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**Ioppolo, Grace, project dir. Henslowe-Alleyn Digitisation Project. Other**

Kara J. Northway

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**Ioppolo, Grace, project dir.**

**Henslowe-Alleyn Digitisation Project. Other.**

London: King's College London, King's Digital Lab, 2020. Accessed 12 June 2020.

[henslowe-alleyn.org.uk](http://henslowe-alleyn.org.uk).

In his *Guide to Early Printed Books and Manuscripts*, Mark Bland sums up the ethical duties of archival institutions and scholars: to cherish the “artefacts of cultural heritage,” but to study them in the context of “other marginal and mundane items alongside which they were created”:

[E]ach library that serves the public or a specific community, has its own role as a guardian of the inscriptions, manuscripts, printed books, and, more recently, other media in its trust. Such collections are never haphazard, and their continuing maintenance and development needs to engage fully with the history of their form as well as their meaning.<sup>1</sup>

The founder of the Henslowe-Alleyn Digitisation Project, Grace Ioppolo, has obviously committed to these responsibilities. This established digital archive beautifully displays and preserves 2,200 high-quality, photographed pages of the most important handwritten documents in English theatre history from the time of Shakespeare.<sup>2</sup> These manuscripts include, on the one hand, treasures, such as the famous *Henslowe's Diary*, an account book listing hundreds of play titles, playwrights' and actors' names, financial expenditures, costumes, and properties, and, on the other hand, ordinary internal communications, receipts, and legal agreements. In short, these papers underpin much of what we know, outside of the plays, about this period's theatres. This archive originated from the business and family records kept by entrepreneur Philip Henslowe (d. 1614)

1. Mark Bland, *A Guide to Early Printed Books and Manuscripts* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 213.

2. “Introduction to the Henslowe-Alleyn Digitisation Project,” Henslowe-Alleyn Digitisation Project (2020), accessed 12 June 2020, [henslowe-alleyn.org.uk](http://henslowe-alleyn.org.uk). All subsequent references to this site contain the same access date and will be cited in the text. For the archive's associations with William Shakespeare, see Grace Ioppolo, “Henslowe's Diary: Including the First Recorded Performances of *Henry VI* and *Titus Andronicus*,” Shakespeare Documented (25 January 2020), [shakespearedocumented.folger.edu/exhibition/document/henslowes-diary-including-first-recorded-performances-henry-vi-and-titus](http://shakespearedocumented.folger.edu/exhibition/document/henslowes-diary-including-first-recorded-performances-henry-vi-and-titus).

and his son-in-law, the actor Edward Alleyn (d. 1626). Henslowe and Alleyn were also commercial theatre-builders who owned the Rose, the Fortune, and the Hope; Alleyn later endowed Dulwich College in the UK, a charitable and educational institution where the archive now resides. The site's stated goals are to safeguard and share broadly this collection by "provid[ing] the best possible images of every page of the manuscripts relating to theatrical affairs in the Henslowe-Alleyn Papers" ("Catalogue," [henslowe-alleyn.org.uk/catalogue/catalogue](http://henslowe-alleyn.org.uk/catalogue/catalogue)). As a scholar of manuscript studies and theatre history, I love this project for its increased accessibility to a unique archive, its scholarly authority, and its mission to support, through ongoing adaptation, current and future research on early modern drama and performance.

Before the site became available in 2009, theatre historians who wanted to study the Dulwich archive had to consult printed scholarly transcripts and summaries, which were inconsistently accurate, or see the originals in person. Physical access to the archive in the twenty-first century has been limited not only because of the items' fragility and worth, but also because of a weathered institutional history. In the archive's early days, curious scholars, actors, and visitors rummaged through and borrowed items, not always returning them, further underscoring the need for stewardship and preservation. In the 1880s, George Warner repaired the materials, ordered and catalogued them chronologically by subject, and bound them into three dozen volumes.<sup>3</sup> The organization of the digital site, for consistency, follows Warner's cataloguing language and numbering and exhibits images from nine of these volumes, which date from 1544 to as late as 1686 (MSS 1–3, 5, 7–9, 19–20) as well as Muniments Series 1 and 3, containing legal documents: for instance, the contract for the building of the Fortune. The foremost benefit of the current Henslowe-Alleyn Digitisation Project, therefore, is the unlimited visual access it provides to these manuscripts. Such access allows scholars to get a sense of the materiality and historical "form" of the documents, as well as the archival context, thereby inspiring interdisciplinary directions for research.

