

**Reinvention Centre Report**  
**Dr Margaret Shewring (Theatre, Performance and Cultural Policy Studies)**

**Project Title**

‘A Warwick-based Renaissance Festivals web-site: resource enhancement for undergraduate teaching and research.’

**Keywords**

Keywords: Renaissance, Festivals, Performance, Resource Enhancement, Digitisation

**Disciplines**

Disciplines: Theatre and Performance Studies, English, Renaissance Studies, Music, Fine Art, History and Modern Languages

**Summary**

The study of Renaissance Festivals has reached a turning point. It has long been recognised that an integral part of the political and cultural world of the European Renaissance was the transformation of cities and great houses into performance locations for elite entries, investitures, christenings, betrothals, weddings, funerals, peace treaties, indeed occasional celebrations of all kinds. In their turn, these occasions formed part of the economy of Renaissance cities, encouraging conspicuous consumption, building (both temporary and permanent), the acquisition of trade skills and the skills of rhetoric, music and dance.

The Festival Books that document such occasions are not easily accessible. There are major collections at the British Library, the Warburg Institute, the Herzog August Bibliothek (Wolfenbuettel), the Victoria and Albert Museum and the New York Public Library. Most individual Festival Books can only be accessed by visiting the appropriate archive, since few have been reprinted.

Since 2000, Warwick staff and students have been part of major funded projects to make these archival resources more accessible and so to allow them to be part of the study of Renaissance history, culture and performance. The Warwick initiatives have included the publication by Ashgate of a large-format two-volume collection of Festival Books with transcriptions, translations, illustrations, introductions, annotations and commentaries (*Europa Triumphans: Court and Civic Festivals of the European Renaissance*, eds J. R. Mulryne, Helen Watanabe-O’Kelly and Margaret Shewring, 2004) and the preparation of a Warwick/British Library website digitising 253 Renaissance Festival Books (Project Directors: Professor Ronnie Mulryne and Dr. Margaret Shewring.) This site, hosted by the British Library, offers fully searchable access (more than 2m ‘hits’ in one twelve-month period) using a set of key-word search terms developed in collaboration with the Herzog August Bibliothek. The same search terms have been applied to an e-book version of *Europa Triumphans* that will be available from Autumn 2009, following the sell-out of the complete print edition. Furthermore, Warwick-based festival scholars are collaborating with international colleagues to bid for funding to make additional Festival Books available on line in fully-searchable digital form and to disseminate collaborative research through conferences and publications.

Encouraged by the success of these projects I have developed a second-year module within Theatre and Performance Studies dealing with Renaissance Festivals and Performance. As part of the students' engagement with this module we have been working towards the creation of a Warwick-based Renaissance Festivals web-site that will complement the Warwick/British Library site by providing introductory essays, commentaries, glossaries and essential background information. The Reinvention Funding was sought to enable a group of students to contribute fully to the creation of this research resource.

### **Activities**

The students involved in this Reinvention Centre project were Laura Kennard (Theatre and Performance Studies), Rose Biggin (English and Theatre Studies), Persala Bandara (English) and Alice Gahan (Theatre and Performance Studies). Laura and Rose were named in the bid. They had worked on Renaissance Festivals as part of their second-year course work (taking my Festivals module in 2007/08). Alice Gahan took the same module in 2008/09. Persala became interested in Renaissance court performances as part of her final year Research Topic in English and has applied to the University of Warwick's Centre for the Study of the Renaissance to take an MA in the Culture of the European Renaissance from Autumn 2009.

The range of students across different year groups interested in the study of Renaissance Festivals, coupled with the recent activity in Festival scholarship detailed above, made my Reinvention Centre bid timely.

The Reinvention Centre funding has made it possible for the four undergraduate students to:

- engage with source materials through access to archival collections of Festival Books (at the Warburg Institute and the British Library)
- have hands-on access to original Festival Books in the collection of the Warburg Institute (University of London) and to be introduced to the use of those books by Professor Jill Kraye, the Warburg's Librarian (herself a scholar of Renaissance Festivals)
- become members of the Warburg Institute's research library
- help to establish the parameters of the new Warwick-based Festivals website
- contribute to the development of the Warwick site (Laura, Rose, Alice and Lauren Wilde -- a further student from Theatre Studies -- have all contributed material.)
- influence future developments in Resource Enhancement initiatives through their contribution to a steering group of Renaissance scholars, librarians and digital experts (London, November 2008: Agenda and Minutes attached).

