DAVID GANTS

"MDCXVI"

MDCXVI. Uttered phonetically [mədcɪksvi] it sounds like an exotic brand of ouzo, but of course most of us recognize this as the year 1616 rendered in roman numerals. Ben Jonson would have preferred this style of numeration, as he was from most accounts a rather learned man, with a conservative's taste for tradition and precedent. His training at the Westminster School and long friendship with William Camden attest to his education. The depth and breadth of his personal library, as well as the promiscuous patina of annotation filling the margins of his published works, bear witness to a life-long reading practice. And his stage pieces in both form and content demonstrate an agility and ease with classical scholarship married to sound dramatic structure. Jonson could also be an arrogant, short-tempered drunk, no one's first choice for the parlor game of listing historical figures we'd invite to dinner. William Drummond's characterization of Jonson illuminates the wisdom of this omission:

> a contemner and scorner of others, given rather to lose a friend than a jest, jealous of every word and action of those about him (especially after drink, which is one of the elements in which he liveth), a dissembler of ill parts which reign in him,

a bragger of some good that he wanteth, thinketh nothing well but what either he himself or some of his friends and countrymen hath said or done."[1]

Yet Jonson had the happy knack of choosing the right friends, colleagues, patrons, and partners. He wrote for the Lord Chamberlain's Men, later the King's Men, worked with Inigo Jones on court masques and entertainments, enjoyed the favor of the Sidney family, and somehow wrangled a royal pension. He wasn't a happy collaborator, as his preface to *Sejanus* witnesses, but I think potential frictions in his professional partnerships often provided him with an extra drive frequently manifest in his literary output. Perhaps his most enduring collaboration, however, was the reason for the 2016 conference the present collection celebrates: his landmark collected folio *Workes*.

In terms of literary history, the folio doesn't contribute all that much to the Early Modern literary canon. Unlike Shakespeare's collected plays seven years later, the bulk of the pieces in the *Workes* had already been published; only *Epicene* (maybe), along with a few of the entertainments, and *Epigrams* and *The Forest* appeared there in print for the first time. Rather, this remarkable book continues to engage scholars not for what it contains but for what it is: a beautifully designed and executed example of the craft of printing. Coincidentally, the September 2016 conference took place almost four hundred years to the day since the final sheets of Jonson's *Workes* were machined in William Stansby's printing house. Two pieces of evidence pinpoint the completion date to early autumn of 1616. First, the final quires of the volume shared headline rules with another project in Stansby's house, Aaron Rathborne's *Surveyor*, where they appeared toward the end of the book. The *Surveyor* also has a preface by the author dated 6 November, and since the preliminaries were almost always printed last, it is likely Jonson's *Workes* was completed late September or early October.[2] Second, on 20 November 1616, a York bookseller by the name of John Foster was buried in the churchyard of St. Michael le Belfrey, and six days later an inventory of his shop was made for the purpose of appraising his estate. Among the many volumes bound, unbound, and in sheets, the appraisers found one copy of Jonson's folio *Workes*, valued at 10 shillings.[3]

Given the time required for Foster or his assistants to arrange the purchase and shipping of the lot of books containing the Jonson folio, it seems probable the volume was published sometime in the early fall.
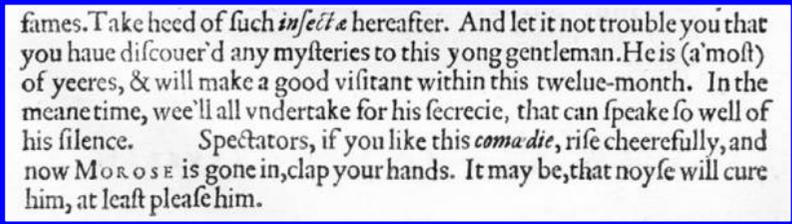
Perhaps the best way to appreciate this book's bibliographical stature is to compare it with the much better known First Folio. Colleagues from the Folger Shakespeare Library who accompanied the volume during its 2016 exhibition tour through all fifty states reported that visitors gazed upon the book as if in the presence of a holy relic, as if being in the same room with it imparted some sort of cultural blessing. Had those viewers momentarily dimmed the aura surrounding the icon, they might have recognized that it is actually a rather ugly book, haphazardly printed, frequently from suspect copy texts, and fronted by a portrait executed by a young Dutch engraver, who in his inexperience neglected to match the length of Shakespeare's locks on either side of his bald pate.

