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Lead-to-Pixels: Digital Archives, Material Access

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The goal of the LEAD to PIXELS Project is to rethink the relationship between digitization and linking, in order to preserve artifacts from the Western handpress period. Digital intermediates alone do not preserve the data fundamental to the bibliographically-based research methods of book history, textual studies, printing history, and scholarly editing: watermarks, depth of impression, characteristics of ink, the appearance of the book before it was folded and bound.

By combining preservation digital master images with both letterpress and 3D printing technology, we are able to migrate the material, tactile, and visual features of a famous early-modern book into research communities and the public. We take the notion of a material surrogate to proof of concept.

This project brings together making, printing, and preservation, through combined resources and talent across the entire MU library system and associated programmatic the Wolverine Press, the Shapiro Design Lab, Special Collections, the Duderstadt Center Digital Media Commons, Baer Conservation Lab, the Department of English, and the University of Michigan School of Information. Our foundational expertise for the editions, Caston 471, was generously donated to the Press by former faculty member Wesley Turner (Passim Editions). It is the only living typeface connected (through William Caslon’s designs) to the pica roman used to set H2Q and the First Folio. Through the Caston pressed into archival-quality paper—an effort that relied on manyhands—we migrate centuries of printing history and mechanical information technologies for...