

# EVERYTHING TO EVERYBODY

Using Birmingham's forgotten past to inspire our future:

Unlocking the world's first great people's Shakespeare Library for all

## 'Everything to Everybody' Project Team

### Ewan Fernie (Project Director)

Ewan is Chair, Professor and Fellow of Shakespeare Studies at the Shakespeare Institute, University of Birmingham, and Director of the 'Everything to Everybody' Project. Central to establishing the University's historic collaboration with the Royal Shakespeare Company and its pioneering MA in Shakespeare and Creativity (co-taught with the RSC), he has been a Visiting Professor at the University of Malmo and the University of Queensland (twice), and a Research Fellow of the Centre of Advanced Studies at the University of Munich. Ewan has nine books to his name, the latest of which is *Shakespeare for Freedom: Why the Plays Matter*. He is General Editor (with Simon Palfrey) of the influential *Shakespeare Now!* series. He has lectured across the world on Shakespeare, modernity and progressive culture.

Ewan has always been committed to civic engagement and fomenting a more vital and creative relationship between 'high culture' and contemporary life. His 'Redcrosse' project invented a new civic liturgy for St George's Day, which premiered in Windsor Castle and Manchester Cathedral in 2012 and was adopted by the Royal Shakespeare Company for a high-profile event marking Coventry Cathedral's 50th anniversary. In conjunction with the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and the Birmingham-based Ex Cathedra Choir, he commissioned a people's 'Shakespeare Masque' by the Poet Laureate, Carol Ann Duffy, and the major contemporary composer, Sally Beamish, for the big Shakespeare anniversary in 2016, when he was also Academic Advisor for the Library of Birmingham's 'Our Shakespeare' exhibition.

Ewan was an ambassador for the British Council's Shakespeare Lives campaign (<https://www.britishcouncil.org/voices-magazine/what-can-shakespeare-teach-us-about-freedom>), and as part of that campaign he addressed large audiences in especially Eastern Europe. His books and projects have featured on radio, television and in the national and international press.

Ewan was humbled and inspired to discover Birmingham's astonishingly rich Shakespeare collection and challenged by its forgotten founding ethos of sharing and remaking culture with everybody. He is proud to be leading a project which follows in the footsteps of that collection's visionary founder, George Dawson. And he is excited to see what communities from across Birmingham and beyond can make of Shakespeare and establishment culture today.

As part of the 'Everything to Everybody' Project, he will be writing a book, provisionally entitled *Lost Prophets: The Unfinished Dream of the Nineteenth Century*, which will restore Dawson and

Birmingham to their rightful place in the story of modern culture and urge us to update and fulfil their best hopes and projects in the changed circumstances of today.

### **Tom Epps (Operations Director)**

Tom is the Cultural Partnerships Manager at the Library of Birmingham. He works with a wide range of partners to deliver a mixed programme of events, activities and exhibitions at the library. During the last few years, he has worked with major national and international institutions, local heritage organisations, community groups and individual artists. His constant focus is the development and delivery of high-quality cultural products that speak to wide, diverse and popular audiences.

An adoptive Brummie, Tom has lived in Birmingham since coming here to study economics in the mid-1980s. He has worked for Birmingham Libraries for 30 years and has led in the development of new commercial services, the evolution of public libraries in a digital world, and the launch of the new Library of Birmingham in 2013. During the 1990s, Tom was a postgraduate in Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham (formerly the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies). His research explored various aspects of identity politics and specifically the complex discursive constructions of sexualities and genders in contemporary Western societies. Tom currently works with other major libraries across the UK on the development of collaborative projects and innovation in public library services.

In 2016, Tom worked with Ewan on the Library of Birmingham's 'Our Shakespeare' exhibition (supported by the British Library). They have since worked together on the remarkable story of George Dawson's Birmingham Shakespeare Library - this collaboration has now evolved into the 'Everything to Everybody' Project. Tom leads on operational aspects of the project and is excited about working with a wide number of differently positioned partners on events, exhibitions and other project activities. He is particularly interested in working with individuals, groups and organisations who would like to explore and expand understandings of words like "History", "Library" and "Shakespeare".

### **Nicola Gauld (Project Manager)**

Nicola is excited to join the team as Project Manager. Nicola has extensive experience of managing heritage projects, community engagement and outreach, research and curation.