A number of scholars have reconstructed the at-times scrambled printing history of the First Folio, detailing the false starts, confusion over the order of plays, problems with getting the rights to *Troilus*, and so forth.[4] A quick glimpse at the volume's collation formula demonstrates that the Jaggards didn't proceed in an altogether coherent fashion.

πA^6 (A1+1) πB^2, A–2B^6, a–g^6 $^\chi$2g^6 h–v^6 x^4, ¶–2¶^{6} 3¶1, 2a–2f^6 2g^2 2G^6 2h^6 2k–3b^6

As you can see, the Jaggards made a few miscalculations and misestimates regarding the structure and length of the volume, resulting in the interruptive insertions reflected in the halting sequence of signing. Digging deeper into the volume reveals a pervading "frugality" on the part of the publishers: the battered pica type, anodyne ornaments, and most obvious of all, the cramped two-column layout of the text page. In contrast, the Jonson folio is light and airy, with individual title pages for each work, fulsome dedications, lists of characters, and text set in single columns of a clean english body offset with generous margins.

And while, as was usually the case in Early Modern London printing houses, the Jonson folio was not printed sequentially (nor

Figure 1. Detail from final page of *Epicene*, 3D6ʳ, *The Workes of Beniamin Jonson* (1616). Image from author's copy.

was the First Folio), its collation formula hints that Stansby knew exactly what he was doing as he produced each section of the volume:

¶⁶ A–4P⁶ 4Q⁴

While coordinating the folio with the other concurrent projects in production, he also printed a simultaneous large-paper issue earmarked for gifts and presentation copies. What motivated the investors to devote so much time and money to the *Workes* can never be recovered, but most scholars agree a major factor was Jonson's insistence on a prestigious manifestation of his own self-worth as an author. Recall he had just been granted by James an annual pension of 100 marks, having written over a dozen well-received entertainments staged at court. Everything about his folio *Workes* argues for his careful oversight, even down to the famous textual silence at the end of *Epicene* (see fig. 1).

Roger Stoddard once observed that authors don't write books, they write texts. While that may be true of most modern works – John Updike's careful oversight of his novels' printings notwithstanding – in the closed world of London's Early Modern book trade, authors could and did write *books*. We have a number of extant authorial manuscripts that reveal careful attention to design, illustration, typography, and other bookish matters. Judging from the manuscript copies of the Jonson masques that have survived, he took meticulous care in communicating exactly how he wished the text and annotation to appear in print. Early textual scholars and editors often viewed the printing house as an enemy of the author and sought, in the words of Fredson Bowers, to "strip the veil of

print from a text."[5] They believed that print was an imperfect dark glass that distorted and often mangled what they felt to be the true source of the author's text: the manuscript. More recently scholars have come to recognize that the study of textual transmission is the study of history, a genre of historical writing, irrespective of any literary interest we might have in the object at hand. Writing about descriptive bibliography, a branch of historical investigation that focuses on identifying and organizing all the material facts a book can tell us about its origins, Thomas Tanselle has underscored "the power of objects to suggest the past." He argues that,

> Through such relics [that is, books] we build up our visions of the past; and the recorded details of those relics—however manifold, however minute, however technical—contribute to the richness and comprehensiveness of our conception of the lives and ideas that have preceded our own. If we are interested in the human past, and the role it plays in the present, descriptive bibliography tells a story that we have to understand.[6]

