REBECCA NILES

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DIGITAL DEVELOPER, UX DESIGNER & PROJECT LEAD

13+ years connecting storytelling, design, and functionality in libraries, publishing, and education

Full-stack developer, UX designer, and digital project lead with more than 13 years working with the Folger Shakespeare Library, one of the world's leading research libraries: first on site in Washington, D.C., then as an independent consultant working remotely from Canada with continuous progression in responsibilities and commitments. Takes digital projects from user research and concept through design, development, launch, and long-term care. Built and managed platforms that drove roughly three-quarters of the Folger's 20M+ annual pageviews, including the flagship Folger Shakespeare Online, which serves 5–6 million users a year. Also served as Managing Editor of the Folger Shakespeare Library Editions, and consulted for Simon & Schuster on the Editions' ebook line. Holds an ALA-accredited Master of Information from the University of Toronto, with graduate training in user research, information architecture, information ethics, and project management.

CORE SKILLS

Development: HTML5, CSS3/SCSS, JavaScript/TypeScript, Node.js, PHP, Python (automation), SQL; WordPress (expert-level theme and plugin development), Drupal, Islandora; REST and GraphQL APIs; MySQL, Solr; Git/GitHub, Bitbucket

Infrastructure & Operations: AWS (EC2, Elastic Beanstalk, S3), Linux, Apache/Nginx, DNS, SSL; dev/staging/production workflows; site monitoring, security response, and disaster recovery

Design & UX: Figma, Adobe XD, Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign, After Effects; wireframing and prototyping; qualitative interviews, surveys, and usability testing; information architecture; WCAG/AODA accessibility auditing (WAVE, axe)

Digital Collections & Publishing: IIIF (Image and Presentation APIs), OpenSeadragon, TEI XML; digital asset platform migrations; ebook production; editorial/production management, proofreading, typography/layout

Interactive & Emerging Technology: VR/AR/MR with Unity, C#, WebGL, A-Frame, ARKit, Meta Quest; web-based game design/development; AI-assisted development (Cursor, Claude Code); image-recognition APIs (AWS Rekognition, Google Cloud Vision)

Project Leadership: Requirements gathering, project charters, Gantt-based scheduling, stakeholder facilitation, vendor management, documentation, and staff training; Jira, Trello, ClickUp, Airtable, Miro, Microsoft 365

Analytics & SEO: GA4, Google Tag Manager, Search Console, Lighthouse, Hotjar, SEMRush; technical SEO auditing

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PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Independent Digital Developer & Consultant | Toronto and Hamilton, ON (remote) 2015 – present

Folger Shakespeare Library — contract engagement | January 2015 – July 2025

Began part-time with the Digital Media and Publications department; the Folger continuously expanded the engagement, adding contracts with other departments, until they contracted for all available hours by 2018.

Digital Developer

- Designed, developed, and maintained public-facing websites and internal platforms as sole front-end developer, using WordPress and custom PHP solutions that generated 75% of the Folger's annual pageviews
- Co-created the Folger Shakespeare API, a RESTful service delivering the Folger's encoded texts to its website, corpus search, and researchers, educators, and developers worldwide
- Rebuilt the Folger Shakespeare Online to modern responsive standards in 2020, serving millions of users each year
- Administered AWS hosting (EC2, Elastic Beanstalk, S3) for ~20 sites, including Linux server configuration, SSL, DNS, and uptime monitoring, within a Git-based development, staging, and production workflow
- Designed and optimized MySQL databases and wrote custom queries and reports for staff; served on a research and development team responsible for creating a GraphQL layer to query and write across about a dozen library databases as part of a federated collections platform
- After a major cybersecurity breach that irreversibly deleted the majority of online properties, co-planned the recovery and rebuilt every affected website from personal off-site backups and from web archive snapshots, restoring full service within weeks
- Designed wireframes, mockups, and interactive prototypes in Figma and Adobe XD for major platform rebuilds, and served on usability testing teams from planning through analysis
- Designed and analyzed a large-scale teacher survey (2018) that informed the strategy of the Folger Shakespeare Library Editions
- Took on accessibility ownership in the absence of a dedicated role, applying WCAG 2.0/2.1 standards and auditing all managed platforms with WAVE and axe
- Led implementation of the Folger's new brand identity across all digital properties (2022), establishing a central digital brand asset repository and contributing web logo guidance to the brand handbook
- Supported two major digital asset platform migrations, including endpoint mapping and redirection of hundreds of thousands of URLs, and built a custom WordPress plugin adapting a proprietary DAM integration to IIIF-compliant image delivery
- Served as technical lead on the migration of the Folger Shakespeare Online into a new institution-wide site built by agency Substrakt (2022–2023), coordinating API integration, search tuning, content migration, and QA
- Built interactive projects under separate departmental contracts, including Do-It-Yourself First Folio, Do-It-Yourself Quarto, and a First Folio facsimile project (2016-2017)
- Acted as de facto project manager on many initiatives, translating loosely defined goals from senior leadership into plans, designs, and working products; liaised with staff across nearly every department, IT, and external vendors
- Provided Tier 2+ support to staff and partners; wrote system documentation, training materials, and onboarding procedures, and led CMS training for staff authors

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Managing Editor, Folger Shakespeare Library Editions | c. 2018 – 2025