While photographic facsimiles of *Henslowe's Diary* and other papers in the collection have been available in print since 1977, the digital archive's images of

3. George F. Warner and Francis B. Bickley, compilers, *Catalogue of Manuscripts and Muniments of Alleyn's College of God's Gift at Dulwich*, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, 1881–1903), [babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.32044080268196&view=1up&seq=7](http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.32044080268196&view=1up&seq=7). For more on Dulwich history, see [henslowe-alleyn.org.uk/about/about-project/?highlight=volumes](http://henslowe-alleyn.org.uk/about/about-project/?highlight=volumes).

documents are high-definition, enhanced visuals.<sup>4</sup> Ioppolo and her team have dedicated themselves to “continuing maintenance and development” of digital content, periodically updating the site. Despite this activity, the site has been remarkably stable over the years. She and the advisory board have proceeded with integrity, subsuming additional restorations for the materials and care into the project from the beginning.<sup>5</sup> A conservationist and professional photographer, David Cooper, took the 600-dpi resolution photographs 2004–07 on location (see the “About” tab, [henslowe-alleyn.org.uk/about/manuscript-images](http://henslowe-alleyn.org.uk/about/manuscript-images)). In order to present the manuscripts in sharp detail, Cooper captured between sixteen and sixty-four photographs for each document; these were then merged using Adobe Photoshop. Overseeing the entire project has been a range of experts from theatre history and manuscript studies, including, in addition to Ioppolo, the late R. A. Foakes, H. R. Woudhuysen, S. P. Cerasano, Peter Beal, and John Lavagnino, as well as the archaeologist Julian Bowsher, technical research director Paul Vetch, and current and former keepers of the archives at Dulwich College, Calista Lucy and Jan Piggott. The interdisciplinary expertise of this advisory board reflects best practices for digital scholarship.<sup>6</sup> A similarly scaled undertaking for these irreplaceable documents probably will not happen in the foreseeable future.

In February 2020, the King’s Digital Lab, which maintains the site, switched the Zoomify image viewer to an International Image Interoperability Framework (IIIF) compliant system for better magnification, moved from XML to a Django-based platform, added new materials, and further restructured the interface with larger thumbnail images and more robust universal design ([henslowe-alleyn.org.uk/accessibility-statement](http://henslowe-alleyn.org.uk/accessibility-statement)). With this latest image-manipulation capability, there is much for users to explore. On a wide range of

4. R. A. Foakes, ed., *The Henslowe Papers*, 2 vols. (London: Scholar Press, 1977).

5. Ioppolo has regularly shared project developments: the 2008 Renaissance Society of America Meeting; “Henslowe-Alleyn Digitisation Project,” Centre for Material Texts (23 December 2010), [english.cam.ac.uk/cmt/?p=1182](http://english.cam.ac.uk/cmt/?p=1182); “‘If I could not liu by it & be honest’: Putting the Henslowe-Alleyn Manuscript Archive Online,” *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 24 (2011): 38–45; and “The Henslowe-Alleyn Digitisation Project: Past, Present, and Future,” *New Ways of Looking at Old Texts, V: Papers of the Renaissance English Text Society, 2007–2010* (2014): 71–80. For information about funding attained for conservation, see Ioppolo, “‘If I could not liu by it,’” 42.

6. See, for example, the category “Interdisciplinarity,” listed in the Renaissance Society of America Best Practices for Digital Scholarship 2020, [rsa.org/page/bestpracticesdigitalscholarship#criteria](http://rsa.org/page/bestpracticesdigitalscholarship#criteria).

manuscript types in the collection—such as deeds, bills, letters patent, receipts, correspondence, and diaries—readers can adjust colour saturation, gamma correction, and contrast to bring into relief, say, a watermark on Ben Jonson’s copy of two poems, MSS 1, Article 135/02r. While the brief descriptions of the images do not usually note particular manuscript features, such as the size or type of paper material, close-ups of the images themselves reveal the intricate texture of each single page: evidence of folds, wormholes, stains from lost wax seals, chain lines showing how the paper was made, conservation repairs, and even the often underrated blank pages.<sup>7</sup> Having travelled to Dulwich to compare particular physical manuscripts against the digital versions, I found the manipulated image data stayed very faithful to the historical record. The site cannot, of course, entirely replace the need for archival visits, but such visits always occur under time constraints. This review is not the appropriate place to relay my discoveries while perusing details of these images, but that desirable outcome, enabled by unrestrained access to the archive, illustrates the value of this site as a medium for generating significant, and perhaps field-wide, research directions.

