The Shakespearean Archive

Why is Shakespeare so often associated with information technologies and with the idea of archiving itself? Alan Galey explores this question through the entwined histories of Shakespearean texts and archival technologies over the past four centuries. In chapters dealing with the archive, the book, photography, sound, information, and data, Galey analyzes how Shakespeare became prototypical material for publishing experiments and new media projects, as well as for theories of archiving and computing. Analyzing examples of the Shakespearean archive from the seventeenth century to today, he takes an original approach to Shakespeare and new media that will be of interest to scholars of the digital humanities, Shakespeare studies, archives, and media history. Rejecting the idea that current forms of computing are the result of technical forces beyond the scope of humanist inquiry, this book instead offers a critical prehistory of digitization read through the afterlives of Shakespeare’s texts.

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For Gerry and Joan Galey
and in memory of Evelyn Galey, 1919–2006
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Preface

The inspiration for this book came from a rare opportunity I was given a few years ago to create a digital interface for the Electronic New Variorum Shakespeare (ENVS), the Modern Language Association’s continuation of Horace Howard Furness’s series of variorum editions begun in 1870, itself a descendant of the work of Malone, Boswell, Capell, Johnson, and other eighteenth-century editors. As I worked with the meticulously crafted XML code of the ENVS editions created by Julia Flanders and Kitto Weikert, I became distracted (productively, one hopes) by the rich cultural history of the project in which I found myself working, whose edges kept receding into the shadowy space of what I came to think of as the Shakespearean archive. That curiosity took shape in 2009 as a project funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) titled Archive and Interface in Digital Textual Studies. That project had a twofold rationale: first, that we cannot build and study digital archives without giving serious thought to interfaces as cultural artifacts; and second, that such inquiry might profitably be carried out by a multi-modal project that combines hands-on digital experimentation with a reconsideration of the cultural history of archival interfaces. The digital experimentation has taken the form of my online project www.VisualizingVariation.ca, and the cultural history has primarily taken the form of this book. A shorter version of Chapter 6 and a few passages in Chapter 7 were published as “Networks of Deep Impression: Shakespeare and the History of Information,” in Shakespeare Quarterly, 61.3 (2010), 289–312, and two paragraphs in Chapter 1 are taken from “The Human Presence in Digital Artifacts,” in Willard McCarty (ed.), Text and Genre in Reconstruction: Effects of Digitalization on Ideas, Behaviours, Products, and Institutions (Cambridge: Open Book, 2010), pp. 93–117.

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Association, the Renaissance Society of America, the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading, and Publishing, the Society for Textual Scholarship, and especially the Shakespeare Association of America. I am also grateful to the organizers and audiences of the many invited talks that helped me develop the ideas in this book over the past several years.

I am fortunate to be part of so many stimulating intellectual communities at my home institution, such that they require their own paragraph. At the University of Toronto I am especially grateful to the students, faculty, and other members of the Book History and Print Culture collaborative graduate program, the Jackman Humanities Institute, the Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, and the McLuhan Coach House Institute. I owe a special debt to the University of Toronto’s Faculty of Information (iSchool), not only for its institutional support but also for the adventurous, interdisciplinary, and intellectually hospitable community created by its students, faculty, staff, and alumni. I hope that a great many of my colleagues will see their influence reflected in this book, and I particularly wish to thank Joan Cherry, Wendy Duff, Patricia Fleming, Steve Hockema, Lynne Howarth, Heather MacNeil, Matt Ratto, Seamus Ross, Brian Cantwell Smith, and my students over the past several years. I was also privileged to work with outstanding research assistants on this project, namely Peter Gorman, Sarah Lubelski, Emily Monks-Leeson, Rebecca Niles, and Matthew Wells.

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Abbreviations

All parenthetically cited Shakespeare quotations are from Jowett, *et al.* (eds.), *The Oxford Shakespeare*.

F1  
*Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies* (London, 1623)

F2  
*Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies* (London, 1632)

**Bell Family Papers**  

**Furness Family Papers**  
Furness Family Papers (Ms. Col. 481), University of Pennsylvania, Rare Book and Manuscript Library

**NVS**  
*New Variorum Shakespeare*

**OED**  