

## Renaissance and Reformation Renaissance et Réforme



Greengrass, Mark, project dir. *The Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online (TAMO)*

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## Digital Resource Reviews / Comptes-rendus sur les ressources numériques<sup>1</sup>

**Greengrass, Mark, project dir.**

***The Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online (TAMO).***

Sheffield: HRI Online Publications, 2011. Accessed 20 February 2018.  
johnfoxe.org.

John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, first published in 1563 and known since the sixteenth century as the "Book of Martyrs," was one of the most widely read, frequently repackaged, and culturally significant books in early modern England. Soon after the publication of the second and much expanded edition (1570), authorities ordered copies placed in selected churches, guildhalls, and public places throughout the country; a less formal instruction aspired to have copies placed in parish churches. But it was not a book that early modern readers encountered solely through public display. The *Private Libraries in Renaissance England (PLRE)* project (plre.folger.edu) lists more than two dozen privately owned copies; no titles other than bibles and prayer books appear as often among the 17,000+ records in the *PLRE* database. What makes Foxe's genuine popularity surprising is that *Acts and Monuments* is not the "cheap print" of most devotional best-sellers. It is instead an expensive, outsized folio, sold in two volumes from 1570 and three from 1632. And yet the recorded owners in *PLRE* include not only a bishop, scholars, lawyers, members of parliament, and court officials, but also provincial merchants, artisans, yeomen, churchwardens, clerics, and a Huguenot émigré. Eight of the owners listed in *PLRE* are women: of these, four owned either a copy of Foxe alone, or a Foxe plus one or two bibles. For many of these owners, a copy of *Acts and Monuments* represented a major personal investment.

But until the completion of *Acts and Monuments Online (TAMO)* in 2011, it was a challenge to read or even just consult this significant and popular book in the form in which early modern readers encountered the work. Four editions appeared in John Foxe's lifetime (1563, 1570, 1576, 1583) and all differ textually. Successive editions were expanded, augmented, revised, and recast,

1. These reviews are published in collaboration with *Early Modern Digital Review*. They also appear in vol. 1, no. 1 (2018) of *EMDR* (emdr.itercommunity.org).

culminating in a massive publication of about 2.5 million words over 2,200 double-columned folio pages, with 150 commissioned woodcuts and quantities of paratextual material. There is no modern scholarly print edition. The most commonly used “citation” edition was published in 1837–43 (revised in 1870 and 1877): a genuine achievement in its day, but clearly inadequate as a scholarly resource. Its commentary is often polemical and 150 years out of date, and it is impossible with this edition to uncover systematically the important textual history of changes across the early editions. In addition, few libraries possessed copies of the original publications, and all surviving copies of the 1583 edition (the final one published under Foxe’s editorship) are imperfect. The microfilms available when *TAMO* began in 1992 were inadequate, based as they were on copies with missing or heavily trimmed pages, their popular woodcuts often removed, the black letter type often illegible due to bleedthrough. The digital images subsequently available on *Early English Books Online* (EEBO) were no better since they derive from these decades-old microfilms.

*TAMO* began as a proposal to produce a new scholarly print edition of the 1583 *Acts and Monuments* that would include detailed commentary plus textual variations from the three earlier editions. Like the *Acts and Monuments* itself, the project evolved over many years. The *TAMO* site offers a fascinatingly detailed history of the project that recapitulates the trajectories of many long-term, large-scale editorial projects that began in the world of print, crossed through transitional technologies such as CD-ROM, then eventually entered the digital realm. The proposed edition became a project of the British Academy in 1993. The initial plan for a print edition was soon shelved in favour of a CD-ROM that would make feasible a variorum edition that embraced all four original texts. As years passed, work on the project increasingly revealed the task as more complex and difficult than originally imagined. The project shifted institutional locations as founding members retired and leadership transitioned. Funding agencies were themselves reorganized, grants re-acquired, new partnerships negotiated, the team expanded, conferences held (the project eventually hosted four) and proceedings published, timetables repeatedly adjusted, phases implemented. A project that began as a proposal by one person to produce a print edition would eventually involve thirty-six contributors (researchers, transcribers, technical support, and design), including many of the most prominent scholars in the field, plus a separate seven-person project team for the final implementation period of 2008–2011,