Paradoxically, at the same time many contemporary scholars have come to embrace the material study of books as a distinct and valuable discipline in itself, the academy has failed to prepare new scholars for such rewarding work. For generations of earlier graduate students, one of the first courses encountered was a seminar in bibliographical and textual methods. As Jerome McGann observed, up until the 1970s and 80s, English departments "regularly made the history of the language, editing, and bibliographical studies a requirement of work." Students may not always have enjoyed the experience, but it prepared them to read critically *texts* as well as *works*, that is, the circumstances of transmission as well as the sociology of reception. McGann raises the alarm because, as he sees it:

> Just when we will be needing young people well-trained in the histories of textual transmission and the theory and practice of scholarly method and editing, our universities are seriously unprepared to educate such persons. Electronic scholarship and editing necessarily draw their primary models

from long-standing philological practices in language study, textual scholarship, and bibliography. As we know, these three core disciplines preserve but a ghostly presence in most of our Ph.D. programs.[7]

His concern centers on the challenges of pursuing textual and editorial work in the digital realm, but I would argue bibliographical and textual training is as important, if not more important, for anyone engaged in editorial work destined for print publication, indeed in any realm of book history.

Bibliography in particular has suffered from shifting academic winds. Due to the empiricist nature of their methods, that is, the physical examination, analysis, and interpretation of books as material objects, bibliographers were dismissed decades ago by critical theorists as *essentialists* chasing the phantom of truth. More recently, literary scholars have adopted the French *Annales* approach as a method for uncovering the social impact of books, writing narratives about the lives of readers and producers and distributors under the mantle of the history of the book. As is so often the case in academia, a gap has opened between bibliographers and book historians, a gap clearly delineated by the contents of journals such as *PBSA* or *The Library* on one side, and *Book History* on the other. Increasingly in the latter, we see exquisitely argued articles elaborating speculative narratives, drawing on careful interpretations of visual, social, and biographical materials, but frequently silent on practical trade matters. In his review of a major history of the book compilation published a few years ago, Henry Woudhuysen observed that, in the volume's essays, "what actually went on in printing houses (and bookshops) is largely passed over, as if it did not constitute part of the history of the book."[8]

The lack of training in the fundamentals of textual transmission has in some cases led young scholars to misinterpret craft practices as semiotic choices, for example, when invoking the term *paratext*. Any inked impression outside the rectangular text block, or even any disruption in the flow of line to line, becomes a moment of possible interpretation. Consider the tailpiece located on the bottom half of a page in the 1617 edition of Richard Hooker's *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, whose production in Stansby's

establishment partially overlapped with the Jonson folio (see fig. 2). Since *Laws* is an important work of Elizabethan theology and politics, one might speculate on the Trinitarian nature of the ornament, or how the sturdy inverted triangle supports Hooker's weighty learning, or even the subtle Marian/Elizabethan iconography of the floriated central visage, and from this intuit intentionality. In fact there is a practical reason for employing this tailpiece: it protects the press from undue stresses that might damage the platen. When a full forme of type is machined, the platen presses down equally across the entire surface. However, if the forme is incomplete, as is the case here where the text ends halfway down the folio page, the platen has nothing to press against, causing one corner to collapse downward and imparting torque that could damage it. The ornament provides practical support. Printers who don't have an ornament handy will use what's called bearing type, that is, they will fill the void with whatever chunks of type happen to be handy and mask it with the frisket to prevent inking. Or, in the case of the Jonson folio, put a big "THE END." in the empty space (see fig. 2). Unfortunately, Stansby seems to have miscalculated the amount of pressure on the two brass framing rules, for in a number of copies I've seen, one or more corners of the rules have slightly punctured the paper.

