Impact case study (REF3b)

Institution: **University of Reading**

Unit of Assessment: **29 English Language and Literature**

Title of case study: **Henslowe-Alleyn Digitisation Project : Transforming access to manuscripts on early modern English theatre history**

1. Summary of the impact

The University of Reading's Henslowe-Alleyn Digitisation Project (H-ADP) resulted in the development of a free electronic archive and website **(**www.henslowe-alleyn.org.uk**)** concerning the single most important collection of papers on English theatre history and performance in the Shakespearean era. Launched in 2009, the resources, which comprise 2,000 pages of unique manuscript records and 15 digital essays based on original research by leading scholars, have been widely used by academic and non-academic users, broadening their awareness of and access to key literary and cultural texts. Together they attract some 27,000 hits and over 2,000 visitors a month.

2. Underpinning research

Origins

The H-ADP arose directly from a body of original research carried out by the University of Reading's Professor Grace Ioppolo. This work included research for three books: Ioppolo's monograph on *Dramatists and their Manuscripts* (2006); her book of collected essays by theatre history scholars, *Shakespeare Performed* (2000); her edition of the 17th-century manuscript play *The Honest Man's Fortune* (2011), as well as two book chapters (see below). Ioppolo's research also covered historical and literary manuscripts, theatre history records, archival research and humanities computing. In 2002, on the basis of this research and related publications, Ioppolo founded and directed the H-ADP.

Objectives

The aim of the H-ADP was to transform access to manuscripts on English theatre history and performance in the age of Shakespeare. Prior to this project, access to the original manuscript archive at London's Dulwich College was problematic, being reliant on the permission of the College and restricted to term-time only. As only 20 per cent of the original archive was available in print, 80 per cent of the material could be consulted only in person and on-site at Dulwich. This restricted access proved off-putting to scholars and students. The aim of the H-ADP, therefore, was to make all of the material freely and easily accessible online in a high-quality format.

Methodology

From 2002 to 2004, Ioppolo did the following:

1) studied 4,000 pages of original manuscripts in Dulwich College's archive in preparation for choosing those that would prove most significant for academic and non-academic users in drama, literature, theatre, archaeology, manuscript studies, national heritage and arts preservation, and economic and regional history;

2) developed the structure and all aspects of the H-ADP, recruiting the world's leading theatre history scholars, archaeologists and practitioners (representing UK and US universities and the Museum of London) to join, support and contribute to the project, and

3) hired a world-leading digital photographer with unique experience in handling rare manuscripts.

From 2004 to 2006, Ioppolo used her Leverhulme Trust fellowship to enable her to work full-time on the H-ADP, including managing and overseeing all practical and administrative aspects of the project, and assisting the digital photographer working with the manuscripts *in situ* at Dulwich College. Between 2006 and 2009, she continued to direct the H-ADP and wrote all prefatory material for the website and electronic archive, edited all content and produced it in XML format, and commissioned and edited 15 digital scholarly essays (writing three of them herself and co-

writing another two).

Outcomes
Ioppolo's research and the H-ADP led to the development of the following:

- an electronic archive (a digital library of 2,000 pages of the single most important archive on English theatre history in the age of Shakespeare);

- a website that makes the electronic archive freely available online, as well as comprising 15 research essays by the world's leading scholars on theatrical entrepreneur Philip Henslowe and eminent actor, entrepreneur and philanthropist Edward Alleyn.

Collaboration
The University of Reading's research was part of a wider collaborative effort among such partners as King's College London, the Museum of London, Dulwich College, the Leverhulme, Pilgrim and Thriplow Charitable Trusts, the British Academy, and staff at Colgate University and the University of California (USA).

The H-ADP also received non-monetary advice and support from staff at the following institutions:

UK: British Library, National Art Library, National Archives, Kew; Historical Manuscripts Commission; Bodleian Library; London Metropolitan Archives; Cambridge University Library.

USA: Huntington Library; Folger Shakespeare Library; Newberry Library; Houghton Library (Harvard University); Beinecke Library (Yale University); Rosenbach Museum and Library.

