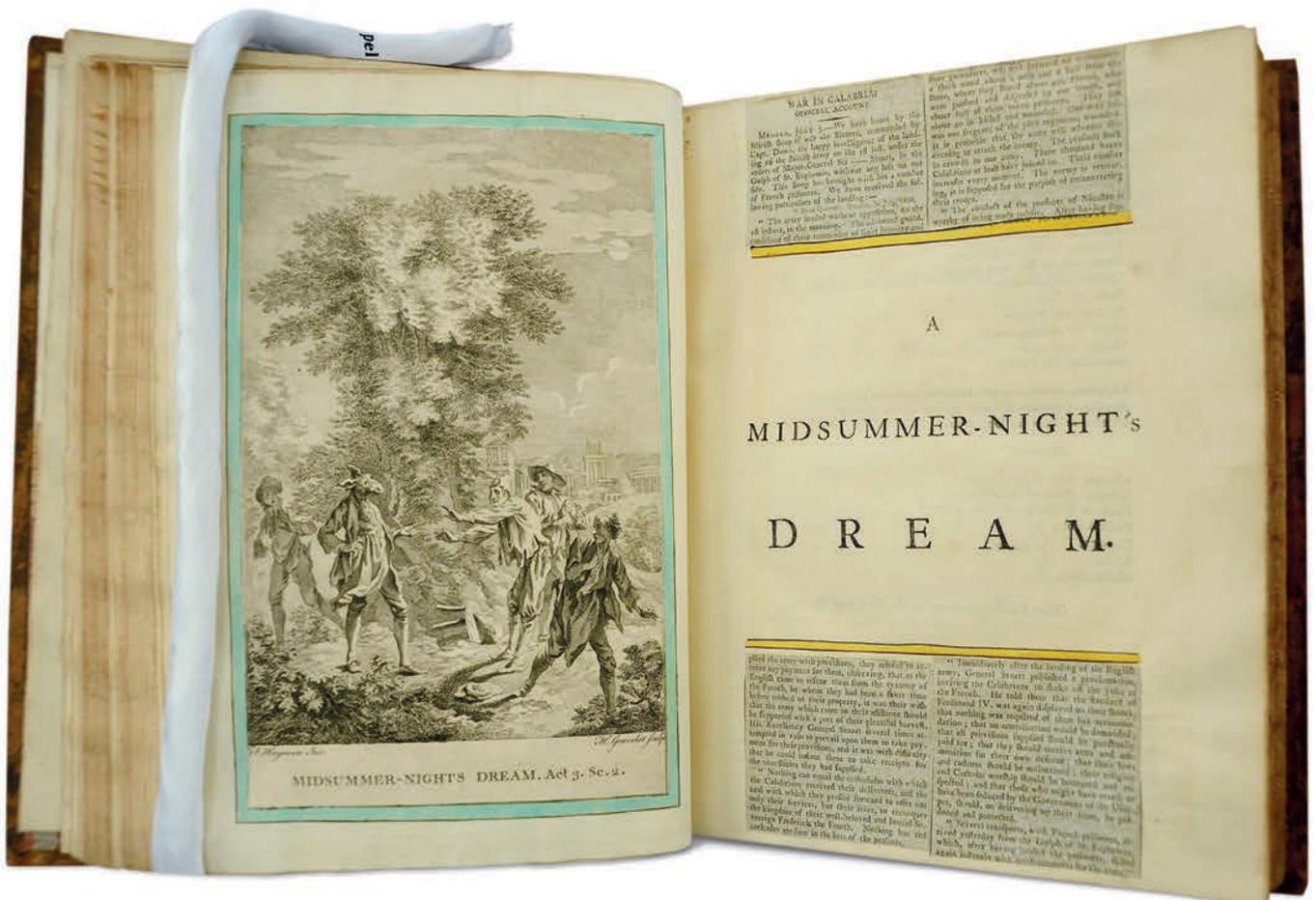
Many of the books in the collection represent superb examples of the craft of the printer and bookbinder. These include a copy of *The Poems of William Shakespeare* published by the Kelmscott Press in 1893.

