Scholarly (re)turns to the Alfred Knight Collection

Brandi Adams

In recent years, book historians and bibliographers from a variety of disciplines have begun to reconsider what it means to be a practitioner of these fields in contemporary academia. Lisa Maruca and Kate Ozment's co-edited a special edition of *Criticism* (2022) demonstrate vital ways that scholars engage with bibliography as scholarship that rightfully includes feminism, critical race studies, trans studies, queer studies, and other historical materialist methodologies. In several of the essays, scholars turn to previously unquestioned practices in book history in order to imagine new possibilities and futurities for the field. At the same time, these trenchant examinations of material texts encourage us reinspect and reevaluate facts we think we know and problems we believe have been solved. This scholarly return to challenge received wisdom also encourages us to reflect upon and discuss openly the ways in which students have been introduced to early modern book history in ways that can perpetuate the kind of practices we wish to question and challenge.

This essay will address archive research experiences that we want to believe are fair and equal for everyone—both for new students and experienced researchers—but are not. To do this, I will reflect on Kim F. Hall's work on Archival Blackness. This book historical turn in her scholarship serves as a model for how to introduce new students to the problems of archival research in book history as well as necessary reevaluations of problems of bibliography. Finally, I will write a small case study of my own recent experiences and current plans with Jonathan Hope (English, ASU) and Alex Mada (archivist and librarian) to engage with the Phoenix Public Library's Alfred Knight early modern English book collection and reintroduce it to Arizona State University undergraduate and graduate students as well as the general public.

What's At Stake? Can Old Texts Breath New Life Into The English Major?

Lucia Alden

Recent decades have seen a waning interest in bibliography and book history – perhaps, for good reason. Both fields seem to have lost touch with the *human* aspect of the humanities, as the printed words hand-set by the compositor have become increasingly disembodied from the literary text and the human laborers who created the physical object. Much of the estrangement, this paper suggests, can be traced to the cold calculus of textual studies forwarded by Fredson Bowers, Thomas Tanselle, and their intellectual progeny. Unlike D.F. McKenzie and Jerome McGann, staunch New Bibliographers tend to treat the physical book as a subject to be observed rather than, as the metaphor has always gone, viewing the book as a body or being to be understood. Every book has a story to tell, apart from the text between its covers. Yet, if we only judge a book by its physical properties, we miss the rich marriage between physical and literary object – the interplay between penning, producing, and receiving a work.

This paper seeks to recover the human element of bibliography and book history and recast it for a younger generation of scholars. When we consider the state of the field as scholars, we must think about those who will sustain the field – students who are currently unaware it is a field at all. Using *A Game at Chess* as a case study, this paper will look at how unravelling the "bibliographic codes" of early modern texts can vivify the words on the page and unlock new literary and historical meanings that are particularly gripping for undergraduate and first-time readers. The siloing of disciplines within current colleges and universities means that students of early modern literature often do not get to experience the full joys of early modern history and literature in the same classroom. Book history offers a natural solution. By introducing undergraduate students to bibliography alongside literary studies (as was standard in the late-twentieth century), we have the ability to renew interest in our field and usher it into the twenty-first century. Bibliography will not survive in its mid-century form and must continue to address notions of race, gender, identity, oppression, power, and empire. Undergraduates are primed for this task. By introducing the text as a socially produced object, rather than a work of genius birthed by a single author, we invite students to join in as yet another collaborator, making meaning alongside the compositor, publisher, pressman, and author. Book history allows us to replace the hierarchy of "creation" with a more equalizing system of collaboration. Cracking the code of bibliographic meaning democratizes access and begins to demystify difficult texts by inviting students into the mystery.

The Current State of Cultural Bibliography

Andreas P. Bassett

In the first part of my paper, I survey the current state of the subdiscipline commonly referred to as cultural bibliography. Delineated by Marta Straznicky in 2012, this area of study interrogates the interplay between early modern print agents, materiality, and culture, often (but not always) within the context of meaning-making in Shakespeare's books. Three years later, Jonathan P. Lamb deemed cultural bibliography one of three promising directions in early modern literary and book-historical research, grouping them under the Kastan-influenced umbrella term "the New Boredom 2.0." How has the subdiscipline fared and evolved since? The first section aims to examine the development of key cultural-bibliographical scholarship, as well as recent challenges and criticisms faced by this body of work. In the second part of my paper, I offer a forecast of cultural bibliography's near-future trajectory: a shift from stationer-centric to book buyer-oriented approaches. Although this shift in emphasis deviates slightly from the original impulses of cultural bibliography, I argue that the study of book procurement processes and experiences presents a new vista for early modern book historians to explore. Recent contributions by Ben Higgins (on visiting stationer shops), Philip Tromans (on book browsing), Jason Scott-Warren (on inventories and phenomenological approaches to "shopping for Shakespeare"), Jennifer Young (on London topographies of print drama), and others collectively illustrate the potential for fruitful insights to emerge by recentering the agency of the early modern buyer-reader. In this regard, I contend that literary scholars, in particular, with their training in close reading and theory application, are well-positioned to undertake such investigations.

