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Estill, Laura, ed. *World Shakespeare Bibliography. Database*

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## Digital Resource Reviews / Comptes-rendus sur les ressources numériques<sup>1</sup>

**Estill, Laura, ed.**

***World Shakespeare Bibliography. Database.***

Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001. Accessed 10 February 2019. [worldshakesbib.org](http://worldshakesbib.org).

The *World Shakespeare Bibliography* (WSB) is the leading online academic archive for Shakespeare scholarship and performance, offering annotated entries for critical works and performances produced worldwide since 1960. The WSB is edited by Laura Estill, with institutional support from the Folger Shakespeare Library, Johns Hopkins University Press, and Texas A&M University. The bibliography itself is maintained by an international committee of correspondents, resulting in a regularly updated archive. Included in the WSB classification of “scholarship” are scholarly books, such as monographs and edited collections, but also editions and dissertations. “Performances” covers stage productions at major theatres, audio recordings, and television and video productions, as well as musical scores. A recently added category, “Digital Projects,” lists items such as published PowerPoint presentations, interactive texts, and websites such as the *MIT Digital Hamlet Project*.

The *World Shakespeare Bibliography* is, quite simply, an invaluable academic resource, offering a vast body of “professional” material, by which I mean work produced as part of an academic, artistic, or publishing industry. In recent years, the administrators have taken significant steps to ensure an easy user experience. The site is primarily designed as a search engine, with basic and advanced search options and a robust browsing menu. Once material has been found, it can be sorted by chronological, reverse chronological, alphabetical, and reverse alphabetical listings, or by document type. It is especially useful that the basic information can be expanded and collapsed when it appears in a list as the search results. The annotations of the text are as detailed as can be expected from a bibliography, with cross-reference tags that include relevant keywords, texts, and people; it is easy to save and export lists, and the e-mail

1. These reviews are published in collaboration with *Early Modern Digital Review*. They also appear in vol. 2, no. 1 (2019) of *EMDR* ([emdr.itercommunity.org](http://emdr.itercommunity.org)).

generated contains all of the information, as well as a link to the text's initial page. All of this information is helpful for academic research.

Browsing offers the user the opportunity to scroll through material organized by categories that include individual works, apocrypha, productions, language/linguistic/philological study, and play groupings. Broader categories such as "Shakespeare and his Stage" and "Reference Works" are examples of headings that open up sub-menus to display smaller specialty fields for browsing, such as "Concordances" or "Acting Companies." This is a wealth of information that accurately reflects the scope of the bibliography itself. The browsing tab is limited by its ability to filter within categories—for example, one can browse the *Coriolanus* tab, but the browse function will not allow further tagging, leaving the reader with over 1,800 files to read. The page does offer the opportunity to click on "+additional tags," and this button leads the user to the advanced search menu, which then allows a search to be refined by year, type of publication, book series, WSB number, and/or language. There is no foolproof way to navigate the WSB's search engine, but this is a testament to the breadth of content, rather than a weakness in design.

In terms of content, the *World Shakespeare Bibliography* must navigate the difficult task of accommodating a range of Shakespearean artifacts, while still remaining useful to scholars. An editorial note on the "About" page explains the Shakespeare-centric focus that shapes the inclusion of critical offerings, justifying the more critical eye applied to texts "that discuss Shakespeare in a brief but identifiable section that offers more than a recapitulation of commonly known facts or interpretations." Such a rationale makes sense, and is easily applied to scholarly work. Less certain, however, is the WSB's ability to cover ephemera such as web videos or indirect appropriations. My search for American-based stage productions yielded bountiful results, including smaller, off-Broadway productions and my local Shakespeare festival, but the database is lacking in the capacity to filter productions by, for example, country or region. As a result, it is not easy to assess whether global Shakespeares receive the same rigorous attention. Confusingly, Shakespeare adaptations are part of the editions tab, and also can be found as "Shakespeare in Literature" under the larger browsing tab of "General Shakespeareana," which leads to the inaccurate label of, for example, Neil Gaiman's issue of the popular *Sandman* comic book that engages with *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; the keyword listing of "comic book" exists, but not as a tag. As the Gaiman example suggests, the

bibliography struggles to accommodate the more oblique, yet nonetheless valid, connections to Shakespeare, eliding appropriative work that is not explicit in its deference to a work or the author. The result is an inconsistency whereby scholars may recognize the Shakespearean quality of a work, but the database is unable to accommodate the text under discussion. A search for Derek Walcott, for example, yields twenty-four critical works on Shakespeare's influence on Walcott, yet fails to include the poet's own work, such as "The Branch of the Blue Nile," a poem that is a direct adaptation of *Antony and Cleopatra*. Presumably, the question of inclusion—particularly the issue of who gets to decide—is difficult, but nonetheless, it makes the process of finding material that exists outside of traditional definitions of Shakespeare production more challenging.

The *WSB* is not open access; both institutional and individual subscriptions are available. Institutional access facilitates a linking system that allows users to connect directly from the *WSB* to their library's database of full-text essays, or shelf listings for books. Individual access to the *WSB* costs (at the time of writing) \$88 per annum, and does not offer direct access to the archived texts. Overall, the *World Shakespeare Bibliography* is an invaluable resource for scholars of Shakespeare, but there is undoubtedly an emphasis on professional communities, both through its archived material and its intended users.

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**Huynh, David François, project lead.**  
**SIMILE Widgets: Timeline. Version 2.3. App.**

Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2006. Accessed 19 March 2018. [simile-widgets.org/timeline](http://simile-widgets.org/timeline).

First designed at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology by David François Huynh, version 2.3 of the SIMILE Widgets: Timeline tool is a spin-off of the popular and widely-used widget that was one of many tools originally developed by the Semantic Interoperability of Metadata and Information in unLike Environments (SIMILE) project at MIT. The current version is maintained by a group of open-source programmers. The GitHub repository is maintained by Ted Benson, a programmer for Instabase, and David Karger,