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Library Marketplace Interview -- "Shakespeare-upon-iPod" Edward de Vere and the Shakespeare Question Updated

John Riley

Eastern Book Company, jdriley@comcast.net

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Another interesting thing about electronic dictionaries — the more ubiquitous and easier to use they are, the more people expect from the experience of using them. If you have a tiny crappy paper dictionary you use only one or two times a year, you don't care about user experience — and probably you aren't too concerned about the quality of the information, either. But if you have, for example, the **Apple OS X Dictionary** widget (which uses *NOAD* and the *Oxford American Writer's Thesaurus*, by the way) open on your desktop all day long, you care more about how it feels to use. You become a better consumer of information, just through repeated exposure. You're more likely to look things up that are just a little unfamiliar, and you'll start to notice if the information is bad. That's why we were so eager to work with **Apple** — they really understand user experience, and we understand the importance of good information — it was just a perfect match!

ATG: If you were to look into your crystal ball, what would the third edition of the *New Oxford American Dictionary* look like?

EM: Well, I can't get too futuristic, as I know the 3rd edition isn't too far off! In other words, I'm not expecting the Singularity to happen before then. (For those of you who, like us don't know the precise meaning of "singularity" see the sidebar.) We're always

trying to make the front matter and back matter more helpful — this edition includes not only an essay on the sounds of American speech, but also a very thoughtful and practical essay on understanding and reading etymologies. Next edition I'd like to add a grammar essay; something that makes the sometimes cryptic grammatical information really come alive (a tall order, I know!).

Revising a dictionary is much like keeping a very large stately manor in repair. You replace the carpet and then it's time to repaint. You repaint and then you need a new roof! Every aspect of the dictionary is always undergoing cyclical revision. Subject-area experts get drafts to look at and revise. Etymologies are compared to new research and information (the independent researcher **Barry Popik** alone is responsible for new information on hundreds of words every year!). Pronunciations are scanned — are they still right? What's changed? It's never-ending.

ATG: That sounds like the near future. What about the long term?

EM: In the further future, with any luck, at least while I'm still working on dictionaries, and I figure I have another fifty years, tops, if I'm lucky — I hope we have books with electronic paper, so that they look and feel like books but hold exponentially more information. I get so excited whenever I read about advances in digital paper in *Wired* or *New Scientist*! I'd like to have dictionaries that were multilayered, so that you could drill down to deeper levels of information — more

detailed grammatical or collocational information, or more and more and more example sentences. And, of course, better cross-referencing — not just obvious cross references, but oblique ones. Looking at the word "loonie"? Then you could link to other words that are Canadianisms, like "pogey." If you look up a plant, you could be directed to other plants that are biologically related, or related in medicinal use or culinary use. You could look up a particular verb and get verbs that had similar patterns of use ... it would be kind of a sideways dictionary. It would make it easier to triangulate the location of those words that are on the tip of your tongue but that you can't quite articulate ... it's all very exciting! I know the words "exciting" and "dictionary" don't appear together too often, but I'm trying to change that ...

ATG: Well it looks like you're succeeding. You make dictionary making sound fun and interesting. Thank you so much for taking time out of your schedule to talk to us.

EM: You're very welcome. I love any chance to be a dictionary evangelist.

Endnotes

1. "mystery1 n." *The New Oxford American Dictionary*, second edition. Ed. Erin McKean. Oxford University Press, 2005. Oxford Reference Online. Oxford University Press. Oxford Online OUP-USA. 3 August 2005 <http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t183.e50544>

Library Marketplace Interview — "Shakespeare-upon-iPod" Edward de Vere and the Shakespeare Question Updated

An interview with Mark Anderson, author of *Shakespeare by Another Name: The Biography of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, the Man Who Was Shakespeare*. (Gotham/Penguin 2005. ISBN 1-592-40103-1. \$30.00) <http://shakespearebyanothername.com/media>

by John Riley (National Sales Manager, Eastern Book Company) <jdriley@comcast.net>

JR: Mark, you and I have been carrying on a number of conversations for the last ten years, but we always seem to come back to two subjects: the technology of publishing and the authorship of the Shakespeare plays, two subjects that have occupied your writing at Harper's and *Wired* for nearly ten years. Now you have moved ahead with these two interests and the result is your new book: *Shakespeare by Another Name: The Biography of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, the Man who Was Shakespeare* due out August 2005 from Gotham Books/Penguin. It is the definitive argument for the de Vere/Oxford authorship of the Shakespeare canon. It should really shake up the scholarly world and encourage further research following the lines you have laid out in the book. Along with your ground breaking effort on de Vere's biography you have also used innovative technologies in the research and dissemination of your scholarship. We'll cover both areas in the next few pages.