The Martin edition of *The Works of Shakespear* was printed in Birmingham using John Baskerville's famous typeface in 1769. Beneath it is a fine print edition of *Hamlet* from the City of Birmingham School of Printing, 1940



Big and small – the largest book in the Collection is John and Josiah Boydell's famous 1803 volume of Shakespearean prints, whilst the smallest is David Bryce & Son's miniature edition of *All's Well That Ends Well* (1904)

Scrapbooks



Most early editions of Shakespeare plays did not have illustrations. This very valuable Alexander Pope edition of 1725 has been customised by its owner with the addition of illustrations and newspaper cuttings

For four centuries the works of Shakespeare have given ordinary people huge pleasure. Generations of fans all over the world have collected Shakespeare memorabilia in scrapbooks and there are more than 200 in the Library's collection. These include examples from countries such as Russia, Germany and Denmark.

These unique and highly individual documents often reflect the collector's own particular interests. They contain a remarkable range of items, from rare illustrations and photographs to newspaper cuttings from across the globe.

And they stand for a kind of self-curating instinct, which is very resonant with George Dawson's original vision for a people's Shakespeare Library, and a Civic Gospel where everything belongs to everybody.

One of the most avid collectors was H. R. Forrest of Manchester who filled 76 scrapbooks between 1830 and 1886. The entire collection was acquired by Birmingham Libraries in 1906. Among the many treasures they contain are illustrations by renowned artists such as Henry Fuseli (1741-1825) and rare portraits of Shakespeare and his contemporaries.

Another notable collector was Howard S. Pearson (1838-1923). He was a local writer, a member of the Council's Public Libraries Committee and an English teacher at the Birmingham & Midland Institute. As if to underline the Midlands connection, Pearson's middle name was Shakespeare! He collected five volumes of memorabilia from Shakespeare productions from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century.

A Wealth of Different Languages



Thanks to the generosity of numerous private collectors and overseas libraries the Collection includes editions in no fewer than 93 languages. These range from Abkhazian to Zulu, with German and French as the most numerous represented languages.

It is these gifts which have made the collection so unusually large for a public library – but they also give it a breadth and appeal that enable it to transcend cultural boundaries. As a result the representation of Shakespeare in Birmingham is a thoroughly multicultural affair.

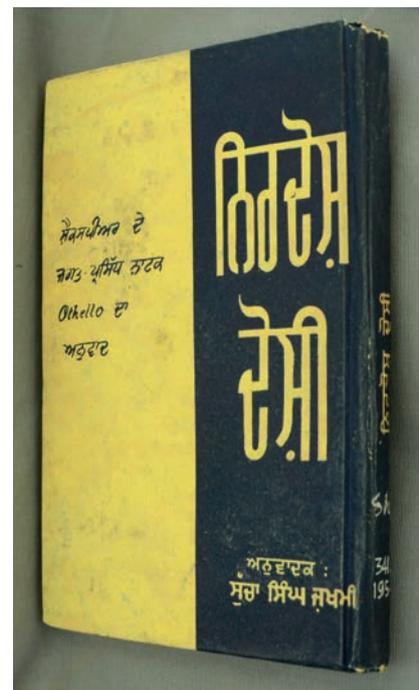
Just one of the unique international treasures held in the Collection is a series of photographic portraits of ‘German Shakespeareans in Science, Literature and Art’