She studied History of Art at the University of Aberdeen and attained a PhD in 2006. Since then she has worked on a number of exhibitions and outreach projects, including Children's Lives (Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, 2011), Caught in the Crossfire: Artistic responses to conflict, peace and reconciliation (Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, 2013), Fight for the Right: the Birmingham Suffragettes (a history project supported by the NLHF and Library of Birmingham in which students from two local schools explored the suffrage campaign in Birmingham and made a short historical re-enactment film) and Beyond the Battlefields: Käthe Buchler's Photographs of Germany in the Great War (Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery and University of Birmingham 2017-18).

Nicola has worked for the University since 2014 and was the Coordinator of the Voices of War and Peace WW1 Engagement Centre, funded by the Arts & Humanities Research Council, that focused on providing UK-wide support for community groups through the National Lottery Heritage Fund's £6m 'First World War: Then and Now' community grants scheme. The Voices Centre was based in the

Library of Birmingham and supported a wide range of community engagement activities, connecting academic and public histories of the First World War as part of the commemoration of the War's centenary.

She has also been a founding member of two community organisations, the People's Heritage Co-operative and Women's History Birmingham, and managed two community-focused projects for those organisations, *Untold Stories: Birmingham's Wounded Soldiers from WW1* and *Birmingham Women: Past and Present Revisited*.

Nicola is the author of *Words and Deeds: Birmingham Suffragists and Suffragettes 1832-1918*, published by History West Midlands in 2018, to celebrate 100 years of women's votes.

As Project Manager for Everything to Everybody, Nicola is excited to continue building relationships with communities from across Birmingham and beyond, to explore and understand more about the world's first great people's Shakespeare library.

### **Lauren Jansen-Parkes (Community Engagement & Volunteer Officer)**

Lauren is a community arts practitioner and writer based in Birmingham. She has experience working with children and young people, and of co-creating projects with people of all ages and abilities within a community setting. She also specialises in creative approaches to history (including oral histories), and the history and performance of Shakespeare's texts.

As a proud Brummie, she is very excited to be working with the Shakespeare Memorial Library, one of the city's greatest treasures – especially as she has regularly worked in Birmingham and Solihull community libraries since her first Saturday job at the age of 15.

Following her BA in Drama in 2009, Lauren gained a scholarship to complete her MA in Staging Shakespeare from the University of Exeter. Since then, she has regularly run workshops for schools exploring Shakespeare's plays and Early Modern theatre practice. Her feminist reworking of the history plays, *Margaret of Anjou*, was first performed in Exeter in 2010, and later professionally produced by a California based theatre company, 'Those Women', in 2016.

As a facilitator and researcher, she has worked with arts and community organisations in Birmingham and across the UK, including The Leaveners (Quaker Community Arts organisation), Birmingham Poverty Truth commission, Birmingham Repertory Theatre, CASBA, Midland Heart, Squire Theatre, Number 11 Arts, Arts50Alive and more. She has been heavily involved with the development of Northfield Arts Forum, including co-founding NAFCaf, a now weekly pay-as-you-feel community arts café on Northfield High Street, and remains a board member. She is an associate tutor at Woodbrooke Quaker Study centre, focusing on storytelling and spirituality, and is a passionate supporter of the Fun Palace campaign, having voluntarily coordinated four Fun Palaces (so far).

Lauren is driven by the belief that everyone has the right to access and create art, and, just like George Dawson, that our cultural heritage can inspire us to build a better city and future. The 'Everything to Everybody' project brings together so many different strands of her work and passions that she still can't quite believe she's lucky enough to be working on it. She can't wait to see what new connections will be made, and what new treasures will be discovered and created.

### **Julia Thomason (Delivery Manager)**

Julia is a freelance consultant specialising in cultural and heritage regeneration with over ten years of experience in the sector. She has an in-depth understanding of the arts and heritage sectors and has developed a specialism for engaging with audiences and non-users of cultural and heritage facilities and developing creative and inclusive strategies and plans to engage new audiences.

Julia is passionate about the role that culture and heritage can play in community cohesion and civic pride; she is particularly looking forward to working with community partners to support the delivery of the wide ranging activity programme that aims to increase awareness of and engagement with the Shakespeare Memorial Library across Birmingham. She is pleased to be able to support the co-curation of exciting and engaging new content that will shape and create new opportunities for engagement with the Collections in the future.

### **Lucy Kamenova (Senior Collection and Engagement Library Assistant)**

Lucy is a Senior Collection and Engagement Library Assistant at the Library of Birmingham. Originally a qualified lawyer from Bulgaria, she moved to Birmingham in 1995 and has worked in Birmingham Central Library for 25 years.

