

## Scholars mark 700th birthday of medieval genius and erotic storyteller

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Academics at The University of Manchester and Bristol are marking the 700th birthday of one of the medieval world's greatest writers, credited with establishing the European storytelling traditions we know today.

Italian Giovanni Boccaccio, author of the 1351 Decameron, a collection of 100 tales ranging from the erotic to the tragic, will be honoured through a five-month exhibition at the University's John Rylands Library,

It is curated by Dr Guyda Armstrong and Professor Stephen Milner from The University of Manchester and Dr Rhiannon Daniels from the University of Bristol.

The same team are also hosting 60 Boccaccio scholars from around the world at a conference at Manchester Town Hall on 11-12 July.

Called 'Locating Boccaccio in 2013', the exhibition will showcase some of the world-renowned Boccaccio exhibits held by the John Rylands Library, alongside loans from other libraries and private collections.

Exhibits span the period from the fifteenth century to the digital age, from [medieval manuscripts](#) and early printed books, through private press editions and popular classics right up to the internet resource, the *Decameron Web*.

As well as the historic books, it contains a collection of new artists'

books, specially commissioned for the anniversary to offer new responses to Boccaccio and his works.

Professor Milner said: "We are delighted to be hosting the world's leading scholars in Boccaccio studies and showcase Manchester's outstanding collection of Boccaccio's works.

"His impact as a writer is vast, both as a founding father of the Renaissance and the revival of interest in the [classical world](#) and as an innovator in writing prose stories"

"His influence on figures as diverse as Chaucer and Salvador Dalí reflect the scale of his literary heritage "

Dr Armstrong said: "Boccaccio was a great humanist, and unlike Dante and other writers of the time, one of the first people to give women a voice.

"He's often described as the writer of 'dirty stories', but he's so much more than that because we can credit him with establishing the great European traditions of storytelling.

"But he is also the master of the double entendre and the sexual farce."

The star of the show is the 'Roxburghe Decameron', purchased by Mrs Rylands in 1892 from the Earl Spencer, and is the founding volume of the world's most exclusive book club - The Roxburghe Club.

The Roxburghe Club, which boasts just forty members at any one time, was founded in 1812 after the auction of the 1471 printed edition of Boccaccio's Decameron for a then world record price of £2,260 after a dramatic bidding war.

Provided by University of Manchester

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