

30 September 2013

To: The Executive Council and Delegate Assembly  
Modern Language Association of America

## **2013 Annual Report of the Committee on the New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare**

### **1. The NVS Committee's Charge**

The MLA's Committee on the New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare has the following charge:

The Committee on the New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare reviews development of New Variorum Shakespeare projects and advises on policies and initiatives for the series.

### **2. Routine Business**

Following a committee dinner on Thursday, 7 February 2013, the committee held a full-day meeting on Friday, 8 February, at the MLA office. In attendance were Alexander C. Y. Huang (chair), Michael Best, Heidi Brayman Hackel, Alan Galey, Richard A. J. Knowles, Sarah Werner, and Paul Werstine. Katherine A. Rowe and Julia Flanders attended by phone for one agenda item; Rosemary G. Feal also joined the committee for the discussion of that item. Staff members who attended the meeting were Kathleen Fitzpatrick (liaison), Anna S. A. Chang, and James C. Hatch; Judith Altreuter attended for two agenda items.

The committee approved the minutes of the previous meeting and reviewed the committee chair's annual report to the Executive Council and the list of New Variorum Editions of Shakespeare. Other routine business included plans for organizing a convention session for the 2014 MLA convention.

The committee discussed potential problems in cases where editors who have worked on editions for long periods of time continue to send in material that is below standard and thus cannot be accepted by the general editors.

After discussing how to attract new editors to the series, the committee decided to work with the Committee on Scholarly Editions and the Committee on Information Technology to issue a joint statement on the importance and worth of textual editing as a form of scholarly publishing and that aims to encourage departments to give greater weight to textual editing projects in tenure and promotion decisions.

The committee decided to make the following changes to the Assessment of the Status of Projected Volumes: *All's Well That Ends Well* and *The Poems* were moved from category C ("active but not likely to be completed in the next decade") to category B ("likely to be submitted in the next decade"); *Two Gentlemen of Verona* was moved from category C to category D ("status not entirely clear").

In December 2012, the committee voted by Listserv to appoint Marvin Hunt and Laury Magnus as assistant editors of *Hamlet*. In May 2013, the committee voted by Listserv to appoint Gabriel Egan to succeed the late Trevor Howard-Hill as editor of *Two Gentlemen of Verona*.

### 3. Modular Publication of the Editions

The committee discussed modular or incremental publication of the editions, concentrating on publication of the text and textual notes first, perhaps in collaboration with the Internet Shakespeare Editions project (ISE) or other such partners. The committee also discussed how Alan Galey's visualization prototypes might be used in the publication of the text and textual notes.

Julia Flanders presented her report on the possibility of developing an authoring tool for NVS editors, "Environmental Scan for NVS Authoring Interface." The committee discussed how an authoring tool could make the XML encoding of the edition more efficient and less expensive. The tool would be designed to provide better data security, support collaborative editing, and allow better continuity and consistency from volume to volume. The committee discussed the possibility of having a common bibliography, list of abbreviations, and list of sigla for all volumes. Kathleen Fitzpatrick, Alan Galey, Judith Altreuter, and Julia Flanders will discuss how to move forward with the authoring tool and report back to the committee.

### 4. Digital Challenge

The committee recommended pursuing a second Digital Challenge award, using other Shakespeare editions available online. The committee stressed that the winner must be held to high editorial standards and that the contestants must include a statement on why they chose the edition they used. The committee seeks the most innovative and compelling uses of the data contained in one of the NVS editions. The MLA is making available the XML files and schema for two volumes, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Comedy of Errors*, under a Creative Commons BY-NC 3.0 license. Scholars can freely download the XML files and schema from GitHub (<https://github.com/mlaa/nvs-challenge>). The committee seeks entries featuring new means of displaying, representing, and exploring this data in the most exciting API, interface, visualization, or data-mining project. It is especially interested in entries that combine the NVS data with another Shakespearean project, such as Folger Digital Texts, Internet Shakespeare Editions, or Open Source Shakespeare. The goal is to see the possibilities of the NVS in digital form and, in particular, the innovations in scholarly research that might be enabled by opening up the NVS's code. Projects will thus be judged both on the quality of the interface they provide for the NVS and on the insights produced by the mash-up. Information about the Digital Challenge has been posted to [http://www.mla.org/nvs\\_challenge](http://www.mla.org/nvs_challenge). The deadline for entries is 1 August 2014, and the award will be presented at the 2015 convention.

In the 2012 Digital Challenge, the MLA released the XML files and schema for *The Comedy of Errors*. The winner of the challenge was Patrick Murray-John's *Bill-Crit-O-Matic* (<http://billcritomatic.org>). The runner-up was Doug Reside and Gregory Lord's *Comedy of Errors* (<http://comedyoferrors.zengrove.com>). The award was presented by Alex Huang at the session sponsored by the NVS at the 2013 convention in Boston. The text of the award

announcement can be found at  
[https://www.mla.org/governance/committees/comm\\_publications/nvs\\_challenge\\_2012](https://www.mla.org/governance/committees/comm_publications/nvs_challenge_2012).

### **5. Globalizing the NVS: Content, Marketing, Collaboration**

Expanding the global reach of the edition was another topic of discussion, especially in connection with translations of key lines; at this year's committee meeting, inclusion of commentaries from non-Anglo-European traditions was discussed. Expanding the reach of the edition's performance histories beyond English productions through the use of crowdsourcing was also suggested. The committee compiled a list of partners, including Shakespeare associations from different parts of the world, and will continue to expand this network. The MLA offered a one-time discount on NVS volumes in May 2013. Members of the committee announced this on the Listservs of the European and Asian Shakespeare associations to which committee members belong.

I wish you all well as you continue with your work. Thank you for the privilege of serving as your chair in 2013 and as a member of the committee since 2011.

Respectfully,

Alex Huang  
NVS Chair

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