all overseen by a twelve-person British Academy Project Advisory Board and supported by a number of research boards, trusts, academies, and universities including the British Academy, the Humanities Research Board, the Arts and Humanities Research Council, and ten research libraries. John Foxe would have considered the collectivity at work here entirely appropriate: *Acts and Monuments* was itself the product of extensive collaboration over time, among a widely based community deeply committed to the project.

The project's first major output (to use the term favoured by funding agencies) was a facsimile edition of the 1583 *Acts and Monuments* published on CD-ROM by Oxford University Press for the British Academy in 2001. The appearance of this facsimile allowed the in-progress online edition to concentrate on transcriptions and commentaries. Phase One of *TAMO* was published online in 2004. It included a dozen prefatory essays by scholars in the field of John Foxe studies, commentaries on the text and images for books 10–12 (which cover the Marian martyrs), translations of Latin and Greek sources, a study of Foxe's glosses, and a searchable bibliography and list of officers in the Tudor state and church mentioned by Foxe. This online edition was technically modified in 2006 "to maintain the stability and integrity of what had become a very complex edifice." Phase Two, covering the remaining text with commentary, began in 2005 and successfully concluded three years later. The construction of the final edition began in 2009 and was completed in 2011. All materials produced by the project up to that point were incorporated into a new database and all the presentational pages were redesigned and rescripted to make the layers of commentary available as appropriate. As a consequence of this fundamental rebuild, some features that were available in the first online edition had to be discontinued, including the searchable bibliography and list of Tudor officers.

As completed, *TAMO* not only exemplifies the kind of edition enabled by the transition from print to digital technology, but is also in itself exemplary as an online edition with commentary of a bibliographically and textually complex work. It is the edition any scholar should use when working with or citing Foxe. In addition, the supplementary essays offer a wealth of information compiled by leading scholars on a variety of issues, including authoritative discussions of Foxe (his biography, his work as a historian, his theological context), on the material and bibliographical aspects of the *Acts and Monuments*, including its illustrations (it was one of the most ambitiously illustrated English works of its

time), on the *Acts and Monuments* in its broader Reformation context, and on its reception history through the centuries.

The site offers searchable transcriptions of the four English editions of Foxe's martyrology published during his lifetime: those of 1563, 1570, 1576, and 1583. The transcriptions are, as the site notes, as faithful to the original as possible. They retain old spelling and almost all typographical features except the black letter font and "long s" (i/j and u/v are not regularized, abbreviations such as "þe" for "the" are not expanded, and superscripts are not lowered). The online pages even include running heads (in bold), catchwords, and signatures. The only transcription problem evident on browsing a few pages is the regular disappearance of a space between the last word of the first column of a page and the first word of the second column, a problem evidently caused by text compilation. Marginal notes are hyperlinked. Navigation is clear and intuitive. The header bar on every page reminds the user what edition is onscreen and where exactly within that edition you are. A search box enables keyword searches in any one edition, across all four editions, or within the substantial apparatus. Navigation bars on the left allow jumps among books within that edition or thematic divisions within each book. Other bars provide access to the critical apparatus for that page. One particularly useful feature is the option to open any two pages (from either the same or from any two of the four editions) in "dual view" mode, which enables side-by-side viewing. This feature allows the user to compare Foxe's treatment of a given passage across editions.