3. References to the research

Henslowe-Alleyn Digitisation Project electronic archive and website (www.henslowe-alleyn.org.uk)

Grace Ioppolo, *Dramatists and their Manuscripts in the Age of Shakespeare, Jonson, Middleton and Heywood: Authorship, Authority and the Playhouse* (Routledge, 2006) [RAE 2008 output: of at least 2* quality]

Shakespeare Performed, ed. Grace Ioppolo (University of Delaware Press, 2000)

The Honest Man's Fortune, ed. Grace Ioppolo (Manchester University Press, 2011) [REF output: of at least 2* quality]

Grace Ioppolo, 'Creating the First Early Modern English Theatre History Archive: Edward Alleyn, William Cartwright and British Library Egerton Manuscript 1994', in `*In the Prayse of Writing':
Essays on Early Modern Manuscripts, 1500-1700*, ed. S. P. Cerasano and S. W. May (British Library, 2012), pp. 145-68

Grace Ioppolo, 'Thomas Heywood, Script-Doctor', in *Shakespeare without Boundaries*, ed. C. Jansohn, L. C. Orlin and S. Wells (University of Delaware Press, 2010), pp. 47-59

All available upon request

4. Details of the impact

Since their launch in November 2009, the website and digital archive have made the original historical and literary manuscript archive freely available and instantly accessible online, where it has been used by an extremely broad and varied constituency of scholarly and non-scholarly users and has had a wide-ranging impact. Notably, the project has broadened awareness of and access to key literary and cultural texts, their significance and interpretation, through transferring and disseminating research to non-academic audiences about English theatre history, performance and production.

Key beneficiaries
The H-ADP has sparked interest in, and raised international awareness of, these records of early modern English theatre history among a wide constituency, when previously access to the subject was limited only to a very small number of scholars who were granted permission to use the original manuscript archive at Dulwich College. The broad interest in and active promulgation of the project and its outcomes is evident through the activities and testimonies of the following

parties:

1) **Acting companies, theatres, actors, directors and dramaturges (literary advisers for theatre companies)**

This group uses the archive and website material in their own research, which they share with colleagues and audiences, both in the UK and overseas. Actors, directors, acting companies and theatres in the UK, Japan, India, South Africa, Germany, Italy, the Philippines, the USA and Canada have stated in Twitter feeds that they have used the material in discussions with fellow professionals and with members of the public in lectures, teaching, exhibits and publications.

These Twitter feeds include: @ShakespeareBT (Shakespeare Birthplace Trust), @theRSC, @the_Globe (Shakespeare's Globe),@theatrestrust @bencrystal (an actor who specialises in Shakespearean original pronunciation), @ShakespeareInstitute (The Shakespeare Institute at the University of Birmingham @donmar, (Donmar Playhouse) @youngvic (Young Vic Theatre, @oldvic (Old Vic theatre), @sdshakespeare (San Diego Shakespeare), @PortersofHG (Porters of Hellgate, a Los-Angeles-based acting company), @KarenJeynes (theatre critic and dramatist based in South Africa), @heather1576 (Heather Knight, Museum of London archaeologist); @MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology)

2) **Journalists, bloggers and news organisations**;

The media has made regular use of the archive and website, as evidenced by the following Twitter feeds: @gawker, @telegraph, @guardianstage, @flavorwire (a media website); @openculture (a media website), @vivgoskrop (UK-based comedian Viv Goskrop), @vickeegan (Guardian journalist), @bluebirogallery (artist Jenny Caron Hall),@LondonHistorian (a group dedicated to London history with over 20,000 followers, @glinner (Graham Linehan, a comic and television writer with over 500,000 followers).

3) **Museums and libraries**

Museums and libraries have benefited from the enhanced access that the archive and website provide to documents and digitised, catalogued and annotated images which can be used in exhibits, publications, lectures and conferences. For example, the British Museum features two of these documents in its 2012 'Shakespeare: Staging the World' exhibition. Other users have included the National Art Library (London), the Huntington Library (San Marino, CA, USA), the Newberry Library (Chicago) and the Folger Shakespeare Library and National Building Museum (Washington D.C).