Lucy was given responsibility for the Birmingham Shakespeare collection in 2008. She represented and curated it from 2008-2015, forming useful partnerships with the Shakespeare Institute, Shakespeare's birthplace and other UK and foreign centres for Shakespearean studies.

Lucy fell in love with the beauty of Shakespeare's language well before engaging with the rich history of the collection. She is happy to be reunited with it and be instrumental in presenting its impressive and wide-ranging content to everybody and bringing to life the aspirations of its founders for the liberalisation of the city and its culture.

### **Kathryn Hall (Archivist)**

Kathryn started working in the Library of Birmingham's Archives and Collections team in 2009 from a background in Community Arts. She loved it so much she became a distance learning student and completed a Humanities BA with the Open University and a post-graduate qualification in Archives and Records Management from the University of Dundee while still working at the library.

Over the last 11 years Kathryn has worked with the library's collections in a wide range of ways from public services to engagement and digitization. She is now using her data wrangling skills to develop and produce a public digital catalogue to enable making the best use of the Birmingham Shakespeare Collection. This will give the people of Birmingham and anyone from around the world a chance to access and understand the treasures held here for their use.

### **Richard Albutt (Digitisation Officer)**

### **Sheena Robertson (Project Research Partner)**

Sheena has worked in higher education for nearly 30 years, facilitating of a range of collaborative partnerships, teaching high-level business and management, and providing professional operational support for research in the University of Birmingham's College of Arts and Law. Sheena has

collaborated with Rolls Royce, British Aerospace, Aeromexico, Oscott College, Chulalongkorn University (Bangkok), Institut Ramon Llull, the National Trust and the Royal Shakespeare Company, as well as many other major organisations.

Sheena gained a BSc Honours (first class) in Business and Management Studies at the University of Salford, followed by an MSc in Engineering (by research) from the University of Warwick. She moved to Birmingham after graduating and has made the city her home. She is passionate about the creative assets and cultural heritage of Birmingham and the wider West Midlands region. Her role on the project is to provide professional support and advice to the 'Everything to Everybody' delivery team, to help secure both immediate impact and a lasting legacy.

Sheena is very excited to be part of 'Everything to Everybody', and deeply committed to its major aim of unlocking the world's first great Shakespeare Library so that the youthful and diverse population of the West Midlands can reclaim it as their own.

### **Kelly Merriman (Project Administrator)**

Kelly is the Project Portfolio Administrator for Everything to Everybody, working across the team, providing support to the areas that need it. Having come from an arts and heritage background working across the Midlands, Kelly feels fortunate to be working on such an inspiring and worthwhile project that aims to make the first, oldest and largest Shakespeare collection more accessible to the people of Birmingham, her home city.

## **‘Everything to Everybody’ Project Supporters**

### **Elizabeth Hardy (Heritage Ambassador Lead)**

Elizabeth Hardy was born into a family of Shakespeare enthusiasts – teachers and actors – and brought up in Warwickshire. She is an English graduate of four UK universities, a trained actor, director and qualified dance instructor. She has worked extensively in mainstream education, teaching English, Latin and Theatre, and specialising in the active teaching of Shakespeare. In 2010, she established her own company ‘Rough Magic’, leading Shakespeare workshops in a variety of educational centres across South Warwickshire. She has organised conferences on Shakespeare’s works in Stratford for the Society for Teachers of Speech and Drama and has delivered LAMDA training (in acting and public speaking) to sixth form students and adults. In 2016-17, she studied for the unique MA in Shakespeare and Creativity, established by Professor Ewan Fernie, at the Shakespeare Institute. She has continued to work closely with Ewan on her PhD project investigating the presence of female agency in Victorian interpretations of Shakespeare. She is delighted to be involved in the ‘Everything to Everybody’ Project, the democratic cultural ethos of which chimes with her own ‘sharing Shakespeare’ initiatives. She is looking forward to working with enthusiastic undergraduates at the University of Birmingham to open up the archives of the rich and under-explored Shakespeare Collection at the Library of Birmingham for the communities in the city to whom it truly belongs.

### **Steve Hewett (Heritage Ambassador Lead)**

### **Islam Issa (Advocacy & Engagement Consultant)**

Islam Issa is a local writer, curator and broadcaster. He is Senior Lecturer in English Literature at Birmingham City University and has been named “one of the UK’s most significant new thinkers”.