Without a solid grounding in the hard mechanics of textual transmission, editors risk misinterpreting unfamiliar phenomena they encounter in ways that shade their textual and annotational decisions. However, experienced editors can sometimes go too far in the other direction, letting the bibliographical design of their sources run roughshod over their sense of balance. The first modern editors of Jonson, C. H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, have been criticized for allowing their regard for the 1616 folio to dictate the editorial choices they made, mainly those involving copy texts.[9] The Oxford editors' decision to use the folio as copy text for all the stage works except *The Masque of Queens* runs counter to later scholarship that argues one should favor the earliest extant print editions, as they will almost always be closer to the original manuscript, and by extension, the author's intentions.[10] Fredson Bowers felt that the Herford and Simpson *Jonson* was "ostensibly an edition of the works which by a mistaken choice of copy-text for many parts turned itself into an edition of
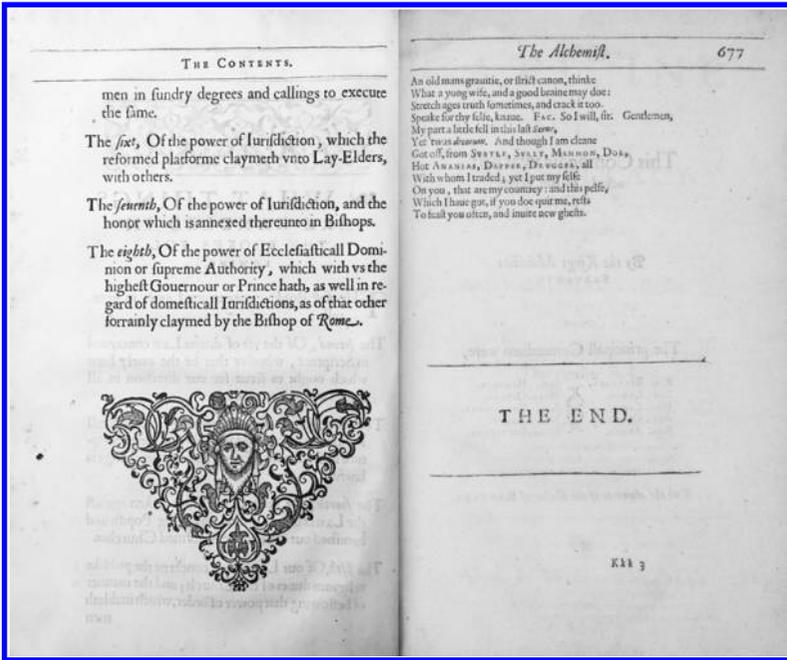
Figure 2. Left, tailpiece, E6ᵛ, Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (1617). Right, Final page of *The Alchemist*, 3L3ʳ (missigned 3K3), *The Workes of Beniamin Jonson* (1616). Images from author's copy.

the folio."[11] Other scholars had similar reactions, questioning the primacy of the 1616 folio in editorial decisions and observing that the edition often wavers between scholarly and facsimile editing.

Irrespective of their textual choices, however, I think the Oxford editors showed unusual sensitivity to what the *book* was trying to say. It is clear that Jonson was working with an elaborate and sophisticated model of textual self-presentation, what Joseph Lowenstein called his "bibliographic ego." Herford and Simpson faithfully reproduced Jonson's typographic strategies for representing the wide variety of scholarly, literary, dramatic, and rhetorical dimensions in his texts. The Oxford editors went one step further, however, and modeled the design of their edition after that of the 1616 folio. They introduced each work with a facsimile image of the original title page, laid out the dedications and dramatis personae as Jonson did, and even fashioned the individual text pages similar to those in the 1616 *Workes*. Typical
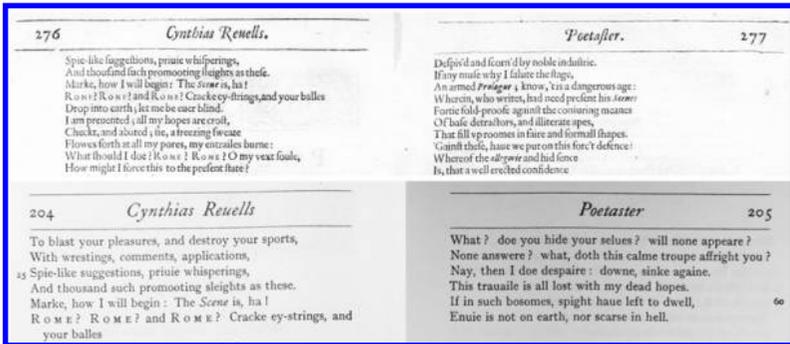
Figure 3. Top, detail, *Poetaster* opening, Z6ᵛ–2Aʳ, *The Workes of Beniamin Jonson* (1616). Bottom, detail, *Poetaster* opening, 4:204–5, *Ben Jonson* (1925–52). Image from author's copy.