To get started, I'd like to quote a passage from your "author's note"

at the end of the book and then you can bring us up to date:

"In the summer of 1993, I first learned about an underground of dissent among accomplished scholars and writers who, over the past two and half centuries, have doubted the conventional biography of "Shakespeare." I was astonished. Here was perhaps the greatest author who ever had lived and legendary figures in their own right say he actually wrote nothing? Was this the biggest case of mistaken identity in history? What had haunted the likes of Henry James, Sigmund Freud, Mark Twain and Walt Whitman so much? Why had I never heard of this before?"

How did you make that leap from interested bystander to dedicated scholar? What motivated you to take on such a daunting subject as questioning the authorship of Shakespeare?

MA: I started as, I suspect, many people in this field started: First having my curiosity piqued — in my case in the summer of 1993 on an NPR program — which then led to checking out as many books as I could find on the subject from my local library, **The Forbes Library** in Northampton, Massachusetts. I was a reporter for the *Valley Advocate* at

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the time, and so my first instinct was to approach the topic of **Edward de Vere** and the “**Shakespeare**” question as an article for the paper. The original topic was the scholarship being done by a then-graduate student at the **University of Massachusetts, Roger Stritmatter**, on **de Vere**’s personal copy of the *Bible*. It turns out this *Bible* has more than a thousand underlined and annotated verses — and approximately one-quarter of those verses turn up as biblical references in **Shakespeare**. So in 1994, I wrote an article about **Stritmatter**’s work. **Roger** and I worked on a number of projects — it even looked for a time like we might do a book together about **de Vere**’s *Bible*. But, throughout, I just kept reading, researching and writing. In 2001, I put together a book proposal for a biography of **de Vere** as “**Shakespeare**,” which my agent started shopping around. In August of 2002, we inked a deal with **Gotham Books**. And I’ve been working on this project as close to 24/7 as I possibly could ever since.

JR: *Your book is built on the case that overwhelming evidence in the plays points to details in de Vere’s life. Was it common at that time to write so autobiographically?*

MA: No. It was uncommon to have what today would be seen as a perfectly natural approach to writing: Tell your own story and tell it with as much intimacy and detail as you can bring to bear. It’s of course perfectly natural to want to cloak one’s meaning sometimes and completely fictionalize some details. But by and large the truer a writer is to his or her own story (define “story” however you will), the truer that story is going to read on the page.

Misery acquaints a man with strange bed-fellows, as somebody famous once wrote, and so I do find it interesting to be agreeing with the staunchly Stratfordian critic **Harold Bloom** when he notes that **Shakespeare** was really the first of the moderns. The Bard was very much ahead of his time... not only in the defiance of some of the classical “unities” of literature (time, space, structure, etc.) but I think also in ways that traditional **Shakespeare** scholars may not be able even to approach. As I say in my book, “**Shakespeare**” appears in fact to have been one of the most autobiographical authors who ever set pen to paper. And to recognize this, one needs to first redefine “**Shakespeare**.” Turn the focus to **Edward de Vere**, and whole new autobiographical layers of meaning in “**Shakespeare**” open up.

JR: *What do you think about Stephen Greenblatt’s book Will in the World that takes a similar approach, but comes to a decidedly different conclusion?*

MA: I think **Greenblatt** does an admirable job of reconstructing the period and bringing to life a very colorful age. But even some of **Greenblatt**’s critics have admitted that he fails when it comes to connecting the life of the actor and entrepreneur **Will Shakspeare** of Stratford with the canon of “**Shakespeare**” plays and poems.