- Took on editorial responsibilities that grew from the earliest work on the digital texts, formalized as Managing Editor when the engagement became full-time
- Managed the Folger Shakespeare editions across the online texts, the commercial print line, and the ebook line; contributed strategy, design, and QA to educational apps co-created with Luminary
- Led the biweekly business meeting between the Folger and Simon & Schuster, setting agendas, facilitating discussion, and driving decisions on new products and copyright requests
- Advised Folger leadership on business decisions for the Editions' commercial products, and served as the primary public contact for the Folger Shakespeare texts, answering support questions and advising on copyright and usage

Simon & Schuster — freelance contract | 2015 – c. 2019

- Consulted on workflow and design for converting the Folger Shakespeare Library Editions from print to ebook, with particular attention to fidelity and feature parity
- Designed how verse lines wrap at different font sizes so that ebooks preserve metrical line structure and line numbering
- Performed full quality control on every title in the ebook line, including code review and proofreading

Various clients | 2025 – present

- Provide end-to-end digital services to organizations and independent clients as a single partner for strategy, design, and development: building new sites and digital experiences from concept to launch, advising on narrative, design, and functionality, modernizing outdated sites, rebuilding sites after data loss, and maintaining sites for stability and security
- Design and build bespoke e-commerce platforms for clients including St. Francis Xavier University (Nova Scotia), for selling products and training sessions, chiefly on WordPress (with WooCommerce integration and Stripe payment processing) and Shopify

Folger Research Fellow | Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, D.C. | July 2012 – December 2014

- Joined the Folger to build its digital texts platform; within six months, became a founding member of the newly created Digital Media and Publications department
- Co-created the Folger Shakespeare Online, digitizing Shakespeare's complete works and co-designing the TEI XML schema used to encode them
- Designed and built the original public site for the digital texts
- Proofread the complete corpus line by line, and again for each new format
- Engineered and QA'd six additional formats for public consumption, including specialized formats for research and teaching

FEATURED PROJECTS

Searching for Shakespeare Scavenger Hunt (2023) — City-Wide Interactive Game Platform

Co-designed the game mechanics and built the complete platform for a city-wide public scavenger hunt (partners: Folger, DC Public Library, Little Free Libraries, Game Genius), with Google Maps API, QR-code puzzles, a real-time MySQL leaderboard, and a privacy-protecting username generator for an audience that included children.

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PAGES Exhibition Portal (2024) — Interactive Collections Exploration
Designed and developed a mobile-friendly web app for exploring the 2,000+ collection images in the Folger's new exhibition spaces, integrating WordPress with Library Collections JSON data, the Folger's IIIF API, and OpenSeadragon for high-resolution display

Folger Shakespeare Online (2012–2023) — Flagship Digital Texts Platform
Co-created the encoded corpus and API, and designed and built the public site that served 5–6 million users a year and carried nearly three-quarters of the Folger's web traffic.

Other concept-to-production projects include **Prattle** (a Shakespeare-themed word game built in two days), **Before Farm to Table**, **Do-It-Yourself First Folio**, and **Do-It-Yourself Quarto**. A more complete project list is available at rebeccaniles.net.

EARLIER EXPERIENCE

Assistant Managing Editor | ArchBook (Architectures of the Book), University of Toronto | 2011-2012
Helped build and manage an experimental online scholarly publication on textual features of rare books and manuscripts in PHP, handling content, images, and digital layout.

Digitization Technician | Internet Archive | 2011
Operated a book-scanning station in a large-scale library digitization effort.

EDUCATION & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Master of Information (MI) | University of Toronto Faculty of Information | 2012
ALA-accredited professional degree, thesis track. Thesis: "Thresholds of Engagement: Integrating Image-Based Digital Resources into Textual Scholarship" — user needs research, prototype design and construction, and web-based delivery of digital tools for scholars. Coursework included Project Management and Organizational Management.

Master of Arts | University of Toronto | 2010
English Literature, Collaborative Program in Book History and Print Culture

Honours Bachelor of Arts | University of Toronto | 2008
English (Specialist), Critical Analysis, Writing and Rhetoric (Minor)

Professional Development:

- XR Development Diploma | University of Toronto Continuing Education & CircuitStream | 2022
- Game Plan Program | Games for Change | 2022
- IIIF Training | IIIF Consortium | 2020
- eBook Production | Toronto Metropolitan University Continuing Education | 2016
- MuseumNext conference series (GLAM-sector practice) | regular attendee; lobbied for and secured an institution-wide subscription for the Folger, and provided a summary of each conference to staff

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SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

"Implementing the Do-It-Yourself First Folio: From Concept Model to Pedagogical Tool." By Meaghan Brown, Rebecca Niles, and Stacey Redick. **Digital Pedagogy in Early Modern Studies: Method and Praxis**, edited by Andie Silva and Scott Schofield. Iter Press, 2023.

"'Into a thousand parts divide': The Pursuit of Precision in Shakespeare's Interfaces." **The Routledge Handbook of Shakespeare and Interface**, edited by Clifford Werier and Paul Budra. Routledge, 2022.

"Moving Parts: Digital Modeling and the Infrastructures of Shakespeare Editing." By Alan Galey, Rebecca Niles. **Shakespeare Quarterly** 68.1 (2017): 21-55.

"Re-Modelling the Edition: Creating the Corpus of Folger Digital Texts." By Rebecca Niles, Michael Poston. **Early Modern Studies After the Digital Turn**. Iter Press, 2016.

References, detailed project case studies, and a complete list of publications and presentations available upon request.