

'Rivers of Ink' is the story of the journey of a 1500year old book, a book whose roots go even further back into the ancient past.

We begin with the transformation of the spoken word into writing, and the development of writing materials such as papyrus and parchment.

Travelling from person to person, from country to country through time, the words flow through the minds of men and women, being repeated, copied, and translated into a varied collection of individual poems, letters, histories, stories, and accounts.

Finally, in the 8th century, they were brought together into one 'library', as one book, called the Bible, in the North East of England.

'Rivers of Ink' uses the Codex Amiatinus, the world's oldest complete Bible, as a unique lens with which to look into the past.

The piece reveals how important writing is to humans, that it is a form of communication that ties us today to every ancestor of ours that has ever used a symbol to 'speak' to another person. It considers that when we look at any writing, it is more than simply words. It is a collective ocean of human endeavour, built from multiple streams and rivers of ink across languages, nations, and continents.
It is our human story.

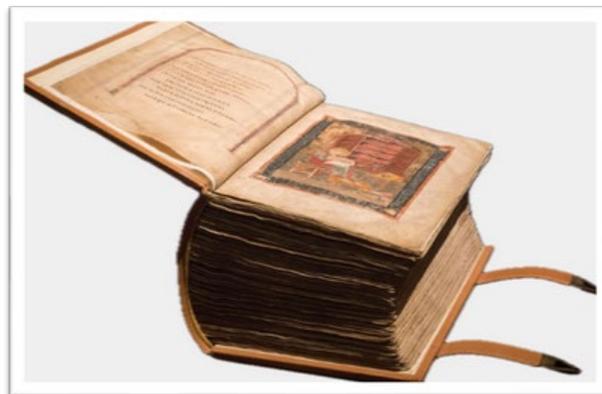


The journey takes us from early Greek fragments

To individual Latin volumes



Leading all the way to turn of the eighth century and the Northumbrian Codex Amiatinus, which transformed the separate volumes of scriptural books into one all-encompassing book: the Bible as we know it today.



Following on from the successful collaboration with The Projection Studio on the 'CODEX' tour in 2022, 'Rivers of Ink' combines a new captivating light and sound show with short, engaging talks by academics from Durham University hosted by venues across the North East. Each event will showcase stunning manuscript images, spanning from ancient to early medieval, and highlight the key role played by this region in the history of book production, exemplified by the creation of one of the most important books in the world.

Celebrating the wealth of Northumbrian heritage, the talks will be tailored to each venue, offering visitors and hosts a memorable glimpse 1300 years into the past, creatively combining research in theology, history, and archaeology, as well as the medieval culinary delights offered when the tour visits Blackfriars restaurant in Newcastle.

Other planned venues include St Paul's Church, Jarrow, and Durham Cathedral. Unlike the wonderful Lindisfarne Gospels, Codex Amiatinus is not so widely known in the region of its birth. We hope to change that and to increase appreciation of the other great Northumbrian book!

*Additional information for teachers
about our events for schools*

'Rivers of Ink' also offers scheduled events for schools, arranged through our partner venues.

After watching the sound and light show, pupils will hear about the history of writing technology, learning about things like papyrus, parchment and even wax tablets - roughly the size of an iPad - used by the Romans and people in the Early Middle Ages to take notes in class and even erase their schoolwork.

Talks will also cover the ink used to write the codex, providing a glimpse into the scientific understanding of the Early Middle Ages. This black ink was made through a chemical reaction between crushed gall nuts from oak trees and iron sulphate.

Use the QR code below for further information about the project, as well as tour dates and venues.



*Professor Francis Watson from Durham's
Department of Theology with Codex
Amiatinus in the Laurentian Library,
Florence*