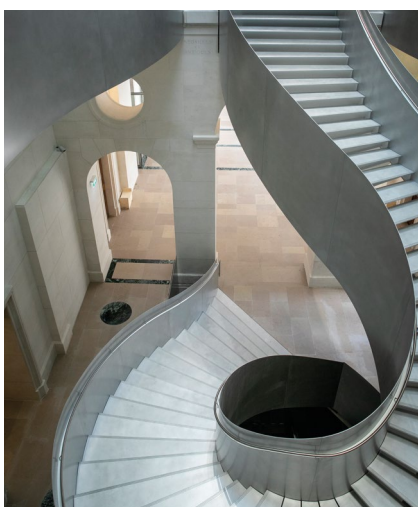




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The historic birthplace of the Bibliothèque nationale de France will be opening to all on 17 September 2022

On 17 September 2022, the Richelieu site, the historic birthplace of the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), will be opening fully after renovation and refurbishment work spanning more than a decade.

Reading, studying, contemplating, visiting : by welcoming all audiences to this iconic venue in Paris' historic centre, which was long reserved for researchers, the BnF is upholding one of its chief purposes – to bring knowledge and culture within everyone's reach. Readers, researchers, visitors and anyone simply wishing to pop in will be able to enjoy a cultural offering that has been completely renewed, revealing the wealth and diversity of the BnF's collections, first formed back in the Middle Ages by the Kings of France and developed continuously ever since.

Free of charge and completely at their leisure, the general public will be able to access the Oval Room, an architectural masterpiece that has been fully restored and which now serves as both a reading room and enlightening visitor attraction. The BnF's new 1,200 sq.m. museum will showcase nearly 900 pieces – from antiquity through to the present day – representing the encyclopaedic breadth of the BnF's collections.

Since 2016, the Richelieu site has been an established research campus devoted to history and history of art, bringing together the BnF, the library of the Institut national d'histoire de l'art (INHA) and that of the École nationale des chartes. By opening up the whole of the site, the BnF is unveiling a wholly original, multi-faceted venue – the culmination of a sweeping architectural and cultural project. Boasting a spectacular public reading room, new rooms for researchers, a museum, temporary exhibition gallery, bookshop, café and garden, it is poised to welcome people from all walks of life.

The site's opening will be celebrated over the weekend of 17-18 September 2022 with free events put on by Director Anne-Laure Liégeois.



Mansart Gallery © Jean-Christophe Ballot / BnF

Renaissance of the BnF | Richelieu

The historic site of the Bibliothèque nationale de France is reopening in time to mark the 300th anniversary of its first installation in the former Mazarin Palace, in 1721-1722. Owing to the constant growth of the BnF's collections, the search for space has been an enduring thread running throughout its history. **This is the first time that the BnF has been able to renovate and redesign the original building in its entirety. The challenge for the architects was to illuminate the historical layers of the building while guaranteeing overall coherence, opening up and breathing modernity into a site whose stones are steeped in centuries' worth of history.**

Through this reopening, the BnF embraces its full identity, shaped by both banks of the River Seine. It has over 40 million documents in its safekeeping, primarily across two sites: François-Mitterrand for printed documents and audiovisual documents ; and Richelieu for the so-called "specialist" collections – manuscripts, drawings, engravings, photographs, maps and plans, coins and medals, antiques and jewellery... amounting to more than 20 million documents.

In addition to the rooms open since 2016 at the Manuscripts Department and Performing Arts Department, researchers will be able to access new, fully renovated reading rooms for the Coins, Medals & Antiques, Prints & Photography and Maps & Plans Departments. The Manuscripts Room is now the Manuscripts & Music Room. A rehearsal studio will also be accessible to researchers using the Music Department.

Preserving its inestimable collections under the very best conditions, providing researchers with an inspiring working environment and giving everyone the opportunity to enjoy this common good: such was the overarching ambition of the site's renovation.



Oval Room © Jean-Christophe Ballot / BnF

The Oval Room : a heritage gem now freely accessible to all

Symbolising the Richelieu site's opening, the «Oval Paradise» as it was nicknamed – an architectural masterpiece designed right at the end of the 19th century by Jean-Louis Pascal and inaugurated in 1936 – will once again fulfil its original purpose as a venue which the public can access for free and completely at their leisure. More than 20,000 volumes will be freely available for consultation there, yielding insight into heritage

and art history as well as comics and digital art. **Much more than just a reading room, the Oval Room will thus become an enlightening visitor attraction, open to wide-ranging experiences thanks to innovative features including the possibility of virtually trying on costumes, for an enthralling journey through the BnF's collections.**



BnF museum © Élie Ludwig / BnF

The BnF's new museum : universal heritage shared with all

The BnF's new museum shines the spotlight on the full extent of the library's encyclopaedic collections, from antiquity through to the present day, with nearly 900 pieces on display, telling a cultural and intellectual history of France and its relations with other countries. Among the exhibits, such rare items as the Great Cameo of France, Throne of Dagobert or Charlemagne chess set will be showcased. Manuscripts, whether illuminated (*Psalter of Saint Louis*) or representative of defining moments in philosophy and literature, such as Blaise Pascal's *Pensées* and Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, will take pride of place alongside prints by artists from Rembrandt to Picasso, images by photographers from Nadar to Depardon, objects, costumes and more.

