



# The Cecil Papers

## A Case Study



**W. Scott Howard is an Associate Professor in the Department of English at the University of Denver.**

Professor Howard teaches Renaissance and Early Modern Literature to undergraduates and graduates. His particular interest and area of research concerns the philosophy of history including the politics and culture of the 16th and 17th centuries.

His teaching is inter-connected with his active research, and he is using *The Cecil Papers* to prepare for teaching a new course on Transatlantic Early Modernism.

## Using The Cecil Papers

Professor Howard is finding *The Cecil Papers* an invaluable resource as he prepares to teach a new course on Transatlantic Early Modernism. He is focusing on literature and cultural material on both sides of the Atlantic during the 16th and 17th centuries. Professor Howard says of *The Cecil Papers*, ‘the vivid detail of correspondence between individuals enables me to place the texts I teach in wider international contexts’.

**“A ‘direct-hit’ for me. The Cecil Papers provide an endless amount of material for my teaching and research”**

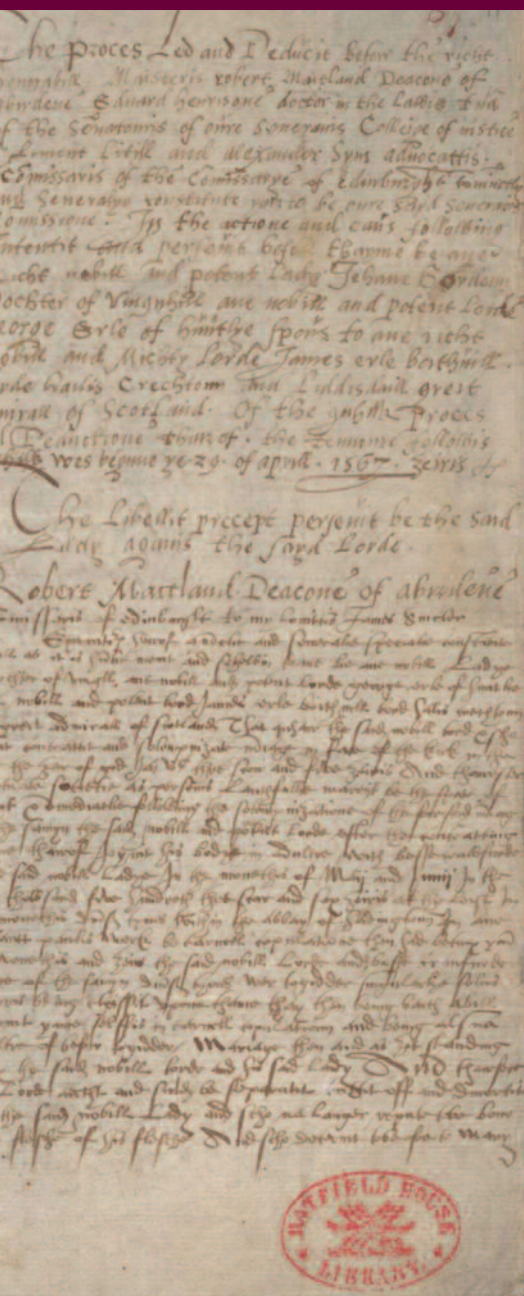
For example, Professor Howard has a particular interest in the emergence of a secular contract for divorce prior to the publication of John Milton’s *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (1643-44). In his Transatlantic Early Modernism course, Professor Howard plans to use *The Cecil Papers* to shed light on prevalent social opinions and beliefs. The range of public documents in *The Cecil Papers* allows him to comment on subjects such as divorce with confidence. Attitudes and legal frameworks are evident in various

personal statements of grievance, including those between Jean Gordon, Countess of Bothwell and her husband James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell. Lady Jean initiated divorce proceedings on 3rd May 1567, and their divorce was granted on the grounds of her husband’s alleged adultery with her maid and seamstress, Bessie Crawford. Eight days later, Bothwell married and became the third husband of widowed Mary, Queen of Scots.

