

Institution: UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM
Unit of Assessment: D30 History
Title of case study: Communicating the Material Culture and Cultural Heritage of Shakespeare's England
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Since 2007 Tara Hamling has been working in collaboration with the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust (SBT) to embed research within their operations. The partnership has achieved these impacts in the area of Cultural Life to benefit museum professionals, visitors to SBT properties and a global public interested in Shakespeare and his period of history:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Creating knowledge about cultural heritage in the form of the SBT's buildings and collections and transferring this knowledge to enrich the cultural lives and imaginations of a range of audiences beyond the academy 2. Informing professional practice in the museum/heritage sector 3. Supporting tourism and improving the quality of the tourist experience 4. Providing expert advice to inform the activities of a major independent charity.
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The underpinning research was undertaken by Catherine Richardson (Lecturer 2001-2007), Tara Hamling (RCUK Research Fellow 2007-2011; Lecturer 2011-2012; Senior Lecturer 2012-present), Peter Hewitt (Doctoral Researcher 2010-2013) and David Hopes (Research Fellow, Shakespeare Institute, 2011-present). Building on Richardson's interdisciplinary research on early modern material culture, the History Department bid successfully for a RCUK Fellowship in the Heritage and Material Culture of Shakespearean England. Hamling was appointed to this position in 2007.</p> <p>Richardson and Hamling are at the forefront of pioneering research in the field of early modern domestic material culture. Both have significantly advanced understanding of how the form and function of domestic buildings and material artefacts relate to the social and cultural context of the period. This work has been fostered and disseminated through interdisciplinary events, collaborations and publications including a colloquium in 2005 'Putting objects in their places' which linked literary, art historical, archaeological and museum studies, and set an agenda for future research. This agenda was pursued through <i>Everyday Objects: Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture</i> (international conference 2007; edited volume, 2010). Richardson and Hamling have also established themselves as authorities in this area through monographs with prestigious university presses; Richardson's <i>Domestic Life and Domestic Tragedy in Early Modern England</i> (Manchester, 2006) and Hamling's <i>Decorating the Godly Household: Religious Art in Post-Reformation Britain</i> (Yale, 2010). Richardson and Hamling have actively pursued opportunities for interdisciplinary and cross-sector exchange and collaboration in order to facilitate innovative research and dissemination of knowledge about artefacts and the built environment. They are currently leading an AHRC-funded Research Network, <i>Ways of Seeing the English Domestic Interior, 1500-1700; the case of decorative textiles</i> (2012-2013), for which Hamling is Co-Investigator. The network brings together researchers in the humanities and sciences, conservators, museums curators and heritage professionals, including individuals from English Heritage, the Victoria and Albert Museum, Geffrye Museum, Ashmolean Museum, Norwich Museums and the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust. The project investigates how the latest developments in computer science and cognitive science can be used to understand peoples' experience of domestic interiors in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and considers how we might use this information to enhance visitor engagement with historic properties in the present.</p> <p>The partnership with the SBT draws on Richardson and Hamling's work and research collaborations in this field and exploits Hamling's research directly. Hamling's work on decorative arts and domestic interiors is part of a new wave of interest in early modern material culture but is distinctive in being object-based, utilising methodologies from art history. Her work in this area was recognised in the award of a Philip Leverhulme Prize in 2010. Hamling is currently engaged in two research projects that have informed the activities described in this case study; an Ashgate Research Companion to <i>Early Modern Material Culture in Europe</i> (as co-editor with David Gaimster and Catherine Richardson) and a monograph (co-authored with Catherine Richardson) <i>A Day at Home in Early Modern England: The Materiality of Domestic Life</i> (forthcoming with Yale, 2015).</p> <p>This case study is also underpinned by the History Department's links with the Shakespeare</p>

Impact case study (REF3b)

Institute (where Hamling is based) and builds in particular on research undertaken by Kate McLuskie (Director of the Shakespeare Institute 2005-2011) and Kate Rumbold (Postdoctoral Fellow 2007-2010; Lecturer 2010-present) through an AHRC-funded project *Interrogating Cultural Value in the 21st Century: the case of "Shakespeare"* (2007-2010) as well as ongoing research by David Hopes into the uses of digital technologies in research and museums contexts. Hopes' activities led to an AHRC funded Scoping Study, 'Digital CoPs and Robbers: Communities of Practice and the Transformation of Research' (Feb-July 2012), for which Hamling was CI.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

Research Outputs [both listed in REF2]:

- R1) Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson (eds), *Everyday Objects: Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture and its Meanings* (Ashgate, 2010). ISBN 978-0-7546-6637-0, 342 pages (peer-reviewed and published by a highly-regarded independent academic press)
- R2) Tara Hamling, *Decorating the Godly Household: Religious Art in Post-Reformation Britain* (Yale University Press, 2010). ISBN 9780300162820, 348 pages (peer-reviewed and published by a highly-regarded university press)

Research Grants:

