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### **Poetry Foundation to Open Its New Home**

*Will Host Two-day Open House, Performances in New Cultural Building Dedicated to Poetry*

CHICAGO — When Harriet Monroe founded *Poetry* magazine in 1912, she wrote that her publication was “a modest effort to give to poetry her own place.” Now, nearly one hundred years later, poetry quite literally has that place. This month, the Poetry Foundation will open its new home in Chicago. The first space in Chicago dedicated solely to the art of poetry, the new building realizes Monroe’s dream, set out in her very first editorial, that the magazine would help poets pursue their art, increase public interest in poetry, and raise poetry’s profile in our culture. Funding for Poetry Foundation programming has been made possible through a generous bequest from Indianapolis pharmaceutical heiress Ruth Lilly.

From the moment the doors open on June 25, the building will welcome the community and encourage visitors to interact with and experience poetry. The two-day grand-opening weekend celebration will feature a stellar lineup of poets who will participate in readings, panel discussions, and book signings (a full schedule is available to download as part of the electronic press kit at [www.poetryfoundation.org/downloads/fullpresskit-building.zip](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/downloads/fullpresskit-building.zip)). Free tickets to the readings and panels were made available online in late May. Within days, nearly all of the tickets were claimed. No tickets are needed to visit the building or attend a book signing, and visitors are welcome to explore the space throughout the weekend. Activities, including self-guided building tours and technology demonstrations, will occur throughout the day.

“We are excited to open our doors to the public and invite audiences from around the world to enjoy the art of poetry at a new destination,” said Donald G. Marshall, Poetry Foundation board chair. “The building reinforces our long-term commitment to the city of Chicago and adds to the city’s reputation as a leading center of literary activity on both a local and national level.”

The building’s primary purpose is to help the Foundation carry out its mission of discovering and celebrating the best poetry and putting it before the largest possible audience. The ground floor of the two-story building is devoted to public use and includes a multipurpose performance space acoustically designed for the spoken word,

a public garden, a library holding a 30,000-volume non-circulating collection, and an exhibition gallery. The new building provides a destination for poetry and, according to Poetry Foundation president John Barr, will help build and sustain audiences for the art.

“Poetry is something people reach for at both the highs and lows of their lives. More and more people are discovering and enjoying poetry, and the growth of our programs really bears that out,” said Barr. “Our new space preserves, creates, and ensures a future audience for poetry. The building will help us continue the oral tradition of reading and reciting poetry out loud, while shining a national spotlight on Chicago as the home of *Poetry*, one of the oldest and most important literary magazines in the English-speaking world.”

Located at 61 West Superior Street and designed by the Chicago firm John Ronan Architects, the building, which includes 22,000 square feet of interior space and a nearly 4,000-square-foot public garden, takes its cues from the art form it represents. Like a poem that invites multiple readings, the space encourages repeat visits, revealing itself slowly, over time. Clad in a black zinc screen wall, the building is by turns opaque and transparent, depending on how it is viewed. It is also environmentally sustainable and built to comply with the US Green Building Council’s Silver Level LEED Rating System.

“The project is designed from the inside out. Its design is about relationships, not form or shape, and is predicated on the experience of the visitor, who moves through and between the various material layers that peel away to uncover the rich spatial sequence of the project,” said architect John Ronan. “Unlike much of contemporary architecture, it cannot be reduced to a single image; it has to be experienced to be understood. It is not meant to be a loud architectural statement that screams for attention, but a subtle spatial narrative that slowly unfolds.”

The total cost for the building, including land acquisition and construction, is \$21.5 million.

Ruth Lilly, who died in December 2009 at the age of ninety-four, began her long association with *Poetry* magazine by submitting poems. Although they were not published, she appreciated the magazine’s attention to fledgling writers. In 1986 she began endowing a \$100,000 annual prize to poets in recognition of lifetime achievement. In 1989 she created Ruth Lilly Poetry Fellowships of \$15,000 each, awarded annually to undergraduate or graduate students selected through a national competition and administered by the Poetry Foundation. In 2008 the Foundation increased the number of Lilly Fellowships awarded each year from two to five. Lilly’s historic gift to *Poetry* in 2002 ensured that poetry will continue to play a significant role in our culture.

The staff of the Foundation’s programs—including *Poetry* magazine; the online, media, youth, and events initiatives; and the Harriet Monroe Poetry Institute—will relocate their offices from rented space on Michigan Avenue to the second floor of the new building. In addition to housing current activities and the new library collection, the Foundation’s

new space will allow the organization to increase the number of public events it sponsors as part of its programming. Additional functions for the space include staged events combining poetry and the visual or performing arts; gallery exhibits from the *Poetry* archives; discussion groups with teachers and students; collaborations with other literary organizations; and audio and video archiving of on-site events.

Area high school students who participated in the Poetry Foundation's signature youth program, "Poetry Out Loud," will be among the first to use the building, recording some of their winning recitations in the new building's recording studio.

The Poetry Foundation's new home is one of only three public spaces in the nation built exclusively for the advancement of poetry, along with Poets House in Manhattan and the dedicated poetry center at the University of Arizona in Tucson.

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### **About the Poetry Foundation**

The Poetry Foundation, publisher of *Poetry* magazine and one of the largest literary organizations in the world, exists to discover and celebrate the best poetry and to place it before the largest possible audience. The Poetry Foundation seeks to be a leader in shaping a receptive climate for poetry by developing new audiences, creating new avenues for delivery, and encouraging new kinds of poetry through innovative literary prizes and programs. For more information, please visit [poetryfoundation.org](http://poetryfoundation.org). Follow the Poetry Foundation and *Poetry* on Facebook at [facebook.com/poetryfoundation](https://www.facebook.com/poetryfoundation) or on Twitter @PoetryFound.

### **About Poetry**

Founded in Chicago by Harriet Monroe in 1912, *Poetry* is the oldest monthly devoted to verse in the English-speaking world. Monroe's "Open Door" policy, set forth in Volume I of the magazine, remains the most succinct statement of *Poetry*'s mission: to print the best poetry written today, in whatever style, genre, or approach. The magazine established its reputation early by publishing the first important poems of T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Marianne Moore, Wallace Stevens, H.D., William Carlos Williams, Carl Sandburg, and other now-classic authors. In succeeding decades it has presented—often for the first time—works by virtually every major contemporary poet.

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