Without Intention: Book History and Poetics

Jessica C. Beckman

In "The Book as an Expressive Form," D.F. McKenzie remarks upon the synchronous emergence in the early twentieth century of modern bibliography and New Criticism. "The congruence of bibliography and criticism lay precisely in their shared view of the self-sufficient nature of the work of art or text," he explains, "and in their agreement on the significance of its every verbal detail, however small." McKenzie and other critics agreed that if these methods seemed to emerge from a single stream, over time they carved a "schism [in] literary studies," that segregated the study of material texts from the practice of literary criticism. While McKenzie unwound "The Intentional Fallacy" by exposing how editors had altered Wimsatt and Beardsley's sources, a broader call to "unedit" Renaissance texts promised new ways to explore the dialectical relation between early modern literary productions and their material presentations.

Nevertheless, although "unediting" has enabled new readings of Renaissance texts—a trend which has accelerated as scholars increasingly work with digital facsimiles—the field has been surprisingly reluctant to release the positivist category of *intention*. When authorial intention can't be reconstructed, the intentions of stationers and printers might be; so might the intentions of historical readers through the marginal evidence they leave behind. This essay builds upon diverse efforts to move past intentionality as a limiting category by treating the material features of texts as an extension of early modern poesie. Is asks: how might the "normality of non-uniformity," (the instability of features such as spelling, punctuation, or content) in certain cases produce not merely variant readings, but meaningful rhetorical effects? How might material texts enhance or even generate poetic structures such as mimesis, irony, and paradox in tandem with their contents? How might texts produce metaphors of their own, beyond those composed by the author? How can the field make space for play and the discovery of multiple and potential meanings?

Susanna Shakespeare Hall, Richard Grace, and Queen Henrietta Maria: Biographical Fantasy and the History of a Book

Marlin E. Blaine

Dubious stories have long attached themselves to the Shakespeare family, and that pattern continues in a legend about Susanna Shakespeare Hall that has, in recent decades, spread and metamorphosed. This new addition to what E. K. Chambers called the "Shakespeare-Mythos" centers on a copy of a book titled *A Mervaylous discourse upon the lyfe, deedes, and behaviours of Katherine de Medicis, Queene mother*, now held in the Shakespeare Center Library and Archives (SR-93.2 Medici/). The volume bears an *ex dono* inscription stating that it had been given by one Susanna Hall to a certain "R. Grace." While all versions of the myth have identified Shakespeare's daughter as the giver, the recipient has been identified as either Col. Richard Grace, an Anglo-Irish Royalist soldier, or, oddly, Queen Henrietta Maria. The book itself has been described, with varying degrees of assurance, as possibly, probably, or

definitely having once belonged to Shakespeare himself. The naming of the queen as its recipient arises from misreadings of the *ex dono* inscription and outright fabrications on the part of researchers, while the identification of "R. Grace" as Col. Richard Grace develops from a too easy reliance on unreliable sources and inferences based on their claims. I will trace the multifarious story of Susanna Hall's book to its origins and analyze its diffusion in terms of recent and long-term trends in Shakespearean biography, particularly a tendency toward wishful, fanciful elaboration in the absence of reliable evidence and a spate of purported discoveries of books from Shakespeare's personal library. At a time when public confidence in the reliability of academic institutions is ebbing, the profession has a responsibility to ensure the accuracy of its claims, particularly those regarding matters of fact. My essay complements Alan H. Nelson's submission to this seminar, which provides additional arguments on this topic.

801.73 820SHAK-94: Or, the Classificatory Problem of Shakespeare
Megan E. Fox

Catalog records present incomplete, and sometimes misleading, descriptions of early modern books. Recent work by Jeffrey Todd Knight and Zachary Lesser has addressed the tension between the ways that contemporary institutions represent early modern books and the complex material instantiations of these objects: whether by the assumption that works are bound individually or a laser-focus on the paradigm of the ideal copy, catalog records and bibliographic objects often resist each other in fundamental ways.