- 'The Material Culture and Cultural Heritage of Shakespeare's England', awarded to Tara Hamling, Collaborative Doctoral Project funded by AHRC, approximate funding £55,000. Oct 2010-Sept 2013. Hamling (Birmingham) is the Lead Supervisor and Delia Garratt (SBT) is co-supervisor, Peter Hewitt is the Doctoral Researcher.
- Research Network, 'Ways of Seeing the English Domestic Interior, 1500-1700, the case of decorative textiles', awarded to Catherine Richardson, University of Kent as PI and Tara Hamling as CI, funded by the AHRC, total funding £30,000. Jan 2012-Dec 2013. Delia Garratt (SBT) and Peter Hewitt are participants.
- Research Development, "Digital CoPs and Robbers: Communities of Practice and the Transformation of Research", awarded to Henry Chapman, University of Birmingham, funded by the AHRC under the Digital Transformations Theme, approximate funding £26,000. Project took place over 6 months from Feb 2012. Hamling is Co-Investigator.
- Philip Leverhulme Prize 2010, awarded to Hamling in recognition of her research achievements; (£70,000), prize fund used to support research towards monograph, *A Day at Home in Early Modern England: The Materiality of Domestic Life* (leave Oct 2011-Sept 2013).

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The impact from the research detailed above is in the area of **cultural life**; the creation of new knowledge and interpretation about cultural capital in the form of the SBT's buildings and collections to enrich and expand the lives, imaginations and sensibilities of individuals and groups in the UK and internationally. These individuals and groups include:

- a) professionals in the museums and heritage sector
- b) the 805,000 annual visitors to the SBT properties in Stratford-upon-Avon including UK and international tourists (SBT Annual Report for 2011).
- c) the wider global public of individuals interested in Shakespeare's work, life and times who visit the SBT's online resources

Some of this impact crosses into the area of **economic prosperity** because applying and transferring the insights and knowledge gained from research on SBT's collections has economic benefit in supporting tourism.

- **Interpreting cultural heritage for audiences external to the academy**

The explicit purpose of the partnership described in this case study is to interpret cultural heritage for audiences external to the academy (see source 1 below). These audiences can be defined firstly as museum/heritage professionals and secondly as an international public interested in Shakespeare and his period of history. The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust [<http://www.shakespeare.org.uk/home.html>] is a major independent charity with responsibility for five significant Shakespeare heritage sites in Stratford-upon-Avon and holds the world's largest Shakespeare-related museum and archives open to the public. From 2007 Hamling has been working in partnership with SBT to embed research within their operations. Prior to this partnership, the 700 early modern artefacts in the SBT museum collection were little understood or utilised in relation to the SBT's strategic development; the majority of the collection was in storage with incomplete or outdated object history files. Members of the public had very limited access to

the physical artefacts or information about the extent or detail of the holdings. Hamling and SBT identified the need for a sustained project to research, document and interpret their collections to respond to recent developments in academic research as well as shifting ideas about the presentation of cultural heritage. In October 2010 Hamling was awarded a three-year AHRC Collaborative Doctorate to formalise this process of knowledge exchange and inform exciting new interpretation for visitors to the SBT properties, along with new online resources and publications. Peter Hewitt was appointed as Doctoral Researcher working under the supervision of Hamling and Head of Collections and Interpretation at SBT. During the period of the award Hewitt examined and documented over 100 objects in the SBT collection and produced a comprehensive 'creative catalogue' of information and analysis used by SBT staff to inform its rolling programme of physical displays, educational events and public engagement projects. Hamling and Hewitt have delivered public talks based on their research to raise awareness of the collection (Hamling in August 2009, evening lecture, audience approx 50; Hewitt in January 2011, a 'Friends' event with 18 participants). Documented feedback in response to the Friends event indicated 100% approval and praised the opportunity to see and learn about the treasures held in the collection (source 2). Hewitt has contributed articles to the SBT Newsletter, circulated to 700 people worldwide including America, Japan, China, Europe.

In addition Hamling, Hewitt and three other doctoral students working under Hamling's supervision have produced a new on-line resource interpreting objects in the SBT collection, 'Shakespeare in 100 Objects' [www.findingshakespeare.co.uk] to engage new audiences and extend the reach of this interpretation beyond groups able to visit in person. The reach of this dedicated series of blogs is indicated by the average pageviews of between 800 and 900 per month. Comments posted on the site indicate the transformative effect of the blog to enrich understanding, for example: "It's interesting that the material things could represent a belief! I've never thought about it like that" as well as its role in extending interest to inform interested individuals worldwide: "I live in Ohio, USA and have never been to England to see all this for myself..." (source 3). As the Access and Interpretation Co-ordinator at SBT stated, "conversations about the objects are being generated, for example a school from Liski in Russia comment frequently to compare the '100 Object' posts to their own material culture" (source 4). Comments in response to Dr Hamling's post on 6/7/12 evidence its integration within educational programmes: "Studying project 'Shakespeare's world in 100 objects' and watching these objects you are able to feel the spirit of Shakespeare works deeply and keenly" (posted by a pupil from 'Liski', Russia) and "I look forward to learning about everyday life in this time period through your blog. I will be passing this link onto the rhetoric school faculty at my classical school" (source 3). The information presented through the blogs has been used to inform display panels in the SBT properties and an educational programme of workshops in 2013 as well as strategic development going forward.