### **Outcomes**

This project has facilitated the development of a Warwick-based website to complement the Warwick/British Library Renaissance Festivals website (BL Treasures in Full, Renaissance Festivals). The Warwick site will:

- further undergraduate, postgraduate and scholarly research into Renaissance Festivals
- provide annotation and commentary to enhance study of the 253 Festival Books digitised on the BL site

- disseminate current research by including contributions from established national and international scholars
- include contributions from students (in the form of refereed notes/annotations/commentary/brief articles)
- provide a teaching tool for use within the second-year undergraduate Festivals module
- be available more widely as a teaching and research tool.

### **Implications**

- This project has engaged undergraduate students from Warwick in discussions with Renaissance scholars, both at Warwick and on a national basis, to devise and facilitate an on-line resource for teaching and research.
- The Warwick-based site has drawn on the skills of the E-Lab team and, in particular, of Dr. Robert O'Toole in the construction of a site that is both visually and aurally user-friendly.
- It has raised issues of the historiography of performance and its dissemination.
- It has allowed the students to engage with primary sources and to present these in an on-line format that will encourage other students to make use of the resources.
- Further development of the Warwick site will be integrated into teaching and research in the School of Theatre, performance and Cultural Policy Studies.
- There will be opportunities for future students to make refereed contributions to the site.
- A successful bid has provided URSS funding for Alice Gahan to further the development of the site over a period of four weeks during the summer of 2009.
- The poster and presentation prepared as part of that URSS award will further disseminate the work undertaken with the Reinvention Centre funding.
- The site will feature in a session on Digitisation and Resource Enhancement at an international conference on Renaissance Festivals to be hosted by Dr. Margaret Shewring in Venice in March 2010. This will allow the site to be internationally recognised.

### **Resources**

- The Reinvention Centre Funding has enabled the creation of a Warwick-based website on Renaissance Festivals designed to complement the British Library site and to enhance teaching and learning at both undergraduate and postgraduate level as well as to provide a scholarly tool for further research.
- The website will be launched in October 2009.

### **Contact details**

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### **Supplementary Information**

The Agenda and Minutes for a Steering Group Meeting held at the Warburg Institute, University of London, 28 November 2008.

A brief report from Alice Gahan on her involvement with the Reinvention Centre Project.

# **Renaissance Festivals Websites**

**Steering Group Meeting  
Warburg Institute  
1.45 pm, Friday 28<sup>th</sup> November 2008**

## **Agenda**

- 1) Apologies
- 2) Introduction (MS)
- 3) British Library Festivals site: record of use (RM)
- 4) New developments and *Europa Triumphans* (RM)
- 5) Recent developments in technology that may enhance the ability to search digitised texts (RO'T)
- 6) Possible further projects to enhance the digitised material available for research in the field of Renaissance Festivals (MS)
- 7) Possible sources of funding for further digitisation projects to make more Festival Books available, in a fully searchable format, from the collections at the Warburg Institute and the British Library (RM/MS)
- 8) Renaissance Festivals Website at the University of Warwick: content, search terms, access (MS)
- 9) Further members of the Steering Group

MS: 27/11/08

# Renaissance Festivals Websites

## Minutes of the Meeting of the Steering Group held on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2008 at the Warburg Institute.

**Present:** Dr. Marie-Claude Canova-Green (Goldsmiths), Professor Jill Kraye (Warburg), Professor Margaret McGowan (Sussex), Professor Ronnie Mulryne (Warwick), Mr. Robert O'Toole (Warwick), Dr. François Quiviger (Warburg), Dr. Margaret Shewring (Warwick, chair) and Mr. Chris Wootton (British Library).

**In attendance:** Pesala Bandara, Rose Biggin, Alice Gahan and Laura Kennard (Warwick undergraduates).

### 1) Apologies

Apologies were received from Professor Sydney Anglo (Sussex), Dr. Kristian Jensen (British Library), Professor Elizabeth McGrath (Warburg), Professor Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly (Oxford) and Dr. Thomas Staecker (Wolfenbüttel).

### 2) Introduction (MS)

i) MS thanked Jill Kraye for arranging for a room to be available at the Warburg Institute for the meeting.

ii) Following a preliminary meeting at the British Library (between MS, RM, KJ and JK), MS bid successfully for pump-priming funds from the University of Warwick to enable the meeting to take place.

iii) In response to the success of earlier digitization projects, particularly the Warwick/ British Library Renaissance Festival Books project, funded by AHRB/C, and to plans for further dissemination of Festival Books by electronic means, including plans by Ashgate to convert *Europa Triumphans*, now sold out in printed form, into an e-book, the intention of this meeting was to discuss the viability of further digitization of resources that would contribute to the development of research into Renaissance Festivals and to consider possible sources of funding for such a project (or projects).

