Impact of Digitized Collections on Learning and Teaching

"Primary Sources, Digital Facsimiles, and Analytic Databases"

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An Assignment for a Freshman Seminar on Shakespeare

ENGLISH 16: SHAKESPEARE / NOT SHAKESPEARE

EEBO research assignment
Due date: Feb 19

This assignment asks you to undertake some detailed research of a single word that you think is important to one of the plays we have read thus far. Choose a key word from one of the plays we've read. For example: we discussed the word *will* in *Merchant of Venice*, analyzing how the word's double meaning as *testament* and *desire* contribute to our understanding of the play. (You can't use this word, therefore; find any other word that you feel carries important meaning in one of our plays.)

"… so is the **will** of a living daughter curbed by the **will** of a dead father"

Portia, 1.2.22-24

First, look up your word in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED). The OED is a dictionary on historical principles; it defines words as they change over time. Make sure you turn on the "Quotations" and the "Etymology" features in the online OED; these allow you to see the derivation of the word and the dates when each meaning of the word was prevalent. Use the OED to find out the various meanings of your word at the time Shakespeare was writing these plays (around 1600).

1) OED

Find all the meanings of your word that were circulating at the time Shakespeare was writing; for the purposes of this assignment, you can consider that to be any definitions with at least one quotation from 1660 or earlier.

Transcribe all of these definitions (but not the quotations); make sure to include the definition number (e.g., II.5.c) so that I can retrace your steps.

2) EEBO keyword search

Next, you will investigate your word in other contemporary texts by using Early English Books Online (EEBO).

Enter your word in the "Keyword" search box.
Restrict your search with the date range boxes to 1590-1610.
Restrict your search by using the "Limit to" drop-down box to select "Items with keyed full text."
If your word is quite common (like *will*), you will get a ton of results, so try to choose a word that doesn't have quite so many meanings and that isn't both a noun and a verb! (Searching for *usury* between 1590 and 1610 and limiting to items with keyed full text, for instance, yields only 12 results.)

3) EEBO context

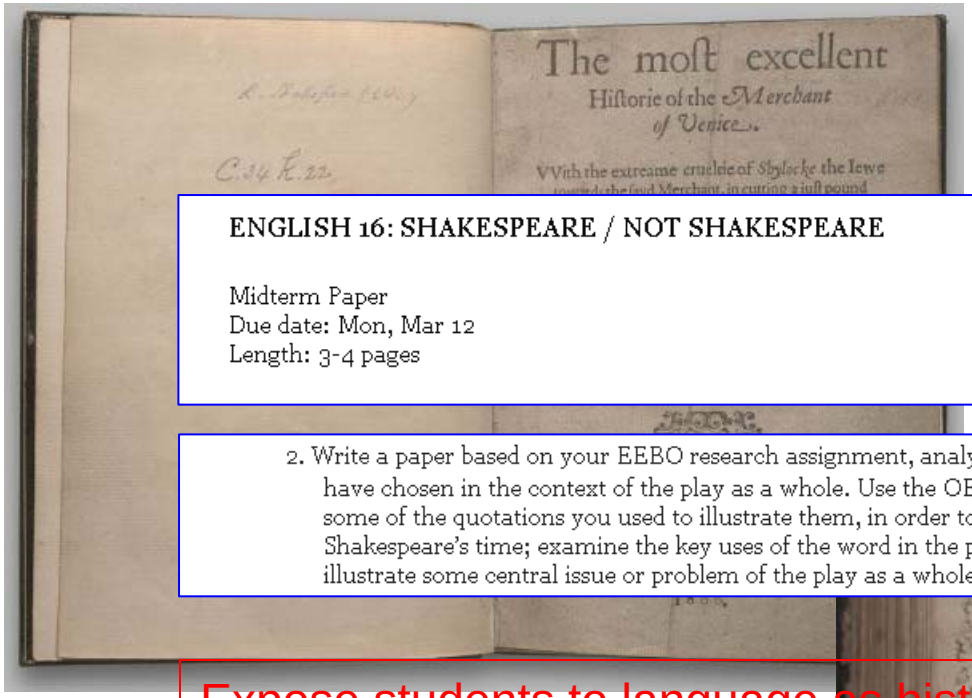
Investigate how the word is used in the texts yielded by your search. For each result, you should see a link to the keyed full text of the book indicated by this symbol: 🗋 Click the full-text symbol and then use your browser's search function to find your word in the text.

