

Assignment 4, option 1: Your book's provenance
Due Monday, April 27th, 11:00 pm; email to swerner@folger.edu
worth 10% of your final grade

The purpose of this assignment is to think about how a book's history of ownership after its publication can illuminate the range of uses a book and a text are put to, long after the original audience has passed on.

Your immediate goal is to find out what you can about any individual owners or institutional owners of your book. This is information that can be gathered, in the first place, by what's visible on the book itself and what is recorded in Hamnet. Some of the visible clues of a book's provenance can be found in inscriptions, bookplates, bindings, tipped-in copy from book seller's catalogs, book seller's codes or other notes, and exhibition labels. It is also possible to find out more information about a book's provenance and entry into the Folger's collections by reading catalogs and other acquisition records that the Folger might have on file. Some of the evidence you find—that it was rebound in the nineteenth century, that someone marked it up in an eighteenth-century hand, etc.—might not be able to be linked to a specific, named individual, but it is still relevant as evidence of usage.

If you know the name of someone who owned your book, you might be able to find out more information about that person by checking to see if they owned any other books in the Folger's collections; some of the former owners in our collection are prominent or are prolific collectors, but some are nearly entirely unknown. If you have reason to suspect that a former owner/reader might be prominent (e.g., their name pulls up other books in our collection, or their name can be found in our catalog with their birth and death dates), you might want to find out some more information about them by either looking in the DNB or in one of the relevant volumes of the DLB (via Gale's Literature Resource Center), or in the American National Biography (available online at the Folger and probably through your home institutions). Online libraries of digitized out-of-print books (e.g., Google Books [<http://books.google.com/>], the Internet Text Archive [<http://archive.org/details/texts>], and HathiTrust [<http://www.hathitrust.org/>]) can be another useful source of information about specific owners and collectors.

To find information about your book's entry into the Folger's collections, start with your book's Hamnet record. Some records will include in the copy notes information about from whom the book was bought. You will also want to contact Georgianna Ziegler (Head of Reference; reference@folger.edu) to ask whether there is any information about the book's acquisition in the Folger's files. Please remember that the staff at the Folger are very busy, and while they are happy to assist, you should not expect that they'll be able to respond to you in less than a week. You can always use the information you gather for your final paper, but not worry about it being included in this assignment.

If you have an exhibition label in the back of your book, you can first try to work out what the exhibit was by looking at the list of previous exhibits at <http://www.folger.edu/Content/Whats-On/Folger-Exhibitions/Past-Exhibitions/>. If your book was exhibited prior to those listed, you can ask Caryn Lazzuri (Exhibitions Manager; clazzuri@folger.edu) if she has any information about it.

More resources are listed at the end of this assignment sheet.

When writing this assignment, it will make the most sense to present your information chronologically, starting with the earliest owners and moving through to its place in the Folger today.

Please cite fully any and all works that you have consulted during your research for this paper. Don't forget that when you cite your book, you need to provide the author (if known), the title (generally the shortened form), and the imprint (location and all names given; if the information is in square brackets in the catalog, include it as such in your citation) **and the call number and copy number, if it has one.**

As always, if you have any questions, or need an extension, please ask.

Suggested resources (in addition to the ones listed above):

CERL Provenance page: <http://www.cerl.org/resources/provenance/main> (see also their list of resources at <http://www.cerl.org/resources/provenance/geographical>)

British Armorial Bindings: <http://armorial.library.utoronto.ca/> (This can be frustrating to search, but if your book has a binding with a coat of arms on it, it can be very helpful.)

W. Carew Hazlitt, *The Book Collector* (1904): <http://archive.org/details/bookcollectorang02hazlgoog>
Seymour de Ricci, *English Collectors of Books and Manuscripts (1530-1930) and their Marks of Ownership* (1930): <http://archive.org/details/englishcollector00ricc>

Carl L. Cannon, *American Book Collectors and Collecting from Colonial Times to the Present* (1941): <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.b4055456> (not online in full, but this will take you to a searchable listing; the Folger owns this book and your university libraries might)

Finally, and I kid you not, it can be productive to simply Google your owner. The most reliable sources will be those that are in scholarly publications; the older publications might be online in full through one of the resources listed above. Genealogy sites can also offer leads, especially The Peerage (<http://www.thepeerage.com/index.htm>).