is Herford and Simpson's design of the opening page of *Volpone*, where, other than the exclusion of the headline and the substitution of a two-line drop cap for the ornamental *N*, the latter is a faithful recreation of the original *mise-en-page*. Demonstrating that serious editors can also have a sense of humor, Herford and Simpson silently included an error made by Stansby's men in changing the skeleton formes when they shifted attention from *Cynthia's Revels* to *Poetaster*. Figure 3 shows a detail from the first full opening of *Poetaster* in the folio. As you can see, someone forgot to switch out the running title from *Cynthia's Revels* to *Poetaster* on the verso page, probably because it was the last leaf in the preceding gathering *Z* (see fig. 3). The running titles in the first full opening in the Oxford *Jonson* for this play salute Stansby's goof (see fig. 3). And as one would expect, they included the visual moment of silence in *Epicene* (see fig. 4).

Despite Herford and Simpson's bibliographical sensibilities, many post-war readers found the eleven-volume collection difficult to use, in part because the editors chose not to modernize elements such as the seventeenth-century i/j and u/v conventions, but mainly, I think, because they assumed those readers would have the same fine education they enjoyed. In other words, they didn't translate the many Latin passages employed by Jonson, presuming that anyone interested in his works would, like Jonson himself, have no trouble understanding the non-English text. I got my copy of the Oxford *Jonson* through a used-book dealer,
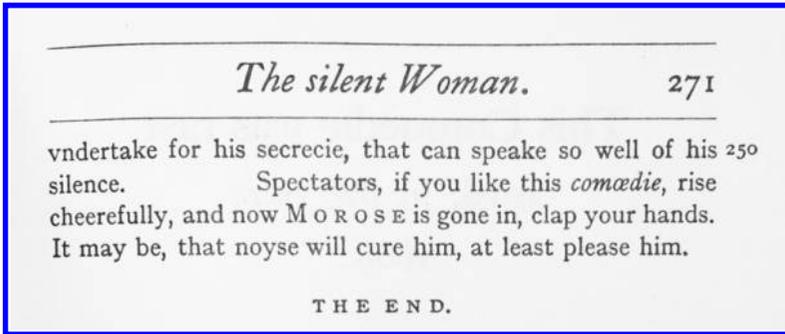
The silent Woman. 271

vndertake for his secrecie, that can speake so well of his 250
silence.   Spectators, if you like this *comœdie*, rise
cheerefully, and now M O R O S E is gone in, clap your hands.
It may be, that noyse will cure him, at least please him.

T H E   E N D.

Figure 4. Detail from final page of *Epicene*, 5:271, *Ben Jonson* (1925–52). Image from author's copy.

who had acquired it from a college in Dallas that shut down in 1988 due to financial scandals. Of the eleven volumes held in the defunct college library, only one had ever been checked out, the one containing *Volpone*, *Epicene*, *The Alchemist*, and *Catiline*. Even more telling, almost none of the bolts at the tops and fore edges of the gatherings had ever been opened. Effectively this means that only one out of every eight openings could actually be read without peeking inside the folds with a flashlight. It seems honoring Jonson's sense of bibliographical design only goes so far.

All of this was in the minds of Ian Donaldson, Martin Butler, and David Bevington when, in 1995, they organized a conference at the University of Leeds to ponder the possibility of producing a newly edited Jonson edition. A number of international scholars heard papers and discussed proposals on a variety of subjects, and the conference ended with the participants in consensus that they should move forward with a proposal to the Oxford University Press. (As a side note, while the proposal was accepted, changes at Oxford prompted a shift to Cambridge University Press.) At first the focus was almost entirely on producing a print edition, with the idea that certain materials best presented in electronic form would eventually be published as a CD companion. Seventeen years later the seven-volume print edition was published,[12] and two years after that the online companion, which had grown and matured into a full-blown scholarly archive *cum* edition.[13]