- **Influencing the methods and ideas of professionals in the museum sector and Helping museum and heritage professionals adapt to changing attitudes and expectations**

This project has been successful in its aim to contribute to museums practice and has significantly changed the culture at SBT in approaching the resource of their collections; it has created new resources to enhance knowledge among staff in several departments (Collections and Interpretation; Learning; Education) enabling them to understand, reclaim and exploit their buildings and object collections alongside various strategies to invest in digital technologies. Evidence of this impact is indicated by testimonials from SBT staff; the SBT Head of Collections commented: "SBT as an organisation has benefited considerably from Hamling's research input. Her involvement in our operations has not only contributed new knowledge to inform our ongoing strategy and programme but has brought about a sea change in the use of our collections...As a result, these collections are now reaching and engaging a variety of constituencies within the wider public to enhance their experience, appreciation and understanding of Shakespearean heritage" (source 5).

The project with SBT forms part of Hamling's wider activities in strengthening links between academics in the humanities and museum professionals in order to inform innovative new directions for the interpretation and display of early modern buildings, interiors and objects. She is CI for the AHRC research network: *Ways of Seeing the English Domestic Interior, 1500-1700: the case of decorative textiles* (2012-13) [<http://www.kent.ac.uk/mems/domestic%20interior.html>] (detailed in section 2 above). The collaborative project with SBT is a test case within this wider

network in addressing the big issues facing heritage organisations in moving away from the traditional 'social history display' in the presentation of historic buildings and interiors. The insights gained through the project's re-interpretation of the SBT's collections are disseminated through the activities of this wider network, including workshops and the project website, to inform and benefit other individuals in the museums and heritage sector in approaching and interpreting their own collections of culturally significant objects.

- **Developing stimuli to tourism and contributing to the quality of the tourist experience**

The SBT is a core part of the tourist experience in Stratford-upon-Avon, with 805,000 UK and international visitors in 2011. The quality of this tourist experience has been improved through the enhanced knowledge of SBT staff about their collections, which informs presentation and interpretation within the properties (source 2). SBT's activities also have a reach way beyond direct contact with visitors; for example, the national and international media coverage of the 'Dig for Shakespeare' archaeological project at New Place, which featured on BBC1 National Treasures Live and C4's Time Team in 2012. The project serves as stimulus to tourism in providing underpinning research to inform SBT's approach, by raising its profile as an organisation and by facilitating remote access to information about its collections through the on-line series of blogs 'Shakespeare's world in 100 Objects' and the 'Eye Shakespeare' iPhone App (source 6). Both support remote and physical access to knowledge about collections to enhance and extend the nature of visitor experience.

- **Contributing to innovation and entrepreneurial activity by informing the development of a new product**

Hamling acted as research consultant for 'Eye Shakespeare', an innovative new iPhone application launched in 2012. The app makes artefacts held by the SBT available to users in digital form and includes in the second version an augmented reality 3D computer model of Shakespeare's lost house at New Place. The form and appearance of the model is informed by Hamling's expertise on early modern domestic buildings, including research specifically on New Place delivered as a lecture at the Shakespeare Institute in October 2011.

- **Providing expert advice and engaging with SBT as an independent charity to influence their activities**

In addition to the funded collaborative partnership described here, Hamling has provided ongoing expert advice on the Shakespeare houses including consultation on plans towards a re-display of the Birthplace in 2011, as a member of the advisory board for the 'Dig for Shakespeare' archaeological project at New Place and as an advisor for the concept and scope of the New Place re-presentation project, 2016. The process of knowledge exchange formalised through the AHRC Collaborative Doctorate provided a foundation and impetus for associated projects, such as a joint research appointment between the Shakespeare Institute and SBT (David Hopes, appointed 2011) to develop digital access to the SBT collections. In February 2012 SBT launched a 'creative digitisation' project to select parts of the SBT collection and bring these items to life using digital images, video recordings, audio and augmented reality activities. This project is informed directly by Hamling and Hewitt's knowledge of the object collections; they have contributed advice in the selection process to influence the nature of items made accessible in digital form which will benefit a range of audiences beyond the academy in the future.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- [1] Formal partnership agreement between the University of Birmingham, the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and Peter Hewitt, March 2011.
- [2] Visitor surveys and feedback evaluation from public talks and workshops
- [3] 'Shakespeare's World in 100 objects', *Finding Shakespeare Blog* (www.findingshakespeare.co.uk/).
- [4] Factual statement provided by Access and Interpretation Co-ordinator, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust
- [5] Factual statement provided by Head of Collections, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust
- [6] Eye Shakespeare iPhone App, launched June 2012 (<https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/eye-shakespeare/id529117003?mt=8>)