FAU Hosts ‘Harry Potter’s World: Renaissance Science, Magic and Medicine,’ a Series of Exhibitions and Lectures

*Presentations Focus on Science, Rare Books from 1400 to 1750*

BOCA RATON, FL (March 15, 2010) – Florida Atlantic University Libraries will host “Harry Potter’s World: Renaissance Science, Magic and Medicine,” a traveling exhibition about the transformative period in science and medicine from 1400 to 1750, from Monday, March 22, through Friday, April 30, on FAU’s Boca Raton campus, 777 Glades Road.

The exhibition of six panels explores Harry Potter’s world, its roots in Renaissance science and the ethical questions that affected not only the wizards of Harry Potter, but historical thinkers of the 15th and 16th centuries. In conjunction with the exhibition, the library will feature 18 cases of rare books and pamphlets from FAU Libraries’ Marvin & Sybil Weiner Spirit of America Collection, a series of lectures by three FAU professors and a presentation by a modern artist/ALCHEMY.

“Since so many of our students have enjoyed the Harry Potter books, we are delighted to host this exciting exhibition to illustrate the often surprising relationship between the story of magic and the history of science,” said Dr. William Miller, dean of libraries.

The library’s exhibitions and lectures examine the early development of experimental science and the movement from traditional interpretation to rational observation. The rare books exhibition features several dozen first and early editions from the Renaissance and Reformation periods and illustrates the religious, philosophical and political changes that led to the birth of modern science. Other items will include Medicina Rara facsimiles of early medical texts, hand-painted manuscripts, a beautifully-illustrated Roman Catholic missal, and diaries on symbolism and alchemy.

Dr. Marina Banchetti, associate dean of the Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters, will kick off the lecture series with a presentation titled “The Influence of Renaissance Hermeticism on the Scientific Revolution,” on Tuesday, March 23, at 2 p.m. at the Wimberly Library. Banchetti’s lecture will focus on how Renaissance Hermeticism influenced four major developments that defined the Scientific Revolution and helped distinguish modern science from its predecessors.

A second lecture, “Medicine, Magic and the Culture of Humanism in Renaissance Europe,” will be presented by Dr. Ben Lowe, associate professor of history at FAU, on Thursday, April 1, at 2 p.m. at the library. Lowe will discuss the culture of science and medicine during the Renaissance, which often crossed over into the realm of what today would be called magic.
Dr. Robin Jordan, professor of physics at FAU, will present the third lecture titled “Johannes Kepler (1571-1630): A Man of Contrasts,” on Wednesday, April 14, at 2 p.m. at the library. Kepler, one of the most influential mathematicians and astronomers of all times, discovered that the Earth and planets travel about the Sun in elliptical orbits. He was a profoundly religious man and incorporated religious arguments and reasoning into his work. Kepler’s opinions resulted in his exclusion from the sacrament in the Lutheran church and his refusal to convert to Catholicism left him alienated by Lutherans and Catholics.

“These interrelated lectures promise to be utterly fascinating,” said Ellen Randolph, rare books librarian at FAU. “Not only are the lecturers scholars, artists and authors, they bring personal passion and dedication to their lecture topics, weaving the atmosphere, people and ideas of the Renaissance together into a harmonious whole.”

Before settling into a career in the book arts, Daniel Kelm, artist and contemporary alchemist, received formal training in chemistry and taught at the University of Minnesota. Kelm will discuss and display his work, which reflects his knowledge of physical science and bookbinding with interests in alchemy and philosophy to produce a unique body of sculptural and kinetic bookwork, on Friday, April 16, at 7 p.m. at the library.

The National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health developed and produced the exhibition and began touring it in September 2009. British author J.K. Rowling introduced Harry Potter to the world in 1997, and although a fantasy story, her Harry Potter books are partially based on Renaissance traditions that played an important role in the development of Western science, including alchemy, astrology and natural philosophy.

The exhibition can be viewed during library hours, which can be found at [www.library.fau.edu/geninfo/hours.htm?boca](http://www.library.fau.edu/geninfo/hours.htm?boca) or by calling 561-297-3770. The rare books exhibition inside the Weiner suite can be viewed Monday through Friday from 1 to 5 p.m. For more information, visit [www.library.fau.edu/depts/spc/spc/spiritofamerica_calendar.htm](http://www.library.fau.edu/depts/spc/spc/spiritofamerica_calendar.htm)

-FAU-

About Florida Atlantic University:

* Florida Atlantic University opened its doors in 1964 as the fifth public university in Florida. Today, the University serves more than 28,000 undergraduate and graduate students on seven campuses and sites. Building on its rich tradition as a teaching university, with a world-class faculty, FAU hosts 10 colleges: College of Architecture, Urban & Public Affairs, Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts & Letters, the Charles E. Schmidt College of Biomedical Science, the College of Business, the College of Education, the College of Engineering & Computer Science, the Harriet L. Wilkes Honors College, the Graduate College, the Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing and the Charles E. Schmidt College of Science. For more information, visit [www.fau.edu](http://www.fau.edu).
Cutlines:
Photo #1: Image from “Harry Potter’s World: Renaissance Science, Magic and Medicine,” courtesy of National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health.
Photo #2: Francis Bacon, founder of the scientific movement, from Resuscitatio, 1661.
Photo #3: Illustrated title page from rare anatomy book Tabulae anatomicae LXXIX, 1627.