### 3) The Warwick/ British Library Renaissance Festivals site

RM reported on the success of the AHRB/C Resource Enhancement Project (co-project leaders RM and MS with Kristian Jensen and British Library staff and post-doctoral fellows Dr. Sarah Cusk and Dr. Alexander Samson, supported by a Steering Group) which provided resources for the digitization of 253 Renaissance Festival Books, in fully searchable form, on the website of the British Library. Quoting British Library figures, RM reported that in the year 2005-6 there were 1,516,784 hits on the site, at an average rate of 4,996 such hits per day, from 19,152 distinct hosts (i.e. individual IP addresses). In 2006-7 (the last year for which the BL has currently got records available) there were 2,070, 287 hits, at an average daily rate of 5,672, from 21,352 distinct hosts. These figures suggested a considerable degree of interest in the site and its books.

The project was rated 'Outstanding' by the AHRB/C.

The work on the BL site had been done with the co-operation of the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel, and had used keyword search terms developed by Dr. Thomas Staecker as the basis for its search process.

Professor Margaret McGowan had given a well-attended and much-appreciated lecture hosted by the British Library to mark the launch of the Warwick/ BL Festival Books site.

#### **4) *Europa Triumphans***

RM reported that Ashgate Publishers are going ahead with plans to make available an electronic version of the two-volume collection of Renaissance Festival Books originally published (2004) under the title *Europa Triumphans*. This publication represented the part-outcome of an AHRB/C-funded major research project under the general editorship of Ronnie Mulryne, Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly and Margaret Shewring. The initial print run had sold out within the first year and a waiting list had been set up for a possible second edition or reprint. As an alternative, Ashgate has proposed to make the volumes available for purchase in digitized form. The volumes include transcriptions of festival books from across Europe, translations, annotations, commentary and a name-index as well as numerous black and white illustrations and colour plates. The process of digitisation will make it possible to include an index of keyword search terms (similar to that on the British Library's Warwick/BL Festival Books site) to allow readers to conduct targeted searches of the digitized volumes. RM, HW-O'K and MS are currently in the process of securing permissions for electronic reproduction of all the images. MS has been successful in a bid to the University of Warwick for help with the cost of permissions. HW-O'K will make a similar bid to the University of Oxford.

#### **5) Recent Developments in Technology**

Robert O'Toole explained that computer technology is developing rapidly. There have been significant developments that will make further digitization of texts, in fully searchable form, an easier and more user-friendly option. In particular, RO'T described means of setting up indexes and search terms to allow for a wide search to become focused, by a process of elimination, on specific groups of data.

RO'T and FQ agreed it would be important to consider data security and ownership but that, given that appropriate safeguards could be put in place, it should be possible to implement a 'one-stop' approach to keyword searches across several sites. FQ and JK stressed that they would be happy to advocate such an approach in order to make the resources of the Warburg collections as widely available as possible. CW agreed that the technology to develop digitized Festival Books could be enhanced further and agreed to consult his departmental manager concerning the BL's approach to extending the project, subject to appropriate funding being secured. It was noted that the funding for the original digitisation project allowed the BL to purchase hardware which might be available to assist a new project being put in place successfully. MS and RM reported that KJ had been very positive in the preliminary meeting at the BL earlier this year and that they would ensure that he is kept up-to-date with current discussions.

#### **6) Further projects**

Encouraged by the reports set out above, including the success of existing projects and the on-going Ashgate plans, members of the Steering Meeting expressed strong

support for further enhancement of digitized resources to encourage wider access to, and further scholarship in, such a strongly cross-disciplinary area of Renaissance research. MMcG, JK and M-CC-G spoke in support of further collaborative projects between universities and major research libraries, emphasising the importance of such co-operation in the development of interdisciplinary research on an international basis. In particular, it would be advantageous to enhance the searchability of the 117 Festival Books from the Warburg collections that have already been digitised, by including the addition of metadata currently available only in the Warburg's card-catalogue and providing a full range of search facilities. It would be good, too, to invite colleagues from the Festival Books collection at the V&A to become involved in the project. FQ agreed to approach V&A contacts. It was also agreed that it would be essential to put in place appropriate quality controls for any new site, balancing availability and usability with a careful monitoring of the content for scholarly reliability.

