Case Study: Shakespeare in Performance at the University of Toronto

Doctoral research

Arlynda, a Doctoral research student at the University of Toronto, was writing a dissertation on how actors annotate scripts. Most supporting research was done using the archives of major Shakespeare companies, with historical research undertaken at the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington D.C., which holds a comprehensive archive relevant to this project.

In many cases, finding notes in playbooks from only actors was a laborious and time-consuming task which involved requesting and viewing each playbook individually – page by page. In some instances, this would involve requesting and physically reviewing fifty to seventy-five playbooks a day.

The Adam Matthew digital collection, Shakespeare in Performance, provided a solution to this challenge through a tagged and referenced digital copy of the archive held at the Folger Shakespeare Library.

"It's an incredibly useful database, easy to understand and navigate, that allows the Folger Shakespeare Library to share important documents while preserving them safely. I could not have done my research nearly so extensively without it and I know from experience in paper archives that it allowed for far greater speed and efficacy than would have been otherwise possible."

Not only could relevant documents be sourced and viewed with greater speed, Arlynda was able to access them without needing to travel to the library itself.

- Saved a significant amount of time not travelling to the library itself
- Additional time saved through the use of tagged search. Only relevant documents where highlighted and viewed
- No physical handling on documents helps ensure the perpetuity of the original documents.