How does the word's use in these books from roughly the period of the play (1590-1610) compare to the OED's definition of the word? Are each of the OED's definitions actually active in the texts you've found?

4) Testing the OED

Follow-Up to EEBO assignment

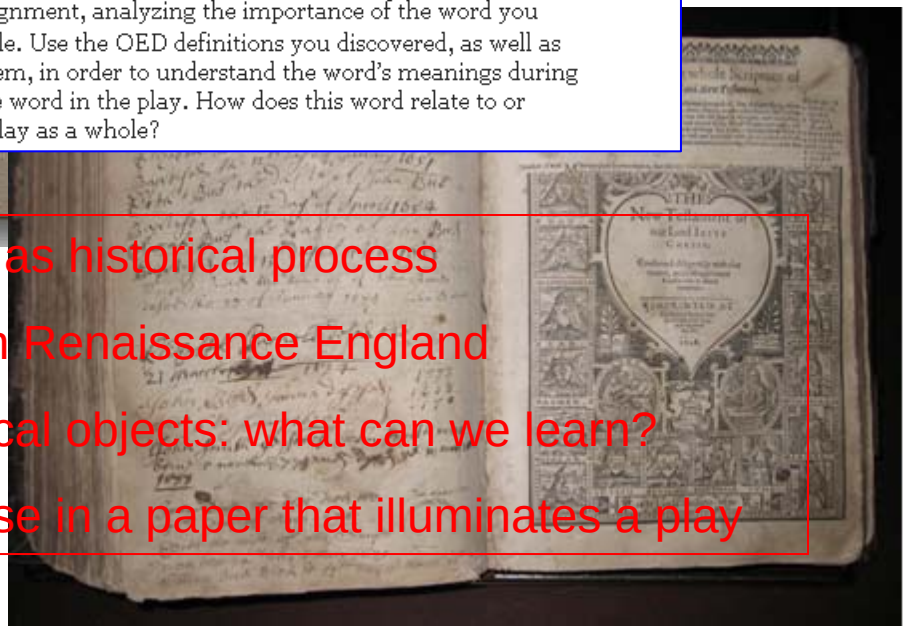
1) Trip to Rare Book Library at Penn



ENGLISH 16: SHAKESPEARE / NOT SHAKESPEARE

Midterm Paper
Due date: Mon, Mar 12
Length: 3-4 pages

2. Write a paper based on your EEBO research assignment, analyzing the importance of the word you have chosen in the context of the play as a whole. Use the OED definitions you discovered, as well as some of the quotations you used to illustrate them, in order to understand the word's meanings during Shakespeare's time; examine the key uses of the word in the play. How does this word relate to or illustrate some central issue or problem of the play as a whole?