A proud Brummie, Islam has an international repertoire of award-winning books, exhibitions, documentaries, and speaking tours. He has written three books on the poet John Milton and curated three exhibitions, most famously the acclaimed Stories of Sacrifice about Muslims in World War One. His Shakespeare-related exhibitions – Shakespeare in South Asia and Ageless Cleopatra – were both housed at Shakespeare’s Birthplace. His broadcasting work includes presenting Radio 3’s “The Essay” – When Shakespeare travelled with me – as well as two documentaries about the playwright: Cleopatra and Me (TV, BBC Four) and Shakespeare and Terrorism (Radio 3). Islam has spoken about Shakespeare at such venues as TEDx and the International Arab Film Festival and has represented the British Foreign Office and British Council at events around the world. He has also offered expert advice to BBC Arts, BBC Drama, Birmingham Museums Trust, British Muslim Heritage Centre and Shakespeare Birthplace Trust. You can find out more at [www.islamissa.com](http://www.islamissa.com).

Islam considers Ewan one of his mentors and is dedicated to ensuring that the project is relevant and exciting to the people of Birmingham and beyond.

### **Ruth Millington (Arts & Media Ambassador)**

Ruth Millington is an art critic, writer and award-winning blogger based in Birmingham. Ruth has had a long association with 'Everything to Everybody' and continues to support the project as an ambassador, both online and offline. Through her blog – [www.ruthmillington.com](http://www.ruthmillington.com) – she encourages everyone to access the city's diverse cultural offering. She is excited to see Shakespeare and the 'everything to everybody' ethos come to life for Birmingham, and beyond.

### **Katherine Scheil**

Katherine Scheil is Professor of English at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities and is the author of several works on the reception history of Shakespeare. Katherine shares Ewan's long-standing commitment to the history of civic Shakespeare and to revitalizing the role that Shakespeare can play in local communities around the world.

In her ground-breaking book *She Hath Been Reading: Women and Shakespeare Clubs in America* (Cornell, 2012), Katherine uncovered a hidden layer of civic Shakespeare that extended to every state, encompassing over 500 Shakespeare clubs comprised mainly of women. As the American Lead for the "Everything to Everybody" project, Katherine is researching how George Dawson's vision and ideals extended well beyond the U.K. In the 1870s, Dawson embarked on a lecture tour in America, where he met and influenced the major American Shakespeare scholars of the day, but also spread his Civic Gospel to ordinary citizens, due to his "desire to see those people in America who bear the chief burdens of national life," as he put it. Described as a "famous and electrifying" speaker, Dawson lectured widely on progressive topics from Shakespeare to women's rights, in places from Rochester, New York, birthplace of the suffrage movement; to Marietta, Ohio, a station on the underground railroad. Dawson's influence on mid-nineteenth-century America linked Shakespeare with progressive causes and laid the groundwork for connecting reading and studying Shakespeare with civic improvements. This mandate was later carried out by women's Shakespeare clubs in particular in America, who saw in Shakespeare an opportunity for intellectual development and for civic improvement. The full impact of Dawson's influence on America remains to be explored, but his legacy is clear in linking Shakespeare with the most progressive causes of the day.

Katherine and Ewan have already traced important components of George Dawson's international influence. They recently uncovered 327 unsorted letters from Dawson's colleague Samuel Timmins, in the collection at the Folger Shakespeare Library. This substantial correspondence clearly links the Birmingham Shakespeare Memorial Library to the development of Shakespeare studies in America and will provide further evidence of the influence of Dawson and his supporters on the ethos of American cultural democracy.

Katherine is also leading a major international scholarly partnership entitled "Citizen Shakespeare." This new venture will link both academic and community projects that share a commitment to the vision of George Dawson by providing democratic access to Shakespeare's works. Amateur performance groups, Shakespeare reading clubs, libraries, private individuals, and scholars will join together to help promote global access to Shakespeare in communities large and small around the world. Katherine is excited to see the Shakespeare Memorial Library re-established as a premiere site for Shakespeare research, and she is thrilled to help the "Everything to Everybody" project become a model for how to combine intellectual inquiry, cultural exchange, and civic life in the modern city.

## **Tobias Döring**

Tobias Döring is Chair of Literature in the English Department of Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich, Germany, where he takes a special interest in Shakespeare as well as in postcolonial writing. As part of his ethos as a reader and teacher of literature, he has long made it his project to work also outside the classroom and make his literary concerns and passions the subject of wider public debates, e.g. through organizing readings and literary festivals but also by reviewing books in the national press or serving as President of the German Shakespeare Society, the oldest civic Shakespeare society in the world, founded in Weimar in 1864. The son of a librarian, Tobias grew up literally between bookshelves and he continues to be thrilled by the riches and enrichments that libraries offer. He is fascinated by the Shakespeare collection in Birmingham Public Library, especially its German holdings, which he had a chance to survey in 2019 and which offer a true treasure house, not just for scholarship, but for all theatre and Shakespeare lovers round the world.