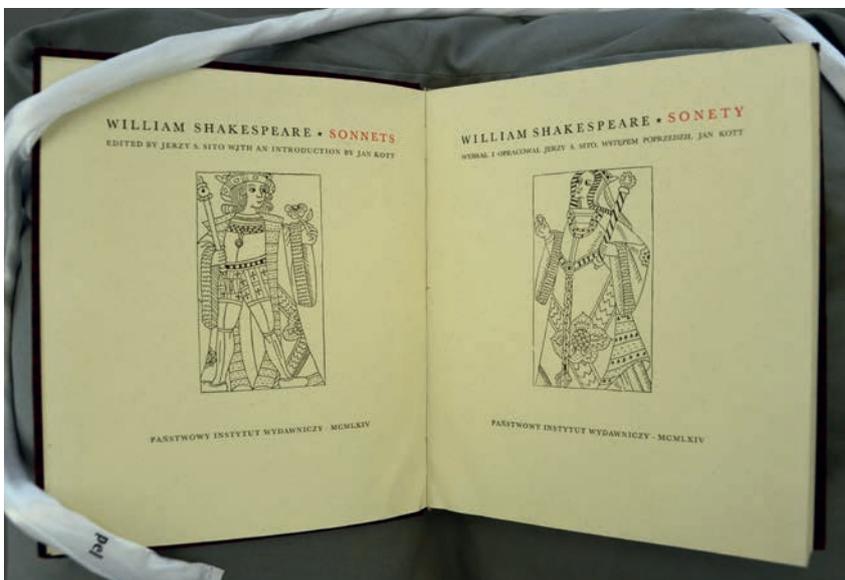
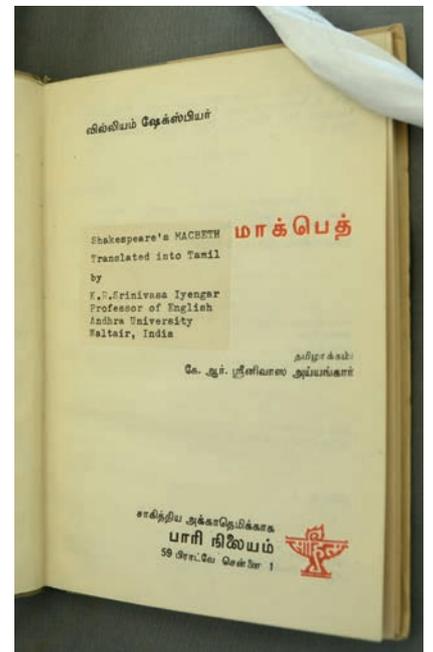
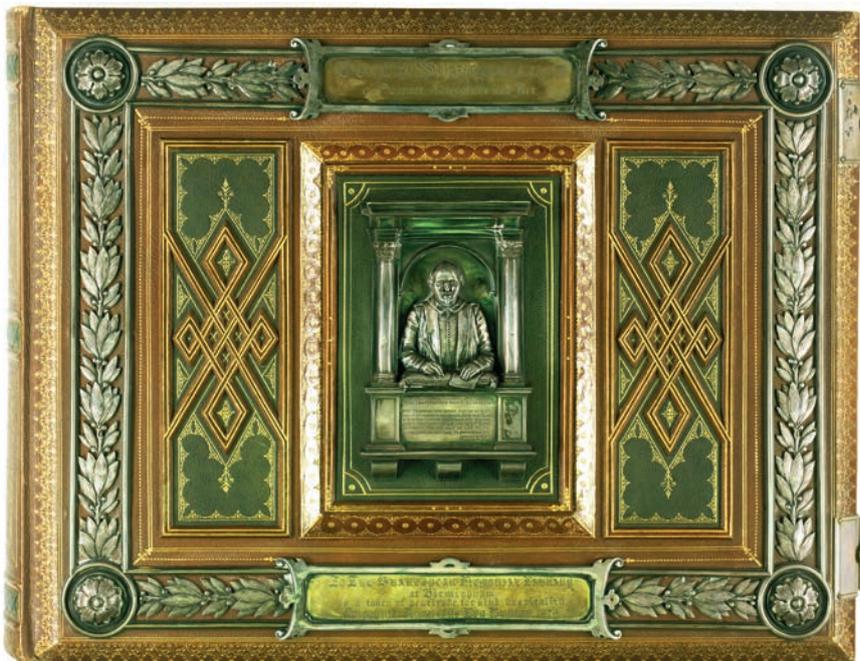
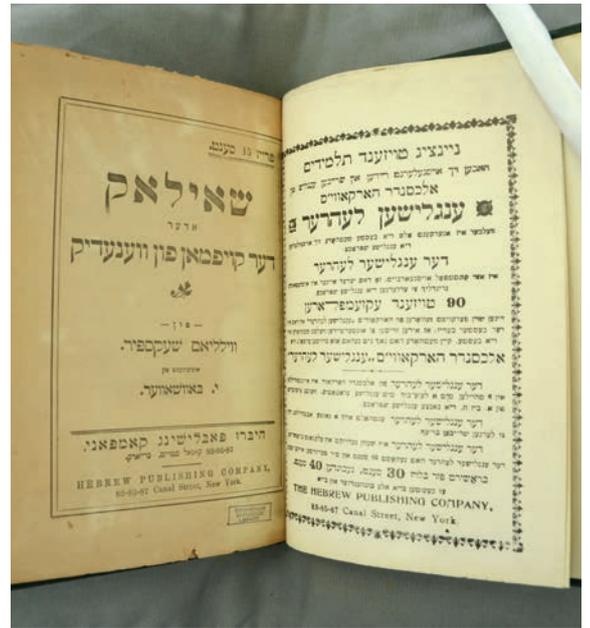
presented ‘to the Shakespeare Memorial Library as a token of gratitude for kind hospitality from Frederick Augustus Leo’ in 1878.