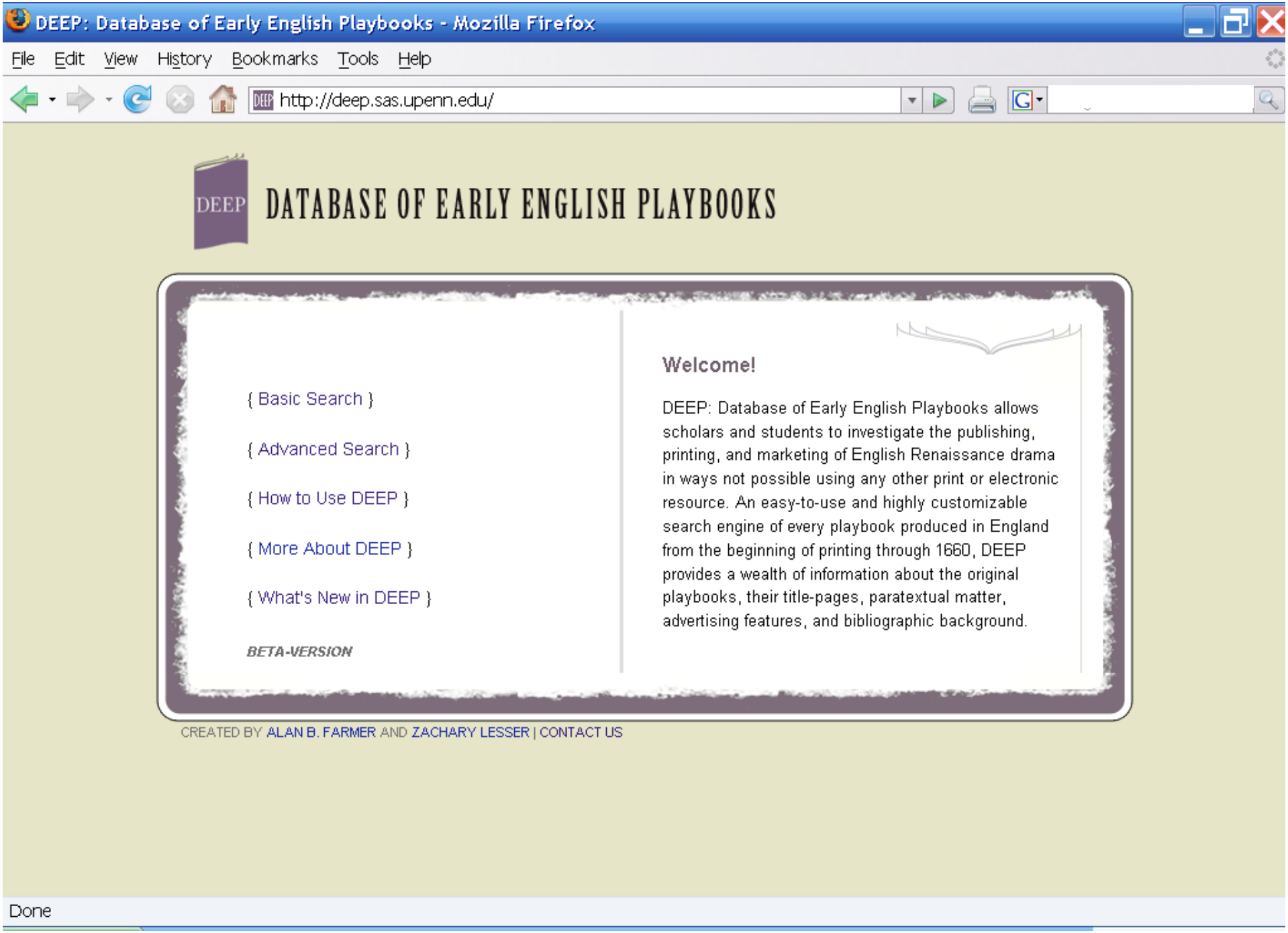
1608 Geneva Bible with Book of Common Prayer

Expose students to language as historical process

Contextualize Shakespeare in Renaissance England

Facsimiles vs books as physical objects: what can we learn?

