

Clara Biesel, "The Pen's Excellencie: Transposing the Hand through Print and Digitization"

As archival libraries become more digitized and access to them is more widely available the scholarly community must wrestle with the questions of the benefits and limitations of digital archives. An underrecognized source for considering these questions is the handwriting manuals from the early 1600s, as the writers of those books are exploring the limitations and benefits of the wide accessibility of printed texts on handwriting. In this case study of Martin Billingsley's book, *The Pen's Excellencie*, I show the ways in which Billingsley uses the medium of printing as a means of dissuading his readers from the lesser authorities on penmanship who are teaching in person, focusing only on his expertise available through print, engaging strong forces of cultural nostalgia and anxiety. In both cases (whether it is manuscript transposed into print in the 17th century or physical books made digital in the 21st,) mediating the handiwork of an individual through technology changes the meaning of that work and also changes how we use that work in the world.

Kevin Chovanec, "Randomness, Spontaneity and the Early Modern Codex"

Scholars of the digital humanities, over the last two decades, have often focused on continuity between print and digital media, demonstrating that many differences have been exaggerated; yet the randomness possible in digital publication seems to be radically new. The internet is filled with random generators – lottery number generators, magic eight balls, spinning wheels -- which would all be impossible in print. At the same time, however, randomness and spontaneity were key components of several kinds of composition in the early modern period, from traveling actors who catered to local tastes to bee-like authors composing their commonplace books. Once these books were finalized, bound in codex, of course, they became static, complete forms; and yet, perhaps this stasis belies the dynamism inherent in both how the work was composed and how it was used. Composers found passages serendipitously, and readers in search of inspiration from various texts might turn to a random passage. Even more, this occurred as ideas of randomness, long tied to the supernatural, were changing. In this paper, I examine how randomness in digital publication can highlight features of early modern literary cultures, including manuscript and performance, and help us recognize ways in which spontaneity was integrated into the codex form. I argue that the dynamism of this digital tool can, in fact, help us better understand both writerly and readerly cultures in the period.

Mark C. Hulse, "Bibliography, Bibliometrics, and Bad Quartos Revisited"

This essay that derives from my dissertation considers the legacy of New Bibliography, exploring ways in which traditional study of physical texts can uncover questions of authority and reception. While the notion of "bad" quartos that was popularized by Alfred Pollard in 1909 has been challenged in recent decades, I revisit some of the tenets of the theory in light of more recent attempts to shed light on the book trade (e.g. works by Peter Blayney and Lukas Erne). I propose that there are many secrets that first-hand engagement with texts can help to reveal, often facilitated by the workmanlike efforts of bibliographers of yesteryear. By appealing to details from playbook title pages and to survival rates of these same playbooks (bibliometric data) I argue that many current assumptions about reprints and profitability may be mistaken. Furthermore, I trace how depressed numbers of extant copies correspond with quartos labeled "bad," defending the hypothesis that Shakespeare's contemporaries treated these playbooks in distinctively different ways based on their perceived lower quality and possibly less forthright modes of transmission into print.