Yet here is where **Edward de Vere**’s life provides a cornucopia of riches. Practically every play and poem resonates with stories, themes and characters from **de Vere**’s life and troubled times. **De Vere** was raised in the household of the Elizabethan spymaster, **William Cecil**, widely regarded as the prototype of **Polonius**; **de Vere** married the daughter of this Elizabethan “**Polonius**.” He spent a year traveling through France and Italy, visiting the locations where many **Shakespeare** plays would later be set. He and his retainers got into an interfamily war with his mistress’s clan — regular Elizabethan Montagues and Capulets. **De Vere**’s sister was a temperamental fireball who was wooed by a swashbuckler named **Peregrine Bertie** — and this courtship is spoofed in *The Taming of the Shrew*. **De Vere** had his own problems with anger management too. When **de Vere** was returning from Italy, one of his servants — a real Iago — whispered hints of **de Vere**’s wife’s infidelity into **de Vere**’s ear. This inspired a tempestuous confrontation scene with his wife followed by seven long years of separation. This marital strife was played out throughout the **Shakespeare** canon in plays such as *Othello*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Winter’s Tale*, and a number of others. The list goes on and on.

JR: *Could you explain how your travels helped you gather evidence for the de Vere case? Since there is no evidence of William Shakespeare ever having traveled outside England this seems to be a particularly rich area for further scholarship.*

MA: Well the specific locales where **de Vere**’s 16th century paths crossed mine are in the Rhone valley, south of Lyons, and in Venice, Verona, Mantua, Florence and Siena. During a Parisian vacation we took the high-speed rail down to a lovely town called Tournon-sur-Rhone. Here I met up with a friend who at the time lived nearby, fortunately she’s a native speaker (as my spoken French is choppy at best), and we explored two chateaus that I knew from my previous research that **de Vere** was likely to have visited on his way home from his Italian Grand Tour. We lucked out that day, finding the town’s local historian and enjoying a spot of tea with her in her drawing room as she explained what Tournon was like circa 1576, when **de Vere** passed through the region. The reason Tournon is so interesting is that this town was the seat of **Just-Louis**, the Count Roussillon — who in 1576 had an immediate family consisting of a mother, the Dowager Countess and a sister named **Helene**. **Helene** is a local legend, even today. They still have local fairs named after her. She became something of a martyr to love in 1577, becoming the victim of a haughty young man and some ugly family politics. This material channels straight into **Shakespeare**: The play *All’s Well That Ends Well* departs markedly from its source (**Boccaccio**) in depicting a Count Rousillon, his mother the dowager countess and (in **Shakespeare**’s telling of the tale) a fond and headstrong bride named **Helena**.

In northern Italy, there is an absolute treasure trove of **de Vere**/**Shakespearean** discoveries awaiting. One can see this from the amazing assortment of original research that has been

done, primarily, by two Oxfordian researchers, both of whom I was very grateful to have had many discussions and exchanges of information with over the years. (I also count myself extremely fortunate in that both, **Noemi Magri** of Mantua, Italy and the Pasadena, Calif.-based **Richard Paul Roe**, also were quite generous in sharing a few gems from their collections of unpublished work.) I, on the other hand, was in northern Italy for a two week period in 1999, so my opportunities to do original research were somewhat limited. In that case, I was more interested in scene-setting. My wife and I took a tour of the Jewish ghetto in Venice — an amazing educational experience that I would recommend anyone do, regardless of their level of interest in **Shakespeare** — and visited the sites where **de Vere** would likely have traveled in these cities where we know he visited: St. Mark’s and the Palazzo Ducale in Venice, the Duomo and Ponte Vecchio in Florence, Siena’s gorgeous central piazza and cathedral, etc. In the past four or so years, I’ve done a lot more research from afar about other sites and locales that I now very much want to explore — the Tuscan towns of Pistoia and Prato, the temple Segesta in Sicily, the tomb of Baldassare Castiglione outside Mantua, the Illyrian (now Croatian) city of Ragusa/Dubrovnik, etc. The book’s written and published, and there’s still so much more to be explored and researched! Fodder, no doubt, for future research and articles and books.