Put what they've learned to use in a paper that illuminates a play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Welcome!
DEEP: Database of Early English Playbooks allows scholars and students to investigate the publishing, printing, and marketing of English Renaissance drama in ways not possible using any other print or electronic resource. An easy-to-use and highly customizable search engine of every playbook produced in England from the beginning of printing through 1660, DEEP provides a wealth of information about the original playbooks, their title-pages, paratextual matter, advertising features, and bibliographic background.
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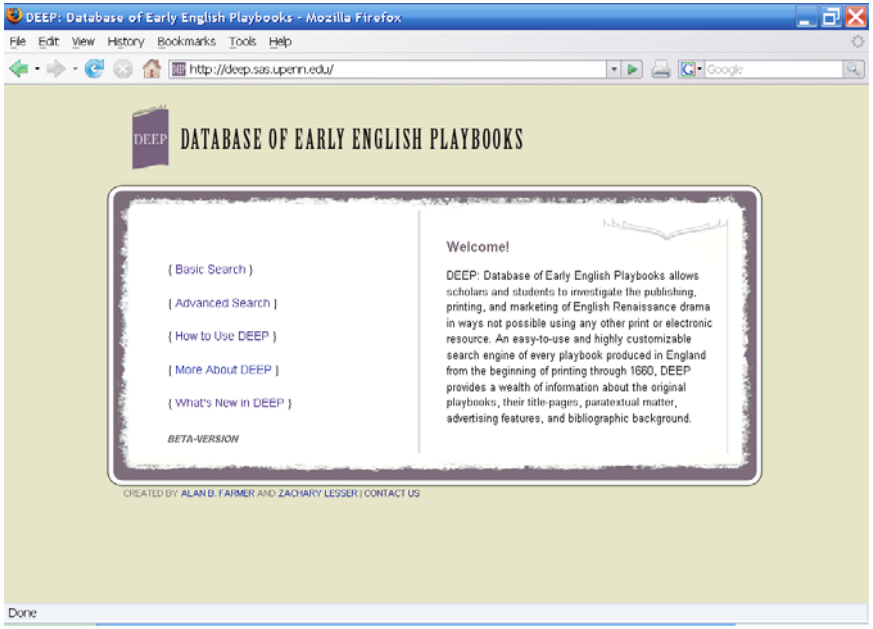