## **Peter Holbrook**

Peter Holbrook is Professor of Shakespeare and English Renaissance Literature at the University of Queensland, Australia, Director of the UQ Node of the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions, and a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities. He is the author of *Shakespeare's Individualism* (Cambridge University Press, 2010) and *Literature and Degree in Renaissance England: Nashe, Bourgeois Tragedy, Shakespeare* (University of Delaware Press, 1994), and co-editor, with David Bevington, of *The Politics of the Stuart Court Masque* (Cambridge University Press, 1998). *English Renaissance Tragedy: Ideas of Freedom* was published by Bloomsbury/Arden Shakespeare in 2015. With Paul Edmondson he co-edited *Shakespeare's Creative Legacies: Artists, Writers, Performers, Readers*, for Bloomsbury/Arden Shakespeare in 2016.

'It's sometimes observed that our present moment is haunted by unrealized past projects for a better, more sharing and equal, world—that, as a society, we haven't made good on some of the hopes for a genuinely democratic and participatory civic life that arose in a great age of progress (for some parts of the world, at least): that of the nineteenth century. The "Everything to Everybody" initiative being steered by the University of Birmingham and Birmingham City Council is an attempt to live up to those past hopes, in particular the aspiration for a "cultural commonwealth"—that is, a world in which high culture is available not just to those who will encounter it anyway, but to everyone.

What is so exciting about what Ewan Fernie and his team are doing is that they are reviving, in a very concrete, practical way, some of the optimism about cultural democracy that was at one time so prominent—in particular, by restoring a landmark collection of Shakespeareana directly inspired by the "civic gospel" of the great social reformer, and lover of poetry, George Dawson. Dawson dreamed that Shakespeare might become the property of working people as much as the well-off, and the establishment of the Shakespeare Memorial Library was an ambitious effort to realize that ideal. The current "Everything to Everybody" initiative will help to make the Library's Shakespeare collection far more accessible and meaningful to the people of Birmingham (who own it as a key part of their cultural inheritance).

As someone who writes about Shakespeare from down in Australia, I'm fascinated to see this project come to fruition, not least because it so happens that there is a link between the Birmingham

Shakespeare Memorial Library and Australia's only copy of the so-called "First Folio", that precious edition of Shakespeare's complete plays published in 1623 (and without which many of Shakespeare's masterpieces would never have come down to us). The Sydney "Folio" was donated to Australia by two Birmingham manufacturers, Richard and George Tangye, who had the casket for the volume constructed in Birmingham and were themselves inspired by Dawson. And Dawson's proclamation of a progressive "civic gospel" was known in Australia. Indeed, a writer for The Telegraph, in Brisbane, where I live, wrote in 1896: "Brisbane needs a Dawson! some fearless man who would preach persistently the gospel of civic elevation: deliverance from ignorant peddling and from shameless littleness. Oh! for just one Dawson!". Ignorant money-worship and littleness have hardly perished from the earth, and even now many people can feel that Shakespeare or other great artists are somehow above them, a no-go zone. Birmingham's "Everything to Everybody" project is a bold, generous, and imaginative, attempt to change all that.'

### **Yan Brailowsky**

Yan Brailowsky is Senior lecturer in early modern literature and history at the University of Paris Nanterre, in France. He is the General Editor of *Angles*, a peer-reviewed online journal, and Secretary of the French Shakespeare Society, co-organising annual conferences on Shakespeare and spearheading outreach activities throughout France.

Yan has also worked as a professional actor for over a decade, performing mostly Eastern-European plays at the Avignon Festival and elsewhere in Europe and the Americas.

His research interests include prophecy in early modern drama, the history of the reformation, and the relationship between gender and politics in Renaissance Europe. He is the author of several book-length studies (notably on *A Winter's Tale* and *King Lear*), and co-edited several collections on early modern literature, as well as more contemporary topics. More information is online at [www.yanb.ey](http://www.yanb.ey).

Yan is excited to support a project which will make the Shakespeare Memorial Library and its incredibly rich collection more accessible and intensely relevant. He believes that the project will rekindle the radical spirit of Dawson for the 21st century, bringing to life what makes up humanity, aspects explored by Shakespeare throughout his work, and documented by the tens of thousands of items currently held by the Shakespeare Memorial Library, for the benefit of the people of Birmingham and beyond.