The museum will grace over 1,200 sq.m. of space across some of the Richelieu site's most exquisite areas, not least the Mazarin Gallery (heart of the former Cardinal's Palace), which has been fully restored and adorned with Baroque frescoes by Romanelli.

Audience outreach tools will enable the public to engage with the collections on display and to see the bigger historical picture behind each piece. A programme of temporary exhibitions in the Mansart Gallery will round off this cultural offering, starting with *Molière, le jeu du vrai et du faux (Molière, a game of true and false)*, which will run from 27 September 2022 to 15 January 2023.



Entrance in Rue Vivienne © Jean-Christophe Ballot / BnF

An architectural journey through time

The architects Bruno Gaudin and Virginie Brégal, with the support of Jean-François Lagneau and Michel Trubert, Chief Architects of Historical Monuments, have redesigned the prestigious complex of heritage buildings forming the BnF I Richelieu, not only to modernise and repurpose it for new uses, but also to bring its splendour to the fore by shedding light on the work of their predecessors.

On an architectural stroll through the 17th to the 21st centuries, encompassing the achievements of architects Mansart, de Cotte, Labrousse, Pascal and Roux-Spitz, the public can admire a « vast archipelago of spaces », many of which are listed or inscribed on the list of historical monuments for example. These include the Mazarin and Mansart Galleries, Oval Room and Louis xv lounge with their ornate painted decoration by Romanelli, Boucher, Van Loo and Natoire, as well as the more recent Glass Gallery for instance. Thanks to this architectural layout championing transparency, free movement and openness, the visitor trail also includes views onto hitherto unseen reading rooms and some stacks, whose styles reflect the different periods in the site's construction.

This journey through time charts the history of one of the world's most comprehensive libraries, where change has been an enduring hallmark, and which today magnificently juxtaposes its historical dimension and contemporary relevance.



Vivienne Garden © Gilles Clément

Le jardin Vivienne

Designed by landscape architect Gilles Clément together with Antoine Quenardel and Mirabelle Croizier, as part of the 1% artistique procedure*, this public garden in Rue Vivienne will stage a collection of plants bearing the Latin name *papyrifera*, used in the production of writing and printing materials. Entitled « *Hortus Papyrifera* », this project is especially meaningful for the BnF – an authoritative custodian of paper-based works – in that it reflects restored coherence with the architecture of the Mazarin Palace built by François Mansart...

* An initiative requiring that a sum of money be set aside during all public building construction or extension plans for the production of one or more site-specific artworks aimed at familiarising the public with contemporary art styles.

The BnF I Richelieu thus welcomes readers, researchers, history, art and heritage enthusiasts and visitors eager to admire the treasures of encyclopaedic collections formed by the Kings of France since the late Middle Ages, as well as their historical settings, learn more via the fun digital devices or unwind in the shade of a garden. Along the route from the Louvre to the Opéra, near the Musée des Arts décoratifs, Palais-Royal and Comédie-Française, with its two entrances in Rue de Richelieu and Rue Vivienne, the Richelieu site harbours truly outstanding heritage which is now open to all – right in the heart of Paris.



In the run-up to the reopening : an exhibition to (re)acquaint yourselves with the history of the BnF | Richelieu

The exhibition immerses visitors in the eventful history of the Richelieu site (known as the Quadrilatère for its four-sided geometric layout), ever since the BnF's installation in the Mazarin Palace. It chronicles the site's architectural developments through to the project led by Bruno Gaudin's architecture firm, framing them within their wider historical context. The exhibition delves into the origins and formation of the collections, from the arrival of the first prints of the Royal Library in 1721 which marked the beginning of a closely shared history between the Library and the Palace, destined to become the "Richelieu site" of the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

It also explores how the BnF's audiences have evolved over time, from the 18th century inquisitive visitors and scholars to the 21st century researchers and readers. The collections that have resonated with them and the cultural offering of this "new" BnF | Richelieu are two further themes.

Lastly, it presents the renovated Richelieu site, illustrating its developments and renaissance in keeping with the new calling of a 21st century library.

The Bibliothèque nationale de France at Richelieu. History of a renaissance

BnF | François-Mitterrand, allée Julien Cain

Until 16 October 2022

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Support the renaissance of the Oval Room and be remembered as part of the history of Richelieu

3,200 donors and prominent partners have contributed to the Richelieu site's renaissance.

There is still time for you too to associate your name with the "Oval Heaven" by supporting the restoration of this spectacular setting.

10 bookshelves and 10 lamps are still available for « adoption », for a €1,000 fee (€340 after deductible tax relief).

It is also possible to donate an amount of your choice (starting at €10) towards the restoration of the Oval Room.

Participate on www.bnf.fr



Oval Room © Jean-Christophe Ballot / BnF Oppic



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