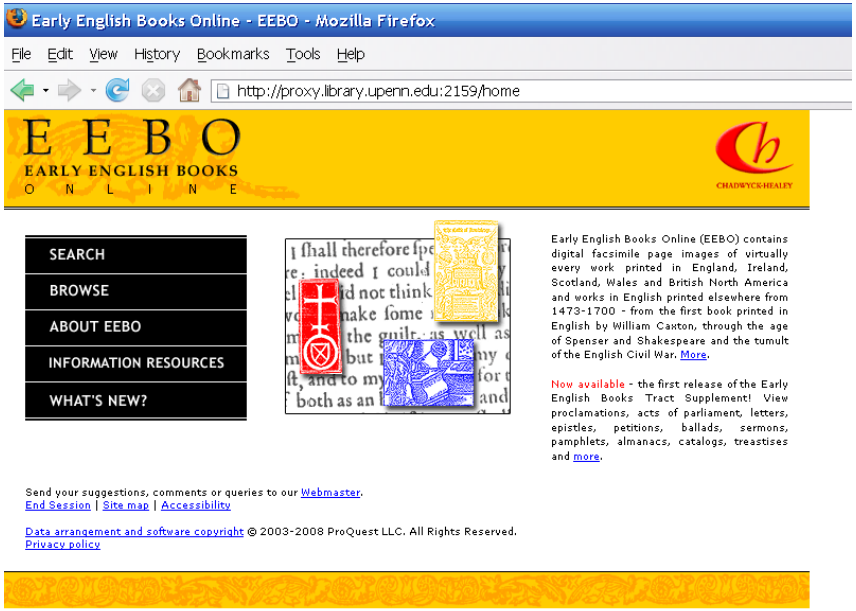

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EEBO

facsimile

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