

# Final Whitepaper HD-50843-09

## The Cambridge Word Shakespeare Encyclopedia: An International Digital Resource for Study, Teaching, and Research

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The *Cambridge World Shakespeare Encyclopedia* (CWSE) an innovative digital reference source and workspace, supports collaboration among scholars, teachers, students and performers worldwide. This project addresses three challenges for the transnational humanities today. *Interoperability*: as a result of our NEH-supported planning, CWSE is now envisioned as part of a larger platform, *Cambridge World Shakespeare Online* (CWSO), designed to aggregate a wealth of dispersed resources from partner archives and also presses. *A dual-edition publishing model*: CWSO will balance subscription entitlements to published content with open access to primary texts and to secondary materials from public archives. *Sustainable growth in an international context*: CWSO will develop a growth model based on peer review, for a transnational field in which peer review remains the common currency of scholarly value. The international editorial team is nearing completion of core content for CWSE, commissioned by Cambridge University Press, who will build and host the site, making it sustainable. The Center for Transformative Scholarship (USC) supported prototype design and planning; Bryn Mawr College supported travel and clerical efforts.

### Summary of findings

In the three areas we investigated, we confirmed some expectations and opened new questions. None of the most significant challenges we identified are technical. With world enough and time, and with deep pockets, every element of our project design is readily implementable at the level of technology. The most significant challenges to moving forward will be institutional and cultural. Thus, the overall takeaway of our project is this: future NEH programming and PI planning should be directed as much at the human challenges and opportunities of digital scholarly development as at the technical ones.

### Interoperability

Digital development in the humanities has generally been project-based, with resources growing in separate silos; notable exceptions include the NINES initiatives and shared platforms for medieval studies. A lack of systems-level thinking about how students, scholars and theater practitioners might move across different digital resources is particularly evident in Shakespeare studies. This represents perhaps the most significant challenge facing our field going forward, since none of our major digital initiatives were designed with an eye towards making their resources (secondary and archival materials) available in an integrated way. And yet, as we discovered by demonstrating our wireframes at conferences in the North-America, Europe and Asia, the natural working mode of Shakespeare students, teachers, and performers requires precisely such free movement between primary and secondary materials.

We sought but could not identify other digital scholarly resources in the humanities that use a primary corpus (such as Shakespeare's works) as the gateway for interoperable collections. Within Shakespeare studies, we identified a high level of interest in such a resource. All the archives with whom we met identified a defined content-gateway such as the CWSO as a new and very exciting way to increase traffic in their holdings, of particular value for heritage institutions. Secondary and college students were the most frequently cited potential audience, with theater professionals and scholars as the next most-frequently cited audiences. The interface we proposed works on a model similar to the Juxta tool developed by the NINES group, toggling on/off color saturation in typeface for plays and poems, with denser saturation representing the density of contextual holdings behind a particular word, word-cluster, or line.

As a field, Shakespeare studies centers on a relatively large and well-defined primary corpus of plays and poems. The production of modern editions has been the engine both of scholarly value for academic Shakespearians and economic value for presses, whose business model depends on an exclusive relationships with lay, student, and academic readers. The dead hand of this publishing history retains a strong grip on digital scholarly communications in this field. An interoperable resource such as CWSO — taking a high-quality modern edition as its primary gateway and allowing readers to access secondary materials through their primary reading experience, line-by-line or image by image — puts direct pressure on that exclusive relationship.

#### A dual-edition publishing model

With this institutional history as context, CUP's commitment to an open online edition of the *New Cambridge Shakespeare* is both financially risky and tremendously valuable to the field — factors every scholar and editor knowledgeable about the field recognized at our international meetings. The publishing model proposed for CWSO, refined during this grant, focuses on public-private partnerships. An open workspace will use a "flat" (low-functionality) version of the *New Cambridge Shakespeare* texts as the gateway to public archives and free CWSE content; a more robust (higher-functionality) resource will be available by subscription to institutions, including access to holdings from partner archives that are subscription-only. CUP will conduct contract and entitlement-management conversations with a small group of launch partners (see activities summary below) in fall 2011. CUP has committed to developing the basic platform (integrated playtext and encyclopedia) and is seeking funding to support the additional of back-end translation layer enabling federation with partner archives and presses.