I approach this tension from the opposite direction, starting from the history of a classification and examining its effects on the objects it constitutes. This paper examines the implementation of "Shakespeare" as a subject heading in faceted classification systems, which began to be developed in the later nineteenth century and inform cataloging practices today. Understanding, via classification, how categorized objects are conditioned by their assumed relationality even as such categories are determined by the objects they gather together offers a unique perspective into the modern institutionalization of "Shakespeare" as an interpretative category (not only an author). Moreover, I suggest that an engagement with librarianship as a discipline would prove useful both for the theoretical perspective it brings to live questions in book history, but also to the end of making the implicit resonances between these fields concerned—in very different, yet entangled ways—with the maintenance of the material record and the particular forms of thinking made available in encounters with objects more explicit.

The Lifespan of Facts

Adam Hooks

How negotiable is a fact? What is the relationship between 'truth' and 'accuracy'? Is it appropriate for a writer to substitute one for the other? These are central questions for early

modern book history. These are also questions asked by The Lifespan of a Fact, a collaborative work of creative nonfiction (and/or an "essay" and/or a provocative juxtaposition of text and paratext) by John D'Agata ("author.") and Jim Fingal ("fact-checker."). The intention of this/my "essay" is to provide provocative juxtapositions of and connections between some standard sources in the history of book history and bibliography, and the work of D'Agata and Fingal. What can book history learn from debates (about genre, about ethics) in a field that considers similar (yet very different) issues? What is past, and how does it continue to haunt the present? What is the chronological relationship between a life, and a fact? Books are everywhere; where is History? Especially in English departments that embrace (even exploit?) the desire for degrees in creative writing? What do we do when we do 'book history' under the ægis of 'Shakespeare' (or 'early modern') studies? Do we (do you?) want truth? Or beauty?

Shakespeare's Shelf Life

Jeffrey Todd Knight

Book history has long relied somewhat unreflectively on the metaphor of the "circuit" to capture the movement and states of being of its objects of study. Recently, however, there has been a quiet but pervasive campaign to rethink the field's guiding metaphor in terms of organic life: ecologies of the book, social lives of the book, public lives, afterlives, and so on. This paper will query the stakes of this shift, and it will survey some familiar and not-so-familiar aspects of the life and death of Shakespeare's books in particular: the degradation of popular publications due to reader handling, the institutionalization and cold storage of important or unique works such as the First Folio or Q1 *Hamlet*, the practice of deaccession and selloff in library collections, the "slow fires" of acidic paper decay, and finally the diminishment of contemporary academic disciplines charged explicitly or implicitly with the task of literary preservation. It will consider how readers and writers in Shakespeare's time imagined the lifespan of books, and how contemporary book historians might be well positioned to contribute to the public discussion about the fate of the literary humanities in our moment.

When Print Was White

Jonathan P. Lamb

This paper, excerpted from a book chapter of the same name, follows the phrase "the art of printing" through early modern England. Used to describe the printing press's German origins, European and English cultural identity, and Europe's relationship with non-European others, the phrase performs what Ayanna Thompson calls "racework." Although the phrase is not itself racialized in many uses, it lays the conceptual groundwork for the identification of printing technology and printed books with European whiteness.

Was Shakespeare's Daughter a Former Owner of *A Mervaylous discourse*?

Alan H. Nelson

In 1973 the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust in Stratford-upon-Avon acquired a copy of *A Mervaylous discourse upon the lyfe, deedes, and behaviours of Katherine de Medicis, Queene mother* (1575), a printed book of which at least sixteen copies are extant, from Sotheby's, for the considerable sum of £4,800. On the title-page of the Birthplace Trust copy occur a pair of inscriptions: near the top: *Liber R: Gracei ex dono amicæ D. Susannæ Hallii* ("[A] book of R: Grace by gift of [his] friend Mistress Susanna Hall"); near the bottom: *Gratia Dei sum quod sum* ("By the grace of God I am what I am"). According to one version of the "Shakespeare mythos," William Shakespeare's daughter Susanna, surnamed Hall by virtue of her marriage on 5 June 1607 to Dr. John Hall, gave this book to Colonel Richard Grace in 1643, long after her father's death in 1616 but before her own death in 1649.

In my paper I argue, first, that paleographical evidence and family mottos effectively invalidate the candidacy of Colonel Richard Grace as the recipient of the book, and, second, that a different Susanna Hall and a different R. Grace are more likely candidates for the donor and recipient of the Birthplace Trust copy of *A Mervaylous discourse*. This essay complements Professor Blaine's submission to this seminar.