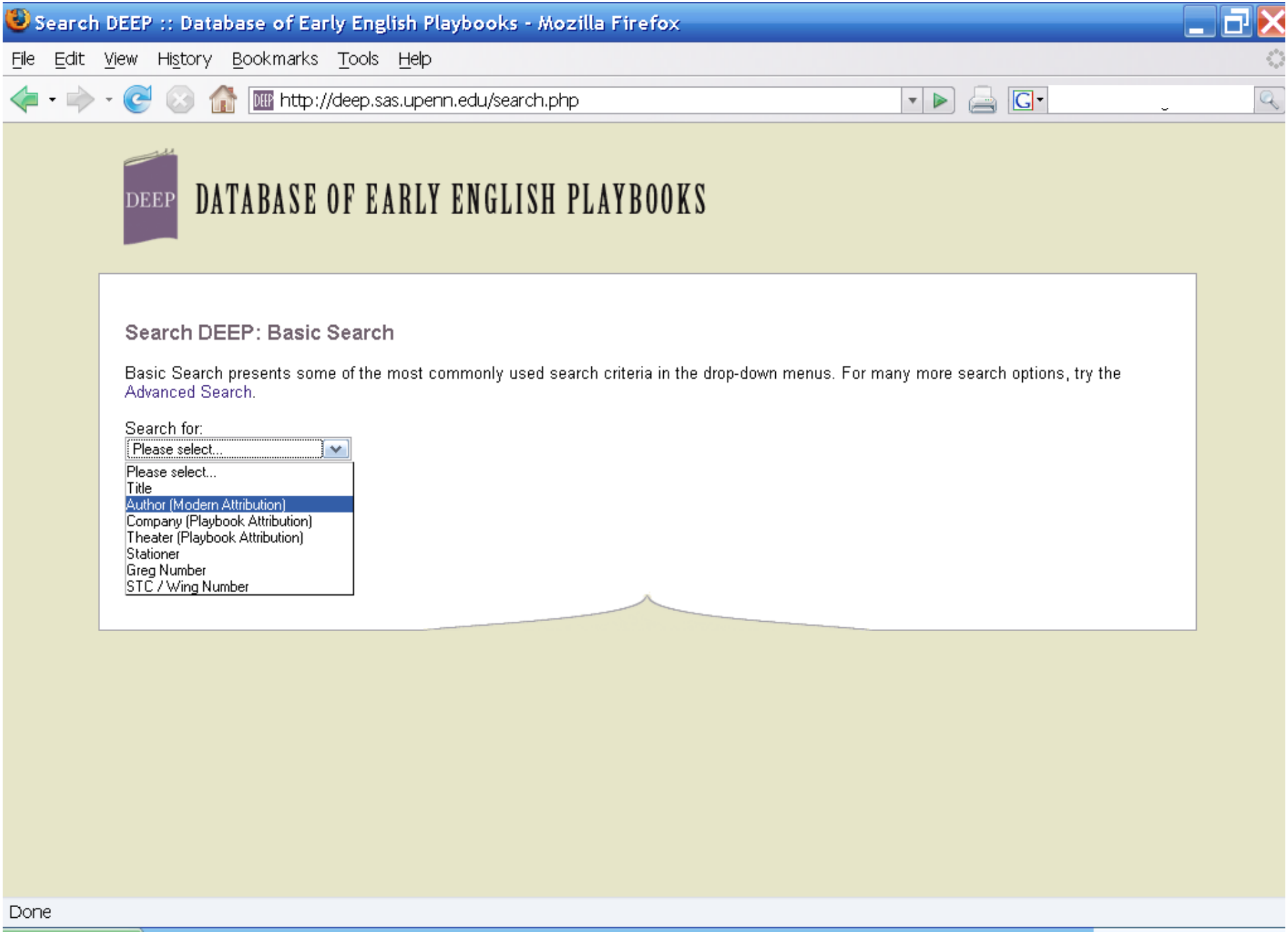
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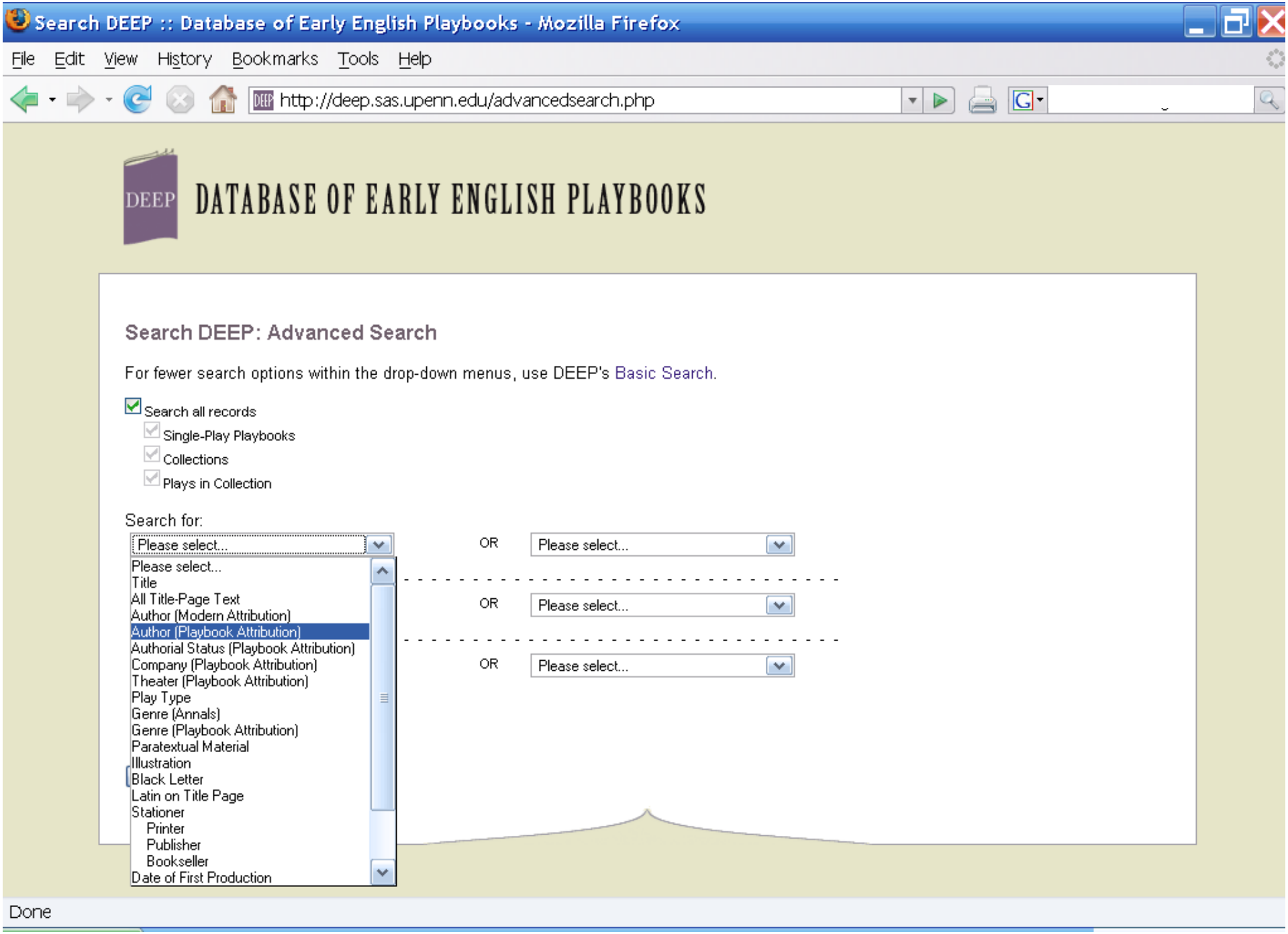