From one perspective, the print Cambridge *Jonson* is a sophisticated and deeply traditional edition. The contributing

editors engaged in a fresh textual and historical collation of their subject works, guided by the principles of eclectic editing, and informed by a contemporary understanding of the processes of textual transmission. The results bear witness to the sheer amount of scholarly investigation that each editor undertook, and the edition presents the material histories of each text in ways that are both complex and readable. The accompanying annotation and appendices provide context that modern scholars, teachers, and students require. And the secondary essays deliver all the biographical, literary, and historical background one expects from an edition published by an established university press.

At the same time, the general editors' overall design and structure of the edition departs from established norms in a number of ways. Perhaps the most striking innovation is the order of texts. Rather than group works by genre, the Cambridge *Jonson* employs a chronology determined by first staging or date of composition if known, from *The Case is Altered*, written in 1598 or 1599, to *Discoveries*, printed some time in 1641. By adopting a biographical rather then typological narrative for the works, the editors sought "to highlight their inner connections and outward historical relationships," and "allow Jonson's relationship to his historical context to be more readily explored."[14] Overall, the print Cambridge *Jonson* gives traditionalists and modernists alike something to quibble about, which I think is the mark of a successful enterprise: if you're not annoying someone, then you probably aren't doing your job. For example, while I applaud the clear, stylish look of the type page, I'm a little peeved that Truewit's final silence is silenced. Rather than a physical gap in the text, the spatial silence is rendered as a page break, obscuring the original visual pun, with only a note indicating "F1 *leaves a sizable blank after silence.*"[15]

While the print edition proceeded from beginning to end with a single editorial and structural vision, the electronic companion continually expanded and morphed. Beginning with the original concept of a single CD containing image facsimiles and perhaps a concordance generator, rapid technological changes allowed the editors to repeatedly enhance the capacity and sophistication of the resource as the potentials of online publication grew exponentially. This in turn raised significant questions with the press. Since first

receiving its letters patent from Henry VIII in 1534, Cambridge has been in the business of printing books, and later journals; the electronic medium was relatively new territory. They also faced the task of controlling intellectual property in an online environment where, in the words of activists, academics, and music fans, "information wants to be free." Free is not a business model that any press finds all that attractive.

Those working on the electronic side confronted four fundamental challenges: how to build a resource that exploited fully the possibilities afforded by networked computers; how to shape that resource in some sort of coherent fashion; how to decide what the resource would include; and finally, how to deliver that resource in a way that produced revenue for the press while protecting its intellectual property. I have to say, looking at what we finally released four years ago, that the results are a mixed bag. While we like to call the Cambridge *Jonson Online* an edition, in fact it is an archive. Some of the materials it contains wound up there because the general editors couldn't find room in the print edition, which, by the way, was originally envisioned as a three-volume publication. Even with the now seven volumes, we couldn't fit the textual and printing history essays into the press's page budget, vital accessories one expects to find in a scholarly edition. Other elements fit more comfortably within the archival model, such as the invaluable primary document cache that details Jonson's life, literary career, and the tricky business of mounting entertainments for the court. We were able to include the painstaking work done by scholars that illuminates how music fit into his canon, a crucial part of both the public and private stage. Other information such as dubious writings, performance archives, detailed chronologies, and of course a complete primary and secondary bibliography, all work well in an online environment.

What took up the bulk of our time, energy, and resources, though, was delivering the core Jonsonian texts to readers without losing their important material nature. We began by creating high-quality digital-image facsimiles of every page of every folio, quarto, and octavo publication of Jonson texts, along with as many manuscript images the team could acquire. Technology will inevitably improve to increase image detail and color density, so that what today looks stunning, tomorrow will look like it was

generated on a dot-matrix printer. We strove to increase the shelf life of our images by seeking the highest resolution scans possible. We didn't always get them – at some point you must accept what libraries, institutions, and archives give you – but for the most part the bulk of the images have held up well, even those scanned twenty years ago.