**“The Cecil Papers connect me to a robust time capsule”**

Comparing other databases Professor Howard uses for research purposes, he comments, ‘*The Cecil Papers* is different. It provides me with ephemeral material that connects me to an individual. It contains records specific to an individual’s social circle. *The Cecil Papers* connect me to a robust time capsule’.

**“I can make inferences about the personality of the author by having direct contact with documents written in the hand of the individual”**

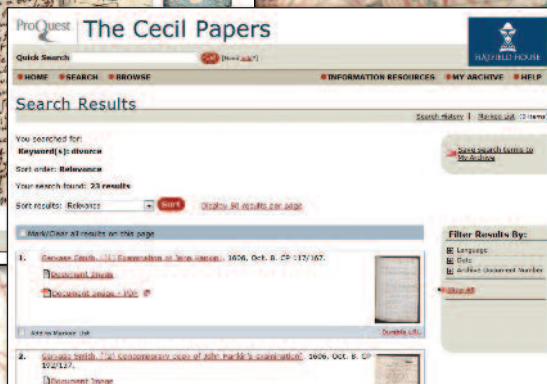
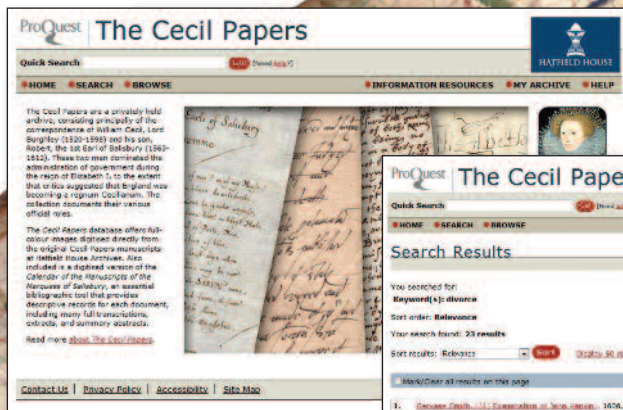


He continues, 'access to handwritten notes provides me with a unique opportunity. I can make inferences about the personality of the author by having direct contact with documents written in the hand of the individual'. This enables Professor Howard to take time to study and teach paleography by downloading examples of handwritten artefacts from *The Cecil Papers* to bring into the classroom. He says, 'having contact with such precise, idiosyncratic detail gives a real feeling for the author's personality. You cannot quite capture those qualities in a typescript'.

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Professor Howard says, '*The Cecil Papers* is an easy-to-use, search-responsive database providing discoverability, which widens my research. This database is a 'direct-hit' for me. *The Cecil Papers* provide an endless amount of material for my teaching and research'.

*"An easy-to-use, search-responsive database providing discoverability, which widens my research"*



## About The Cecil Papers

*The Cecil Papers*, a unique collection of almost 30,000 original documents gathered by William Cecil, Lord Burghley, one of Elizabeth I's closest advisers and his son Robert Cecil, First Earl of Salisbury, have now been digitised by ProQuest in partnership with Hatfield House in the U.K.

William Cecil was Queen Elizabeth I's Lord High Treasurer and Secretary of State and his son, Robert Cecil, succeeded his father as Secretary of State serving Queen Elizabeth I and her successor, James I. These two men were at the heart of events during one of the most dynamic periods in Western history.

Over 150,000 pages of public documents and private letters, privately held until recently, can now be accessed by a worldwide audience. Full colour, high quality scans of handwritten documents are accompanied by transcripts and searchable bibliographic records. *The Cecil Papers* provide a unique insight into Elizabethan and Jacobean England and is essential to the study of the politics, religion, social and economic history of the early modern period.

## Among the highlights:

- Princess Elizabeth (Elizabeth I) defends her honour in a letter to the Lord Protector
- Love letters between Elizabeth and her suitors, including 'The Frog of Anjou'
- Sir Walter Raleigh pleads with James I for his life, whilst awaiting execution
- Epigram verses penned by Ben Jonson (in his own hand) and addressed to the Earl of Salisbury
- Draft copy of Elizabeth's warrant for the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots – penned by Burghley

To discover more about *The Cecil Papers* visit [www.proquest.com](http://www.proquest.com) and search '*The Cecil Papers*'