In our planning and demonstration process, a significant gap in current digital Shakespeare resources became evident and with it, an opportunity to validate the dual publication model by testing a value-added function for CWSO. Actors, directors, artistic directors and theater librarians noted the absence of online resources for departments of drama and theater and of digital tools for use in the theater; high-school teachers noted the absence of any robust mobile script tool — despite the increasing dominance of mobile devices in the lives of our students. As a result of feedback from these different audiences, plans for CWSO now include a user-defined workspace in CWSO for theater practitioners, allowing manipulation of Shakespeare's scripts for actors' use and giving actors, directors, and designers one-click access to records of earlier productions and contextual materials. In partnership with the American Shakespeare Company in Staunton, Virginia we have been awarded a Phase Two Startup grant to develop and test in production a mobile script-editing tool (MyShx), using the iPad as a delivery device. Such a tool would make CWSO usable by professional and academic companies in the preparation and archiving of productions. Our key questions for the Phase 2 grant: will easy access to contextual materials and a dynamic script-editing environment redress the current gap in performance-related Shakespeare resources? Can such an environment add sufficient value during play

production to make CWSO subscriptions attractive to theater companies, helping to generate the revenue that will make the maintenance of an open playtext and workspace sustainable for CUP in the long run?

### Sustainable growth in an international context

Shakespeare studies is a broadly international field and a key question of our grant was how new modes of authoring, reading and research enabled by digital media play in different academic cultures. Digital Shakespeare project have emerged in Asia, Europe, and North-America. We found expected differences across generations, with senior scholars somewhat less comfortable with new media environments than younger ones. Across groups we found a higher degree of comfort with archive tools than with multimedia authoring and scholarly-social-networking tools. The most significant differences had to do with tolerance for experimentation with scholarly protocols. New models of content-generation and peer review were entertained with somewhat more confidence in North-America and Europe than elsewhere (though not with general confidence anywhere in the field). These findings have implications for the future growth of CWSE. Its 310 articles represent the beginning of a world Shakespeare reference work that needs to grow with the field. In this arena of grant study we made the least progress, identifying the following opportunities for growth that might work separately or together: 1) feedback threads for commentary and expansion to the CWSE entries, available to those establishing a user account (free or subscription); 2) an ongoing editorial board to review submissions for new entries, on the model of a journal; 3) affiliation with international Shakespeare conference (ISC, SAA, BSA, JSS, DSG) to maintain international breadth of scholarly content.

### **Summary of activities**

Of the five phases outlined in our grant application, all five had been accomplished by the end date of the grant, 31 March 2011:

- Refining the concept of the encyclopedia as an on-line resource
- Building a prototype (later adjusted to wireframes)
- Reviewing the wireframes
- Building and demonstrating the wireframes in an international context
- Documentation, assessment, and final dissemination.

As we note above, new phases of the project were launched during the timeframe of the grant:

- Groundwork for partnerships with research entities including the Folger Shakespeare Library, the British Library, the Department of Modern and Contemporary Performance at the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Global Shakespeare video archive at MIT, and ArtStor as “partner archives” on a federated site to be known as Cambridge World Shakespeare Online;
- Planning collaboration with a professional theater company, the American Shakespeare Center, headquartered at Mary Baldwin College, Staunton, VA, to develop a software program combining the electronic resources of the CWSE with a fully searchable and manipulatable script from the New Cambridge Shakespeare Edition. This app for a handheld device will be used by theater professionals and students designing, rehearsing, performing, and archiving plays in production;
- Beginning negotiations with book publishers such as the University of Pennsylvania Press, University of Manchester Press, Macmillan, and Ashgate to federate their electronic scholarly content with CWSO.