At present, the outreach of the site exceeds those whom, beyond specialists, it likely is serving, but Ioppolo has shared two future aspirations for the site: 1) to offer online readers more, and more varied, meaningful uses—not just “a look”; and 2) to diversify the audience—not just “literary, theatrical and manuscripts scholars, economic, social and regional historians and archaeologists, but students, actors, directors and other theatre personnel” and amateur enthusiasts, as well.<sup>8</sup> To this list, I would add further conceivable fields of study to consider on this site: life-writing, seals (sigillography), sports, food, clothing, religious charity, and rhetoric.

For scholars without the paleographical skills needed to decipher the handwriting in the catalogue’s manuscripts, the site supplies five transcriptions, as well as a few more incorporated into fifteen scholarly introductions, which focus on the most celebrated holdings. Among these transcriptions is MSS 9, the “Diary [and Account Book] of Edward Alleyn, 1617–22,” the first since 1889, which also includes glossaries ([henslowe-alleyn.org.uk/transcriptions/mss-9](http://henslowe-alleyn.org.uk/transcriptions/mss-9)).

7. Heather Wolfe, “Was Early Modern Writing Paper Expensive?” *The Collation*, Folger Shakespeare Library (13 February 2018), [collation.folger.edu/2018/02/writing-paper-expensive](http://collation.folger.edu/2018/02/writing-paper-expensive).

8. Ioppolo, “If I could not liu by it,” 43; [henslowe-alleyn.org.uk/about/about-project](http://henslowe-alleyn.org.uk/about/about-project).

While the 124 PDFs of page-transcriptions must be downloaded individually, Ioppolo's edition is a welcome contribution for those interested in Alleyn's art appreciation, book collection, and social-networking with royal and prominent contemporaries. Ioppolo has acknowledged that the lack of additional aids to the reader is a limitation of the site and has disclosed plans underway, pending financial support, to upload more extensive transcriptions and improve search and indexing functions.<sup>9</sup>

In terms of the usability and design of the 2020 interface, online readers can conduct some limited inquiries under the "Search" page tab. For example, a query on the actor William Bird, who also went by Bourne and various other spellings of his name, turns up an allusion to a *Robert Bird* in *Alleyn's Diary*, but not MSS 1, Articles 104 and 105, written by William Bird, nor the Muniments, nor any of the almost fifty references to him in *Henslowe's Diary*. Searches for particular years, theatres, document types (such as petitions), endorsements, or even the word "dog" yield only partial or no results despite frequent associations in these theatrical and bearbaiting documents.

Until a more streamlined experience of the site is possible with expanded transcriptions, the best approach for reading the manuscripts is to consult relevant outside print and online resources, cross-referencing Warner's catalogue numbers. Like memos extracted at any given moment from a busy, modern corporation, the Henslowe-Alleyn Papers are highly contextual and often complicated. The site flags complete forgeries, such as MSS 1, Article 20, done by scholar John Payne Collier, and some, but not all, of his known minor insertions, such as in MSS 1, Article 23. For the dramatic contexts, people, dating practices, transcriptions, and scholarly disputes, I suggest as starting places Foakes's *Henslowe's Diary*, which remains the most authoritative scholarly edition; W. W. Greg's *Henslowe Papers*; Martin Wiggins's *British Drama*; and the Lost Plays Database.<sup>10</sup> These external sources may add more

9. Ioppolo, "If I could not liu by it," 43; [henslowe-alleyn.org.uk/about/manuscript-images](http://henslowe-alleyn.org.uk/about/manuscript-images).

10. R. A. Foakes and R. T. Rickert, eds., *Henslowe's Diary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), reprinted by Foakes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); W. W. Greg, ed., *Henslowe Papers, Being Documents Supplementary to Henslowe's Diary* (London: Bullen, 1907), [archive.org/details/henslowepapersbe00hensuoft](http://archive.org/details/henslowepapersbe00hensuoft); Martin Wiggins, in association with Catherine Richardson, *British Drama, 1533–1642: A Catalogue* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2012–); Roslyn L. Knutson, David McInnis, and Matthew Steggle, eds., *Lost Plays Database* (Washington, DC: Folger Shakespeare Library, 2018), [lostplays.folger.edu](http://lostplays.folger.edu). For biographical information, see Edwin Nungezer, *A Dictionary of Actors*

nuanced understanding and help users take greater advantage of the digital archive's offerings.