In the middle of the richly ornamented binding is a metal bust of Shakespeare modelled after that on Shakespeare’s tomb by the Berlin sculptor H. Bauch and produced in the electro-metallurgical workshop of L. Wolter.

Thankfully, this token of international fellow-feeling based in Birmingham and based on Shakespeare was rescued from the 1879 fire.

Posters in numerous different languages. The Library contains approximately 800 posters from around the world, including amateur, professional and school productions
Below: Punjabi edition of *Othello*





Clockwise: Some examples of Shakespeare's work in a variety of languages – braille, Hebrew, Tamil and Polish; the richly decorated binding of the 'German Shakespeareans in Science, Literature and Art', 1878

Art, Photography, Film & Music

The Shakespeare Memorial Library boasts some 17,000 images in a variety of media.

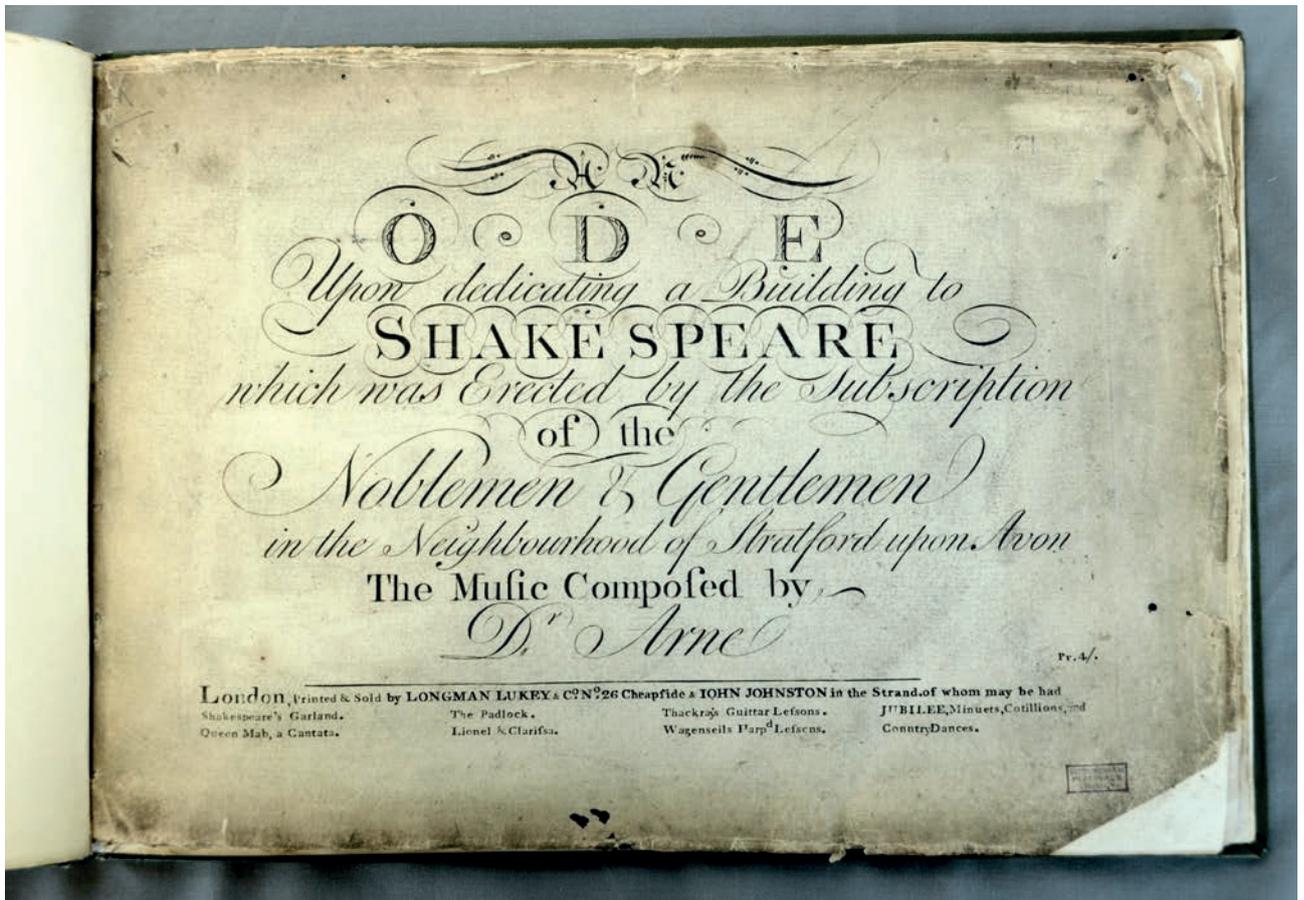
There are photographs from British, international, professional and amateur productions. These include fine examples of early theatrical photography and more recent images which illustrate how approaches to presenting Shakespeare have changed over time.

The Library contains thousands of illustrations relating to the life and work of Shakespeare. Some of the Library's important limited editions feature the work of famous artists like Picasso, Dalí and Cocteau.

