



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

News Release

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Treasured volume of Renaissance plays saved for nation

Annotated plays by influential English dramatist Ben Jonson – earmarked for sale in North America – have been acquired by the University of Edinburgh.

Experts say no other editions of Jonson’s works show how they were actually performed in this significant age of English theatre.

The rare book was printed in 1640 and features manuscript annotations from the time, such as stage directions, details of props and textual corrections.

An export bar was imposed on the book by the UK Government to give British libraries the chance to acquire it on the condition that they met the purchase price of £48,000.

With support from Friends of Edinburgh University Library, Friends of the National Libraries and John R Murray Trust, the University of Edinburgh was able to purchase the volume.

Ben Jonson, who lived from 1572 until 1637, is arguably the most important writer of the English Renaissance after Shakespeare. He lived and worked in an age of great social change that produced some of the finest works of English literature.

Leading Ben Jonson scholar Professor James Loxley, of the University of Edinburgh, has described the acquisition as potentially "the most extraordinary addition" to the University’s collections.

Joseph Marshall, Head of the Centre for Research Collections at the University of Edinburgh, said: “We are delighted to purchase this landmark collection of works, and are grateful to our supporters for helping us save this volume of recognised cultural importance.

“Some 400 years ago Jonson famously walked from London to Edinburgh meeting Scottish poets such as William Drummond on his travels. Now this remarkable volume is making the journey north too.

“The arrival of this book in Edinburgh 2018 is a great moment for our collections, our students and researchers who will now have access to it through our Centre for Research Collections.”

For further information please contact: Kathryn Darcus, Press and PR Office, tel 0131 651 5587; email kathryn.darcus@ed.ac.uk

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