The critical apparatus is substantial and comprehensive. The navigation bar for any given page in the 1583 edition (the most fully edited of the four and the citation edition for most purposes) provides links to commentary on the text, on any woodcuts, and on the glosses; translations of any Latin or Greek text; useful references from the nineteenth-century Cattle/Pratt edition; separate glosses on any names or places mentioned; and a facsimile image of the page. With the exception of the facsimile pages and the glossaries of names and places, much of this commentary is also available for the versions of these passages in the three earlier editions. While *TAMO* does not include the texts of the two Latin martyrologies Foxe compiled that preceded the first edition of *Acts and Monuments*, they are cited wherever relevant in the commentaries. The critical apparatus can also be browsed separately as a text in itself. When accessed in this mode, each comment is followed by hyperlinks that take the user to the glossed textual moment as it appears in each one of the editions,

allowing comparison. A separate section in the apparatus treats “Textual Transpositions” and “Textual Variations” which likewise allows users to track and compare textual variations across the editions. A bibliography contains works (up to 2008) referenced in the commentaries and biographical entries.

As a scholarly old-spelling citation edition of the 1583 *Acts and Monuments*, with comprehensive commentary and accompanying facsimile images of the original pages, TAMO superbly fulfills the aspirations of the 1992 proposal that initiated the project. But it is the site’s user-friendly mechanisms for comparing the four evolving versions of the text that allow for work nearly impossible to do in a non-digital environment. The template created here serves as a model for editorial projects involving texts with similarly complex histories. The site does not foreground its technical specifications or metadata practices, though (as mentioned above) the site’s underlying architecture was rebuilt at least once, and presumably the project followed best practices as available in 2011, the apparent date of the last update. Which leads to a final caveat. Like other large-scale collaborative online projects, TAMO represents an immense investment over many years of time and funding. What happens after completion and successful launch? In this case, the “Report an Error” link on the project’s home page notes that “errors in the organization or representation of the edition will be addressed as part of a scheduled update which will occur annually. These annual updates will be marked by an increase in TAMO’s version number [...] and any changes made to the edition will be recorded in a history log which will be available from this page.” No updates appear to have taken place since 2011, however: the site remains version 2.0, and there is no obvious history log. TAMO remains the go-to site for anybody interested in John Foxe and the *Acts and Monuments*. But a major promise of online platforms has always been the ongoing ability to keep material updated, to correct glitches or omissions, to implement new technical possibilities as they become available. Static sites also court the danger of losing ground on issues of compatibility, operability, and security: seven years is a long time in the digital world. At what point do we start to lose confidence in the viability of major, important sites like this one despite the massive investment that went into their making? Now that some of these pioneering online editorial projects have been in place for a decade or more, issues of the long-term maintenance and support should start to be a more pressing subject of general discussion. What institutions or entities make

the most secure long-term hosts for major projects once they are complete, their initial funding expended, their guiding personnel retired?

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***Bpi:1700: British Printed Images to 1700. Digital library.***

Birkbeck: University of London, 2009. Accessed 22 January 2018. [bpi1700.org.uk/](http://bpi1700.org.uk/).

*British Printed Images to 1700 (bpi1700)* is a digital image collection of prints and book illustrations from early modern Britain. This project has several aims: to contribute to the study of early modern British print history, which lags behind that of Dutch, Flemish, German, and French prints; to make available the rich holdings of the Department of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum; and to develop “a rich and sophisticated subject index” for prints of the period. The database is complemented by essays on the history, techniques, and genres of British prints, and reference resources for studying them.

The vast majority of works included are engravings (1398), with etchings (677) and mezzotints (601) making up the top three techniques represented. The relative lack of letterpress (15) and woodcut (37) images speaks to the relatively small proportion of book illustration included. The authors note that print representation outweighs books in the current online collection “mainly due to the Herculean task of locating and cataloguing the vast body of material involved” (About: The corpus). Researchers interested in book illustration should head to the Research tab, which hosts “British Book Illustration, 1604–40”: an enumerative bibliography, in excel spreadsheets, that complements Edward Hodnett’s *English Woodcuts 1480–1535* (London, 1935, repr. 1973) and Ruth Luborsky and Elizabeth Ingram’s *Guide to English Illustrated Books 1536–1603* (Tempe, AZ, 1998). These are not the detailed digital images and metadata that represent print production in the rest of the site, but some fascinating data nonetheless.

Although based on the capacious collection in the Department of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum and supplemented with items