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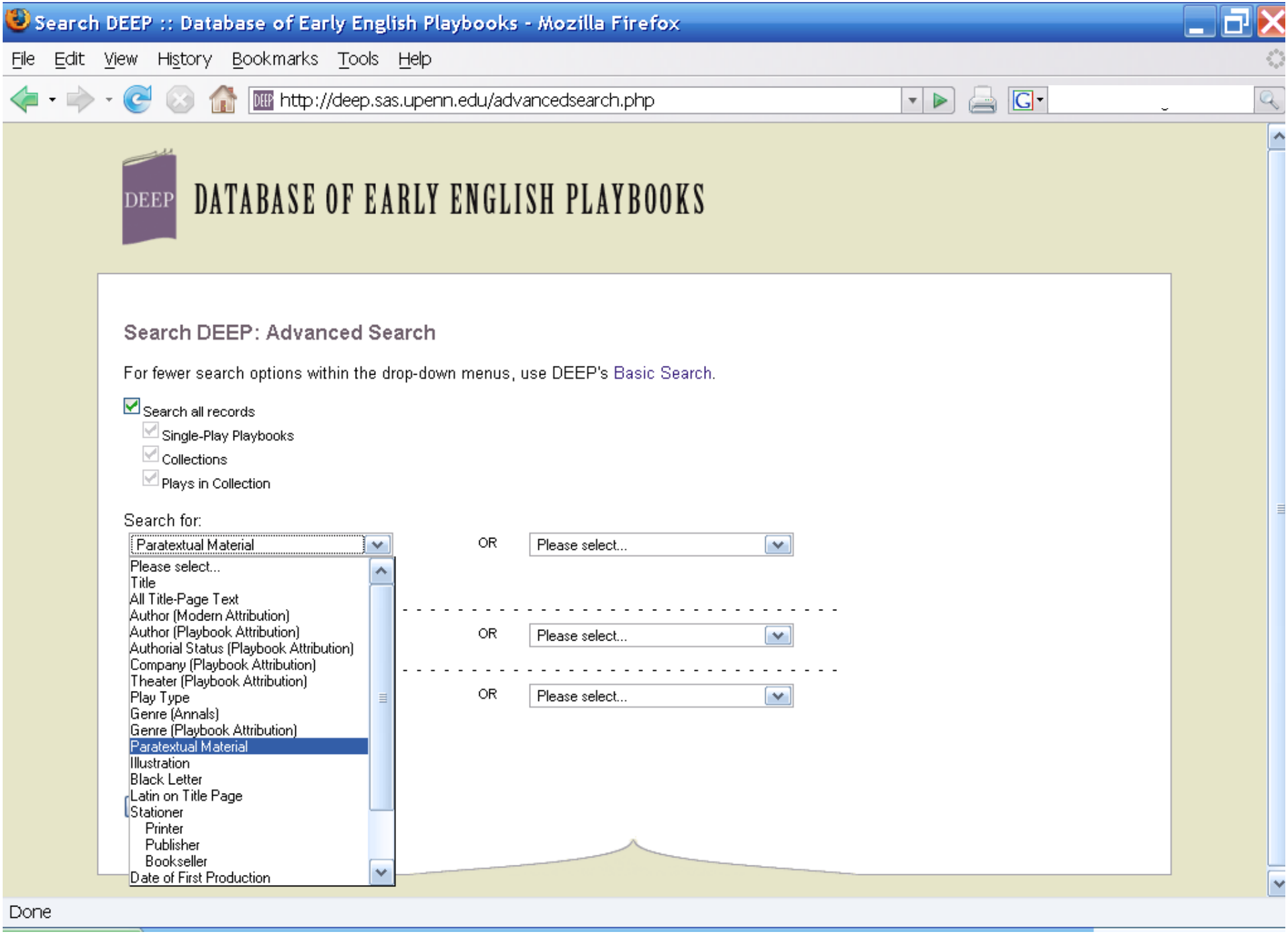
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