

**Octavofest: Celebrating the Book and Paper Arts**, is in its eighth year of organizing and promoting events throughout Greater Cleveland during October. Referencing the page size produced by folding a sheet of paper three times to produce eight leaves, the octavo is still a common size for printed books.

The origins of Octavofest began in 2006 with The Artistry of Words, a “Books and Art” festival at the Heights Main Library. The next two years saw it reworked as The Joy of Text, drawing in the Heights Arts Collaborative. The first Octavofest debuted in 2009, and featured eight events, coordinated by Art Books Cleveland (ABC), an organization founded in 2008 to advance appreciation of the book arts. This year there are more than 50, hosted by over 20 collaborating organizations and institutions from Oberlin to Akron. Program details are at <http://www.octavofest.com/>

Each year, Octavofest schedules include a wide variety of programs, each designed, organized, and promoted by a grass-roots coalition of collaborators who leverage their own venues, audiences, expertise, staff, and other resources. Events range from lectures, workshops, and public demonstrations to exhibitions and tours of rare book collections. The 9<sup>th</sup> annual ABC show of abecedaria – alphabet books – show is at Loganberry Books on Larchmere Boulevard in Cleveland, and handmade artist books on the theme “100” will be exhibited at Notre Dame College Gallery in South Euclid. Other artist book exhibitions are in the lobby of the Galleries at Cleveland State on Playhouse Square and at the Shaker Heights Public Library.

In 2016, Octavofest goes international! Ohio Humanities, a state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, and several local partners are hosting Rickey Tax, Head Librarian and Acting Director of the Meermann Museum in The Hague. The Meermann, established in 1848, is the world’s oldest book museum. Its extensive collection documents the history of handwritten and printed books in the west from Egyptian papyri to eBooks. Mr. Tax will present three public keynote talks in the area: at Cleveland State University, The Rowfant Club, and Oberlin College, which inaugurates a new Book Studies Certificate Program this year with Mr. Tax as guest speaker.

Octavofest partners Cleveland Public Library and Cleveland State University will continue Shakespeare-related programming, building on this summer’s exhibition of Shakespeare’s First Folio at CPL. Other events include a workshop on encapsulation at the Intermuseum Conservation Association, an origami program by Global Ties Akron, and an opportunity to view rare books in the collection of the Dittrick Museum of Medical History during Octavofest in the Circle on the 19<sup>th</sup>.

Outreach activities that began last spring saw ABC and Octavofest engage with the Promise Neighborhood Project in Cleveland’s Central district. DIY bookmaking projects using recycled materials were distributed through Little Free Libraries, and monthly children’s workshops were held at the Sterling Library Branch. The work produced will be exhibited throughout October and a public event featuring children’s handmade puppets and art demonstrations will occur there on the 15<sup>th</sup>. This year’s celebration includes new venues for Octavofest traditions such as WatchART!, public events where book and paper artists work on projects in progress and talk with visitors about the book as an object.

For nearly two decades we have been hearing that the book is dead. Like the advent of the “paperless office,” the demise of the book has been overstated. Since the 1950s when the first modern “artist books” began to appear, the popularity of the book as art object has thrived. A broad approach to the book encompasses everything from the archaeology of cuneiform tablets to legal issues in copyright protection to the sociology of literacy. Octavofest has, since its inception, taken an interdisciplinary

approach, incorporating diverse institutional philosophies and types of programming into each year's schedule. Octavofest participants look at the book with a new appreciation and a new awareness, contemplating both the history and future of books, and revisiting their own interest in and experience of the book as a "container," not only of information but also aesthetic enjoyment.

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