The Book-of-the-Month Club's Shakespeare Editions: Readability, Prestige, and the Creation of Value

Elizabeth Rivlin

This paper centers on Shakespeare editions offered to subscribers by the Book-of-the-Month Club (BOMC) in the post-WWII era. The BOMC's purpose was to sell new and recent books by mail order to readers, for profit, and in service of a self-described mission to elevate the tastes of the American middle-class public. One of the BOMC's highly successful innovations was to offer subscribers incentives and rewards, known as "premiums" and "dividends." Over a span of decades, the BOMC returned repeatedly to Shakespeare editions to fill this role. Shakespearean premiums and dividends helped sell new literature whose value was more uncertain and reinforced a set of aesthetic and cultural standards which the Club hoped to impress upon its subscribers. In order for Shakespeare editions to function essentially as loss leaders, their perceived aesthetic, social, and even economic value had to appear high in the eyes of readers. In its promotion of Shakespeare, the Club struck a delicate balance between competing definitions of value. Focusing especially on the criteria of "readability" and "prestige," I discuss how the BOMC negotiated this balance in the case of two editions: The Shakespeare Head Press's *The Works of William Shakespeare* and the Yale University Press facsimile edition of the First Folio.

One point underlying my paper is that while there is a robust body of research on Shakespeare editions through the nineteenth century, there is comparatively little on more recent editions geared to public or mass audiences and, more broadly, on cultural histories of

reading Shakespeare in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Some work of this sort has been done by scholars in other fields, but scholars trained in early modern literature have special investments in, and questions to ask about, how the values assigned to the reading of Shakespearean and early modern books have adapted and changed over time.

Dictionarying: Adding Early Modern Women Printers and Publishers to the *ODNB*

Valerie Wayne

The *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* is a major resource for research, yet its representation of women has always been inadequate. After numerous updates following its online publication in 2004, the current version still includes six times more men than women (65,226 entries to 9,731). The "Publishing and Book Trade" field from 1540 to 1640 registers 186 entries, only one of which (on Anne Griffin) is among the 51 widow publishers working in London during those years, as identified by Alan Farmer in his essay in *Women's Labour and the History of the Book in Early Modern England*. Two more women, Joan Jugge and Elizabeth Pickering Redman, appear only with stub entries that are cross-listed to their husbands.

If this resource is taken to represent the field of early modern book history, we are in a parlous state. Yet change is possible, and the *ODNB* continues to update its listings each month, with clusters of articles ranging from the Gaiety Girls before World War I and women in science and literature to persons of African or part-African descent from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Each update is preceded by an introduction. Drawing on the expertise of this seminar and others working in book history, including Helen Smith, I am organizing a cluster of new entries on early modern women printers and publishers from 1540 to 1660 to be added to the *ODNB*. Ian Gadd, who worked for the dictionary years ago, has offered his advice and support for this cluster.

We plan to propose entries on Elizabeth Allde, Jane Bell, Joan Broome, Jacqueline Vautrollier Field, Elizabeth Purslowe, Elizabeth Toy, and Alice Warren, and to extend cross-listed entries to full accounts of Joan Jugge and Elizabeth Pickering Jackson Redman Cholmeley Cholmeley. The scholars working on these entries are Kirk Melnikoff, Heidi Craig, Andreas Bassett, Molly Yarn, Helen Smith, Georgina Wilson, Tara Lyons, Andie Silva, and myself. My essay for this seminar situates the project within the contrasting views of biography held by Leslie Stephen, the first editor of the *Dictionary of National Biography*, who focused on the need for "factual truth," and his daughter, Virginia Woolf, who asked "whether the lives of great men only should be recorded" and advocated for "the creative fact; the fertile fact; the fact that suggests and engenders."

Of Parts and Wholes: Leveraging Bibliographic Metadata

Mary Erica Zimmer

Almost a century after Alfred Korzybski noted that "a map is not the territory," his insight remains challenging to heed in a bibliographic world where large-scale digital resources predominate. Yet moments of crisis can reveal unlooked-for opportunities. While the recent British Library cyberattack reaffirmed the English Short Title Catalogue (ESTC)'s vital role in our scholarship and teaching, experiencing the site's precarity also called attention to the complementary forms of perspective smaller-scale resources may provide—not only for placing individual items into context, but also for reflecting on the wholes associated collections present. The degree to which metadata schemes of these collections can themselves fuel inquiry is also suggested by Farmer and Lesser's meditating upon the inherent complexities of categorizing early modern texts—especially though not only at scale—and the dynamic subcategories of the Print & Probability project, which make visible ways that intersecting schemes of classification aid analysis.

Using selected case studies drawn from metadata of the MIT Libraries, this paper will explore options for bringing smaller collections into dialogue with current and emerging systems and standards, while noting benefits these approaches may yield. At their heart, such methods leverage FAIR principles to facilitate what McGann might term discovery "in a new key."3 Understanding early modern metadata collections as "research objects" in their own right highlights the ability of these entities to shape new questions while developing and enriching the ever-changing "maps" through which we continue to read early modern histories of the book.