Selective parts of this site could potentially be assigned in an introductory theatre or Shakespeare classroom. To clearly picture an early modern actor's part or handwritten playscript, students could examine the excellent essays "The 'Part' of Orlando in Robert Greene's play [*Orlando Furioso*]," by Foakes, or "The Manuscript of *The Telltale*," by Foakes, Beal, and Ioppolo, alongside the corresponding images of these rare documents.<sup>11</sup>

While the digital archive is open to anyone with a browser, it is primarily intended for personal research. Users should not expect a locus for scholarly networking, wiki-style contributions, big data visualizations, maps, or portraits of anyone other than Alleyn. Downloading, annotating, printing, or sharing images is not possible; and reuse of them requires permission from the keeper of the archives at Dulwich. The project was completed with the permission of the governors of Dulwich College and with funding from the Leverhulme Trust, the British Academy, the Thriplow Charitable Trust, the Pilgrim Trust, the Henry E. Huntington Library, the Folger Shakespeare Library, the British and American Bibliographical Societies, the Marc Fitch Fund, King's College London, and the University of Reading.

In its eleventh year since launching, the Henslowe-Alleyn Digitisation Project can now be evaluated as a mature digital humanities site, but also as one that continues to evolve. The question for the next iteration will be how to balance stability and scholarly authority with dynamic growth and access for increased numbers of users, especially from disparate fields. Surprisingly, this well-publicized and free site has been underused, even by specialists. Matthew Steggle has commented that digital humanities is "a discipline which is at once ubiquitous and also strangely invisible in current discourse."<sup>12</sup> The Henslowe-Alleyn Digitisation Project is often referenced in scholarship, but usually only in a footnote or in passing. For example, theatre historians Lawrence Manley and

(New Haven: Yale University Press, 1929) and David Kathman, "Biographical Index of English Drama Before 1660," accessed 12 June 2020, [shakespeareauthorship.com/bd/index.html](http://shakespeareauthorship.com/bd/index.html).

11. For "The 'Part' of Orlando," see [henslowe-alleyn.org.uk/essays/the-part-of-orlando-in-robert-greene-s-play/](http://henslowe-alleyn.org.uk/essays/the-part-of-orlando-in-robert-greene-s-play/); for "The Manuscript of *The Telltale*," see [henslowe-alleyn.org.uk/essays/telltale/](http://henslowe-alleyn.org.uk/essays/telltale/).

12. Matthew Steggle, *Digital Humanities and the Lost Drama of Early Modern England: Ten Case Studies* (London: Routledge, 2016), 25, [doi.org/10.4324/9781315577180](https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315577180).

Sally-Beth MacLean call it “a superb reference tool for off-site consultation.”<sup>13</sup> I agree. My hope is that the site eventually becomes recognized not as a digital archive for secondary “reference” but as a superb *primary source* tool for developing new research ideas.

KARA J. NORTHWAY

Kansas State University

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Shakespeare and the Players. Other.**

Atlanta, GA: Emory University, 2016. Accessed 15 December 2019.  
[shakespeare.emory.edu](http://shakespeare.emory.edu).

Shakespeare and the Players is a digital archive containing around a thousand postcards of Shakespearean actors from the 1880s to 1914. It provides a unique and fascinating insight into late Victorian and Edwardian theatre that will be of significant interest to those researching and teaching not just early modern drama but also theatrical history and its intersection with visual and material cultures. Originally launched in the 1990s by Harry Rusche, whose collection of postcards form the collection, Shakespeare and the Players has recently undergone an attractive new redesign led by Emory University PhD student and digital project manager Justin Shaw. Coding and layout have been provided by digital scholarship consultant Erin Hecht, and assistance on the project has been contributed by another Emory PhD candidate, Kayla Shipp Kamibayashi. As well as the appealing redesign, the site also now includes audio and video material of some of the actors who feature in the collection, expanding the archive’s scope and potential research and teaching applications. Indeed, these applications from a pedagogical perspective are large, especially as the archive has been designed with mobile phones and tablets in mind, meaning in-class activities are easily accessible to students and can be developed confidently by educators.

13. Lawrence Manley and Sally-Beth MacLean, *Lord Strange’s Men and Their Plays* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 340, [doi.org/10.12987/yale/9780300191998.001.0001](https://doi.org/10.12987/yale/9780300191998.001.0001).