The Collection also includes around 200 music scores ranging from incidental music to opera. The oldest is a 1676 copy of a score written by Robert Johnson in around 1613. Johnson knew Shakespeare and worked with him on music for *The Tempest* and other plays.



Left: Salvador Dalí design for *As You Like It*, 1948. Right: Laurence Olivier, who was a member of Birmingham Repertory Company in the 1920s, made personal donations to the Library, including production photos from his 1944 *Henry V*



Top: Original film poster for *The Taming of the Shrew*, 1967

Above: In 1769 David Garrick organised the first great celebration of Shakespeare in Stratford-upon-Avon. Thomas Arne, the composer of *Rule Britannia*, wrote music especially for the occasion.



‘Everything to Everybody’

*Postscript by Professor Ewan Fernie, University of Birmingham,
Director of the ‘Everything to Everybody’ Project*

Birmingham has forgotten it is home to the first great Shakespeare Library in the world. It has also forgotten the world-leading vision this exemplifies of a democratic ‘cultural commonwealth’ – where the cultural wealth of a city is ultimately held in common and actively enjoyed by all.

The Library’s founder, George Dawson said,

‘The day will come when a man will be ashamed to shut up a picture by Raphael or a statue by any great master in a private house. These gifts of genius should be like the gift of God’s sunshine, open to all, for all, to be reached by all, and ultimately to be understood and enjoyed by all.’