JR: *What other areas of research into the de Vere/Shakespeare question do you think would be worth exploring? It seems like you have opened a floodgate.*

MA: Where to begin here? I suspect there are many more discoveries to be made in Parisian, Roman, Venetian and other continental archives. **De Vere** was a true cosmopolitan Renaissance man, and I’m sure there’s much to be discovered about him that’s outside of the English soil. As for Terra Britannia, I would most want to know about the holdings of some of the private castle and estate archives of the families closest to **de Vere**, such as Belvoir Castle, etc. A lot of this stuff dates to the Elizabethan age and before, and an astonishing amount of it has never been catalogued or, in some cases, even perused by anyone conversant in the history of the individuals in question. Again, I’m sure there are some lovely needles to be found in these gigantic haystacks, for those with the access and the time to be able to search.

JR: *What has been the reception of your scholarship so far?*

MA: Mixed. This book, I’ve found, has already begun to inspire passionate responses both positive and negative. And, as of this writing, it hasn’t even officially been released yet! My favorite review so far appeared recently in a Boston newspaper. The reviewer, whom I have to give points to for his candor, stated flat out that he simply refused to read the book. He didn’t want his myths tampered with, and he evidently recognized that *Shakespeare By Another Name* stood to upset his apple cart. What the reviewer called the “**Horatio Alger myth**”

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of the conventional **Shakespeare** story was too pleasing to him to consider any other point of view about the Bard.

His zeal was misdirected, though. As one correspondent (not me) wrote in a letter to the editor in response to that un-review: “[Y]ou have my personal guarantee that reading this book won’t vacuum the poetry from your life. In fact, the larger lesson of the book is that artistic inspiration isn’t a lightning bolt from some mysterious divine cloud, but a product of one’s own experiences, real life, and hard work. What could be more poetic than that?”

JR: *Do you think that there will ever be a “smoking gun” to prove the authorship either way? Could Shakespeare and de Vere ever have collaborated and do you think evidence for that will ever be found?*

MA: It depends on the day, **John**. Sometimes it seems like the circumstantial evidence for **de Vere** as “**Shakespeare**” keeps piling on — but that there will never be a breakthrough. It’ll just be an ossified orthodoxy holding down the Stratford fort for ever and ever amen. But other days it feels a lot more like this is all building to something big, something within our lifetimes. It won’t be tomorrow... but the day after? Well... who knows?

As for **de Vere**’s relationship with the actor and entrepreneur (and, it seems, front-man) **Will Shakspeare** of Stratford: That’s an open and active area of research. **Amy Freed**’s recent speculative comedy *The Beard of Avon* supposes that **de Vere** and **Shakspeare** of Stratford worked together. I haven’t yet seen the play, but I wouldn’t be surprised if there was some degree of back-and-forth in that relationship. Perhaps something along the lines of **de Vere** writes these plays for the courtly stage in the 1570s and ’80s and then adapts them for the public stage in the ’90s and ’00s — but **Shakspeare**, the man-on-the-scene reports back what parts of what play need tightening or revision... and what bits are the crowd-pleasers. It’s just speculation, but I certainly see that kind of scenario as very feasible.

JR: *Let’s talk a little about the technology you employed in writing and disseminating *Shakespeare by Another Name*. You were telling me about how you promoted your book early on using “podcasts.” Could you tell us a little more about that?*

MA: Technology played an important role in both researching and then later in promoting *Shakespeare By Another Name*. Later one first: I’ve been a radio buff for as long as I can remember. My father always had Minnesota Public Radio playing in the background in our house when I was growing up. I remember vividly waking up on cold Minnesota mornings in the winter and hearing **Garrison Keillor**’s morning show — back when he did both a drive-time program on MPR and then the Prairie Home Companion on Sat-