## **7) Funding**

It will be essential to secure significant funding for such a project (or projects). Both Thomas Staecker and Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly had already indicated their willingness to support a funding bid (or bids). RM reported on his conversations with Ian Broadbridge (AHRC) and Alastair Dunning (JISC) concerning possible sources of funding from JISC, the AHRC and the British Academy. He noted that JISC has an 'Enriching Digital Resources' programme, referring specifically to 'digitising analogue collections and enhancing existing digital collections for use in learning, teaching and research' (JISC website). Alastair Dunning confirms (by email) that 'we are also making plans to provide funding to enhance existing digital content', and anticipates that a call will be issued for bids for funding in the near future. JISC has in many areas moved over to a rolling application system, so that it may be possible to submit or at least float a bid as soon as one is developed. It was agreed that it would be of great benefit to the project to be able to fund one or more post-doctoral researchers as well as to support the involvement of established academics, librarians and technicians. Bids to AHRC and the British Academy in these respects may be feasible. It might also be good to look to these bodies for a funded doctoral student as part of future Festivals research.

RM emphasised that, now that the earlier Resource Enhancement Funds were no longer being offered, it would be important to place the project in the context of a wider research-led bid. RM and MS agreed to seek further information and guidance on the suggested, and other, potential sources of funding.

## **8) Warwick Festivals Website Project**

MS reported that she is in the early stages of developing a website, currently hosted as part of the University of Warwick's site, to complement the BL's Renaissance Festivals 'Treasures in Full' project. Although the BL Festival Books are searchable, there are no individual introductions, annotations or commentary for the selected texts and no translations into English for foreign-language books (by far the largest proportion of the digitized texts). She has secured pump-priming funding to begin on this project and is developing it in consultation with students and with RO'T. MMcG has generously allowed the talk she gave to launch the BL site to be included as an introduction to the Warwick-based site. The site will also have an audio facility to assist blind or partially-sighted scholars. It will make use of the same keyword search

terms as the BL site. (These terms were, as remarked above, developed in collaboration with TS at the Herzog August Bibliothek (Wolfenbüttel).)

**9) Students** from Warwick, in attendance at the Steering Meeting expressed their support for the plans. They had each made use of the BL site in their undergraduate work on Festivals and would welcome both further digitization of Festival books and further work on the complementary site hosted by Warwick to provide necessary information to new students and scholars as they begin to work on Renaissance Festivals.

**10) Future Meeting(s)**

The Steering Group were in full support of further Festival-based projects. It was agreed that, for a subsequent meeting, it would be good to re-invite Professors Sydney Anglo and Margaret McGrath to join the Group as well as to make it possible for Dr. Thomas Staecker to come over from Wolfenbüttel. It was also agreed to invite Dr. Nadine Pederson (University of Toronto) to contribute by correspondence. Dr Pederson has been using the BL site as the basis for postgraduate teaching at Toronto well as her own research.

MS/08/12/08



## **Reinvention Centre Funded Meeting at the Warburg Institute 28.11.2008**

Last November I, along with three other undergraduate students, was invited to attend a steering meeting for the further digitisation of festival books at the Warburg Institute, University of London. This tied in with my studies, as I was taking a module on Festival and Performance in the European Renaissance. I had already made use of digitised festival resources for classes, and would shortly be writing an essay on the subject.

On arriving at the Warburg Institute, we were invited (before the meeting) to view some of the original festival books and texts we had been studying. This was a fascinating opportunity to come into contact with the primary sources. Following this, we were taken into the Library itself and each of us became a member, and we were each given a card to allow us to use of the facilities for the next year. This would be extremely helpful if we wanted extra material for our studies.

However, as students based at Warwick, there are practical difficulties for us to be able to make good use of the Warburg Collection in London. Therefore, what was discussed during the afternoon in our presence (at the academics' meeting on digitisation) was highly relevant.

In the meeting we were able to listen to the discussion and analysis of what has already been done (in terms of the BL, the Warburg Institute and the Herzog August Bibliothek sites) and what could be done in order to make the resources more accessible. We were then able to give our own feedback on how, as students, the improvements and the creation of a Warwick site would benefit us, and those taking the module in the future. We agreed that, when starting to learn about the discipline, for us it would be fantastic if there was a site which would provide a grounding of knowledge and that we could easily search when researching for essays.

Our attendance at the meeting was, I feel, beneficial to the scholars in underlining the importance of the creation of such online resources for the use of undergraduates, as well as further academic research, and in particular, the need for the Warwick website. As the only student in attendance who had not yet completed the module, it was extremely useful for me when I began to think about researching for my essay, and later exams, and I was able to know exactly what I would find helpful.

I am now, as part of the URSS programme, helping with the development of the Warwick Festivals site. The meeting in London was an excellent starting point in terms of gaining an understanding into the work I will be doing.

Alice Gahan  
2<sup>nd</sup> Year, Theatre and Performance Studies.