He also said that ‘the library of a great town should be a library of the whole human intellect’.

What Dawson wanted for Birmingham was unrestricted freedom for each individual citizen to live his or her own life to the full.

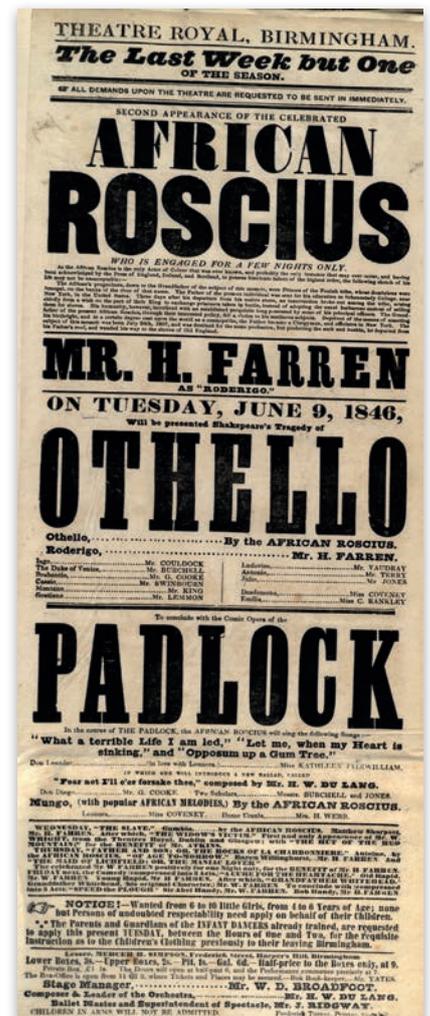
But he also wanted to stimulate a new sense of social solidarity and purpose.

Dawson believed that Shakespeare was a kind of prophet, one whose teaching could help us fuse together freedom and responsibility. He believed that Shakespeare’s portrayal of the largest possible cast of vividly realised characters afforded a glimpse of what the modern world could be.

It was a glimpse of solidarity in freedom – a window on a new, inclusive and ambitious culture. That was what Dawson wanted for Birmingham, and he did everything he could to make it happen.

The ‘Everything to Everybody’ Project aims to renew the Birmingham Shakespeare Memorial Library not just for but *with* the diverse population of today’s Birmingham in the hope of updating Dawson’s vision and recovering his ambition for Birmingham today.

Dawson knew that if we give everything to everybody – if we make the most of the life we live together – there is really no telling what we might achieve.



Opposite: Ewan Fernie with Adrian Lester looking at a Birmingham playbill from the Collection advertising the pioneering black actor Ira Aldridge’s *Othello*



Bust of George Dawson in the Library of Birmingham looking out over the modern city

Timeline

Date	George Dawson and the Shakespeare Memorial Library	Birmingham and the World
1821	George Dawson born in London	
1834		Birmingham Town Hall completed
1844	Dawson moves to Birmingham as minister of the Mount Zion Baptist Church	
1845	Dawson moves to take up the role of minister of the Church of the Saviour	
1864	Birmingham Shakespeare Library founded	Tercentenary of Shakespeare's birth
1865	Free Lending Library opened	
1866	Free Reference Library opened. George Dawson gives the opening address.	
1868	Opening of Shakespeare Memorial Library	
1873		Joseph Chamberlain elected Mayor of Birmingham
1874		Chamberlain takes the Birmingham water and gas supplies into municipal ownership.
1875		Completion of Council House
1876	Dawson dies aged 55 in Kings Norton	
1878	Work commences on the Free Library	Work commences on the construction of Corporation Street
1879	Fire destroys the first Shakespeare Memorial Library and Free Library	George Cadbury establishes new factory at Bournville
1881	Dawson Memorial unveiled in Chamberlain Square	
1882	Rebuilt Free Library opened, designed by Martin & Chamberlain	
1885		Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery founded
1889		Birmingham granted city status by Queen Victoria
1893		George Cadbury starts building Bournville model village
1900		University of Birmingham receives its Royal Charter
1901		Death of Queen Victoria
1906	Shakespeare Memorial Room reaches capacity. The Collection is extended into the floor below.	
1914-18		First World War
1937		Neville Chamberlain (1869-1940) becomes Prime Minister
1939-45		Second World War
1974	Birmingham Central Library opened. 1882 Library building demolished.	
1986	Shakespeare Memorial Library reconstructed in Birmingham School of Music complex	
2013	Library of Birmingham opened. Shakespeare Memorial Room reconstructed on 9th floor	