The textual side proved easier since we created the transcriptions ourselves, but it was also the most time-consuming. We began by sending page images to an offshore keyboarding company that generated SGML-encoded texts with an error rate of less than one character per page. Cohorts of graduate assistants then proofed and reproofed each file, followed by the painstaking labor of adding layers of semantic and structural encoding. In the middle of this long process, we had to pause and convert the original SGML to XML, but since seamless upgrade was one of the key attributes offered by SGML, this proved nearly trouble free.

Our encoding goal was to build texts that contained detailed literary, linguistic, semantic, *and* bibliographical information. Anyone who has worked with text mark-up will be familiar with the hierarchical nature of XML: elements nest within elements within elements, and the domain of one element cannot overlap another. Books, however, are not hierarchical. The linguistic structure of a text – chapter, section, paragraph, word – conflicts with the bibliographical structure, particularly the page. Paragraphs break across pages, which means you can't simultaneously encode both the paragraph and the page since their domains conflict. Our solution was to adopt the linguistic hierarchy as primary but encode the bibliographical elements in such detail that if we chose, we could reconstruct the bibliographical hierarchy with protocols such as XSL transformation.

The current *Cambridge Jonson Online* doesn't support the types of technical innovations a fully functional electronic edition requires. The press does not yet have an online editorial apparatus capable of exploiting the sophisticated assortment of materials held in the archive, and the Jonson team had to seek outside funding and contract with King's College London in order to build the current platform, which must bow to the simplification dictates of a Web interface. This means, among other things, users have no access to the core encoded texts, only HTML-based texts, with the bulk

of the semantic and bibliographical information stripped away. At some point in the future, however, one hopes to open up the data to outside developers, perhaps supply APIs for access to the core datasets.

Ideally, the XML-encoded versions of the original-spelling texts, along with the modernized and edited versions and the image facsimiles, should form the backbone for a true electronic edition. And maybe someday they will, in which case this will be the title of my talk:

MDCXVI

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NOTES

1. William Drummond, *Informations*, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson Online*, ed. David Bevington, Martin Butler, and Ian Donaldson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 554–59. Hereafter abbreviated as *CWBJ Online*. http://universitypublishing online.org/cambridge/benjonson/k/works/informations/facing/.

2. See Kevin Donovan, "The Final Quires of the Jonson 1616 Workes: Headline Evidence," *Studies in Bibliography* 40 (1987): 106–20.

3. See Robert Davies, *A Memoir of the York Press* (London: Nichols and Sons, 1868), 342–74, 343.

4. Peter W. M. Blayney has written the most concise and coherent history of the Folio's production. See *The First Folio of Shakespeare* (Washington, DC: The Folger Shakespeare Library, 1991).

5. Fredson Bowers, *On Editing Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Dramatists* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1955), 87.

6. G. Thomas Tanselle, "A Description of Descriptive Bibliography," *Studies in Bibliography* 45 (1992): 30.

7. Jerome J. McGann, "A Note on the Current State of Humanities Scholarship," *Critical Inquiry* 30.2 (2004): 410.

8. Henry Woudhuysen, *Times Literary Supplement* (10 October 2003): 12–13.

9. *Ben Jonson*, ed. C. H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, 11 vols. (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1925–52).

10. I am not referring to "final intentions," a problematic term justly questioned by scholars. Rather the preference for early printings helps editors separate authorial and printing-house choices, an important

distinction that allows us to make more informed analyses of the interaction between the two influences.

11. Bowers, "Greg's 'Rationale of Copy-Text' Revisited," *Studies in Bibliography* 31 (1978): 114.

12. *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, ed. David Bevington, Martin Butler, and Ian Donaldson, 7 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). Hereafter abbreviated as *CWBJ*.

13. *CWBJ Online* (2014). http://universitypublishingonline.org/cambridge/benjonson.

14. "Chronology," *CWBJ Online* (2015). http://universitypublishing online.org/cambridge/benjonson/about/general_intro/chronology/.

15. *CWBJ* 3:504.