urday nights. Then when I went to college, I got into college radio — an interest that continued during my graduate school years at the **University of Massachusetts**. I still do occasional programs at the **UMass** station **WMUA**. So when I finished writing the book at the end of last year, it seemed that actually telling parts of the story could make for some great “radio.” I put that word in quotes because podcasting — the recording of audio programming that is then converted to mp3 files and downloaded over the Internet, often to people’s iPods or other portable music players is the medium that seemed most suitable for this material. So with the kind assistance of a number of talented Shakespearean actors as well as a couple friends who had both the know-how and equipment to do professional-quality on-location recording, we set out to recording a number of **Shakespeare** scenes and vignettes as well as some of **de Vere**’s letters and other Elizabethan texts. Then my wife and I took these raw materials into the production studio at **WMUA** over this past spring and early summer and told the story — of **de Vere**’s life and of “**Shakespeare**” — that connects these audio excerpts together.

The “**Shakespeare-upon-iPod**” podcasts, as I’ve dubbed them, are the result. You can hear them on the Web at shakespearebyanothername.com/audio.

JR: *What libraries were most important for your research? Did you have access to many documents through digitized archives available on the Web?*

MA: I spent countless hours in the **Five College Library** system that is made up of the **University of Massachusetts**, **Smith**, **Amherst**, **Mt. Holyoke** and **Hampshire Colleges** over these past 10+ years — both in poring over their superb collections of books and journals and in utilizing the latest and best in online scholarly databases such as **J-STOR**, **EEBO**, **LION**, **MUSE**, **Questia**, and others. Many of the 2000 endnotes in this book trace back to resources that were available to me as a patron of this excellent library system. Many

others, however, come from the shoe leather work of tracking down old and obscure books and articles and documents and theses and the like that no one has yet bothered to bring into the digital world: everything from **Harvard** and **Yale**’s libraries to smaller and more specialized collections such as **Holy Cross College** in **Worcester**. If I were living in some remote corner of **Alaska** — with access to the right kinds of online resources — I probably would have been able to do about 30% of the research required for *Shakespeare By Another Name*. Considering the amount of material that represents, that number, I think, is still pretty impressive.

JR: *You worked with a compact-flash USB pocket drive storage unit during your library research. Can you tell us a little about how that aided your note taking?*

MA: The compact-flash USB pocket drive has become my best friend over the past couple years. When I would start a new chapter of the book, the first thing I’d do is grab my stacks of index cards that I’d compiled from c. 2000 onwards and I’d pull out everything that looked remotely interesting or relevant to the chapter at hand. And then I’d just scour the scholarly databases with keyword searches for the subjects I’d be writing about. On some searches I’d turn up a dozen or more papers of relevance — all of which would then get dropped onto the pocket drive. Now sometimes those dozen papers ended up as just one sentence in the book... but it was a sentence with one hefty endnote! It’s the only way I know how to write a book like this: work and work to gather all the information possible on a topic and then write a great paragraph on that subject. Then, when that’s done, it’s back to the mines!

JR: *Mark, I truly enjoyed your book, both as a refreshing look at the evidence and as an extremely well written piece of prose. I think that anyone with an interest in the de Vere/Shakespeare question will find your book to be a fresh look at the evidence and a rewarding exploration that serves to add even more depth to our experience of the plays.* 🍷

From the Reference Desk

by **Tom Gilson** (Head, Reference Services, Addlestone Library, College of Charleston, 66 George Street, Charleston, SC 29401; Phone: 843-953-8014; Fax: 843-953-8019) <gilsont@cofc.edu>

There has been a need for a comprehensive, but up-to-date, scholarly reference work covering World War II. The most recent serious attempt was the well received 1995 *Oxford Companion to the Second World War* (0192141686, \$59.98 from **Amazon**). Now comes **ABC-CLIO**’s publication of the *Encyclopedia of World War II: A Political,*

Social, and Military History (2005, 1576079996, \$485). It was worth the wait.

Editor, **Spencer C. Tucker** adds to his impressive list of military references with this five volume set. There are some 1500 articles in the first 4 volumes while the last volume contains 238 related historic documents, as well as a thorough index. Naturally the articles cover a broad range of topics including the causes and origins of the war, individual battles, military campaigns and operations, weapons and armament, tactics and logistics, resistance movements, intelligence, conferences and treaties, as well as both well, and lesser known, personalities. There are

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