Further Reading & Acknowledgements

Further Reading

- Phillada Ballard (editor)
Birmingham's Victorian & Edwardian Architects
(Oblong/Victorian Society, 2009)
- Tristram Hunt
Building Jerusalem: The Rise and Fall of the Victorian City
(Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2004)
- Andy Foster
Pevsner Architectural Guide to Birmingham
(Yale, 2005)
- Emma Smith
Shakespeare's First Folio: Four Centuries of an Iconic Book
(Oxford University Press, 2016)
- Stanley Wells
Great Shakespeare Actors
(Oxford University Press, 2015)

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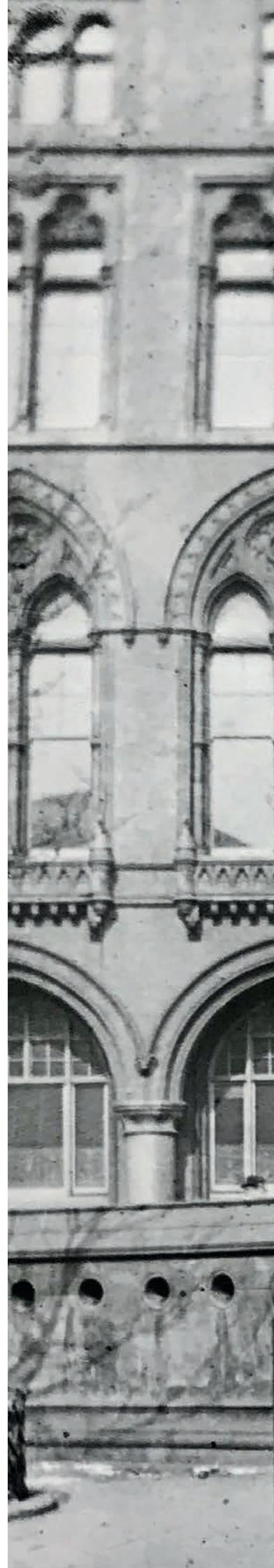
Photographs courtesy of The Library of Birmingham,
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The 'Everything to Everybody' Project is a
collaboration between the Shakespeare Institute,
University of Birmingham and the Library of Birmingham,
Birmingham City Council





George Dawson Memorial
by Francis Williamson



Birmingham's Shakespeare Memorial Library

The Birmingham Shakespeare Memorial Library was opened in 1868 as the first great Shakespeare library in the world; it remains the only internationally important Shakespeare collection owned by a public library. It holds around 100,000 items, ranging from the only First Folio bought for comprehensive (including working-class) education; to Shakespeare-related artwork by Dalí, Cocteau and Kokoschka; through materials in 93 languages from Abkhazian to Zulu, including late-nineteenth-century editions in braille. This splendid treasure-trove belongs to all the citizens of Birmingham. It is part of a great effort by the Library's founder, George Dawson, to establish a 'cultural commonwealth' in the city where great culture would be enjoyed and, indeed, actively recreated by all.

The 'Everything to Everybody' Project aims to share these riches across the diverse communities of today's city. It seeks to recapture a forgotten association between Birmingham and the Bard. And it will work to renew in time for the 2022 Commonwealth Games a proud heritage which for a period made Birmingham the most ambitious and forward-looking city in the world.