Importantly, the H-ADP has protected, conserved and prolonged the lifespan of documents relating to English literary and cultural heritage by enabling users to view them digitally rather than handling them in person, and by providing funding for conservation of damaged volumes of manuscripts.

4) **Secondary school students, teachers and administrators**

The H-DAP's impact on this group is evidenced from various Twitter feeds and from email feedback to Ioppolo after her lectures on the subject.

5) **The general public**

This constituency has benefited from H-ADP material being utilised in a wide range of public lectures, in places such as the Rose Theatre Trust (London); the Rose Footprint Theatre (Lenox, MA, USA); the Shakespeare Institute (Stratford-on-Avon); Shakespeare's Globe; the National Archives (London); the Folger Shakespeare Library and New York University.

Visitors to museums and libraries, both real and virtual, have also benefited. Links to the H-ADP have been included in numerous library websites open to the general public in the UK and US, including the British Library; the National Archives; the Newberry Library; the Huntington Library and the Folger Shakespeare Library.

The Shakespearean London Theatres Project (ShaLT) has produced a Walking Map of Theatres 1567-1642, including information drawn from the H-ADP, which is publicly available for use as a free download: http://shalt.org.uk/downloads

Usage statistics

The project's impact is clearly demonstrated by the number of hits on the H-ADP website. These have increased from a high of 21,772 hits per month in 2012 to an average of 26,987 monthly hits in January-April 2013. Visitor numbers to the website averaged 2,108 per month in the same period. These data are derived from Google Statistics for the site, which can be accessed at: http://henslowe-webstats.cch.kcl.ac.uk/.

The number of unique and return visitors per month spikes sharply when Ioppolo tweets links to the website. For example, on 1 September 2012, she responded to a tweet about Edward Alleyn's birthday by tweeting links to the biographies on the website, resulting in 80 unique visitors within a few minutes. On 3 March 2013, she responded to a tweet from the Rose Theatre Trust and Vic Keegan (a *Guardian* journalist) about a notation in Henslowe's Diary by tweeting a link to the electronic archive's image of the page mentioned and then tweeted several items about the significance of Henslowe's Diary and how to access it using www.henslowe-alleyn.org.uk. These tweets, which caused a large spike in usage of the site on that day and subsequently, were immediately re-tweeted by several Twitter feeds of up to 5,000 followers each. Further evidence is provided by articles about the H-ADP and/or website links in and through articles on the project in the *Guardian*, the *Evening Standard*, the *Irish Times*, the *Hackney Citizen* and BBC Radio 4.

International conference

The H-ADP resulted in an international conference convened by Ioppolo entitled 'Burbage & Shakespeare and/or Henslowe & Alleyn: Who Invented the "Shakespearean" Theatre?' This event, held at the University of Reading on 24 November 2012, attracted over 100 attendees, many of them non-academic, such as librarians, theatre trustees, archivists, secondary school teachers and members of the general public interested in Shakespeare. The conference was the first to bring together all four archaeologists at the Museum of London who have excavated 16th and 17th-century London playhouses with internationally renowned academics, including three of the world's most esteemed Shakespeareans: Professors Stanley Wells, R. A. Foakes and Andrew Gurr. The evaluations of the conference by attendees were unanimously high. Podcasts of the entire event were posted on the English Department's website: http://www.reading.ac.uk/english-literature/aboutus/ell-shakespeare-conference-2012.aspx.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

The individuals below can be contacted for corroboration of the impact detailed. Contact details have been provided separately.

Head of Research Development & Delivery, King's College London: http://www.kcl.ac.uk/artshums/depts/ddh/index.aspx to corroborate the collaborative effort with King's College London.

Head of Courses and Research, Shakespeare's Globe to corroborate the usefulness of H-ADP in exhibitions and educational provision at the Globe.

Curator of Manuscripts, The Folger Shakespeare Library to corroborate the usefulness of H-ADP in exhibitions and educational provision at the Folger Shakespeare Library.

Special Collections Reference Librarian, The Newberry Library, Chicago to corroborate the usefulness of H-ADP in exhibitions and educational provision at the Newberry Library, Chicago.