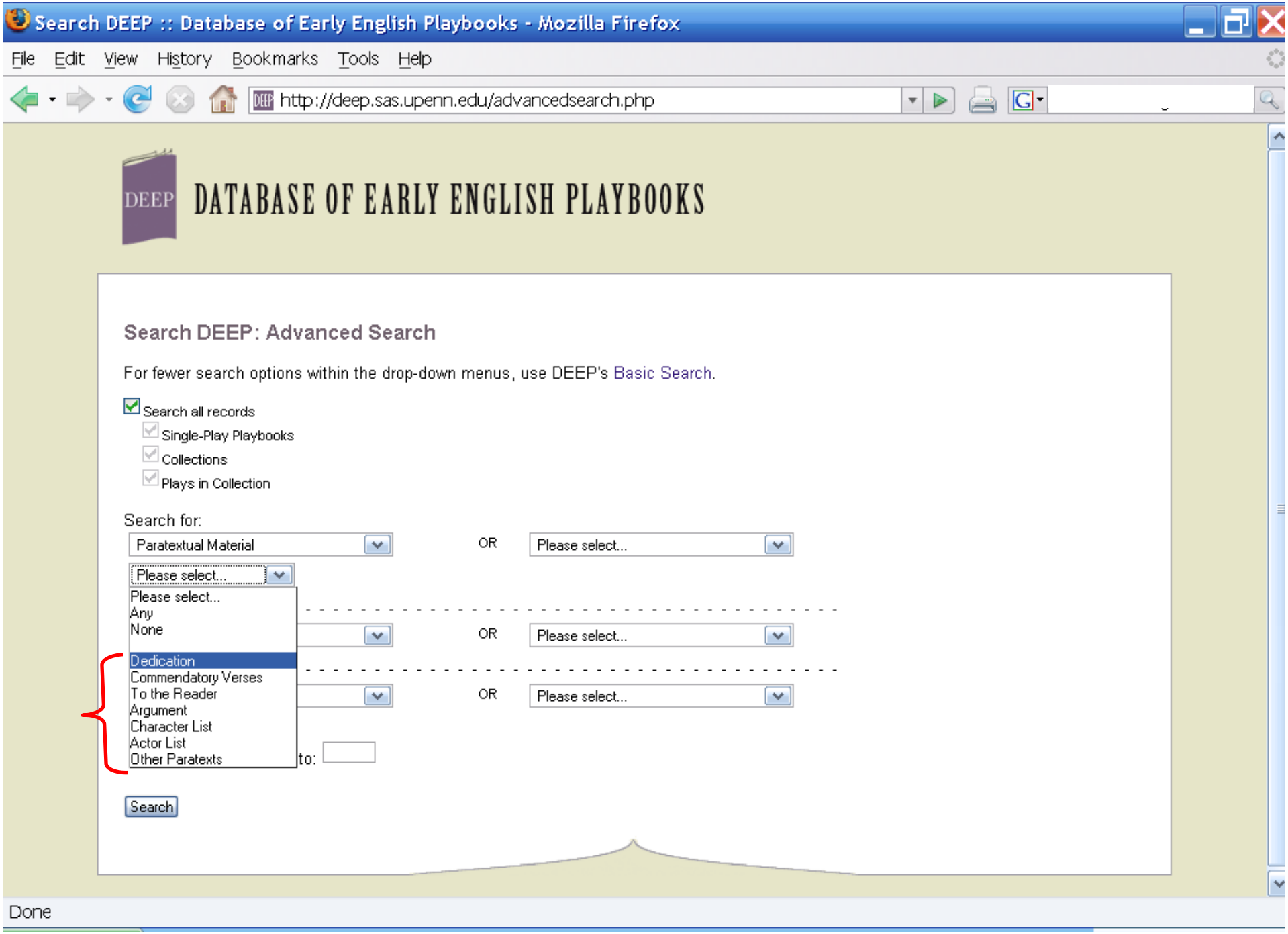
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An Assignment Using DEEP for Upper-Level Students

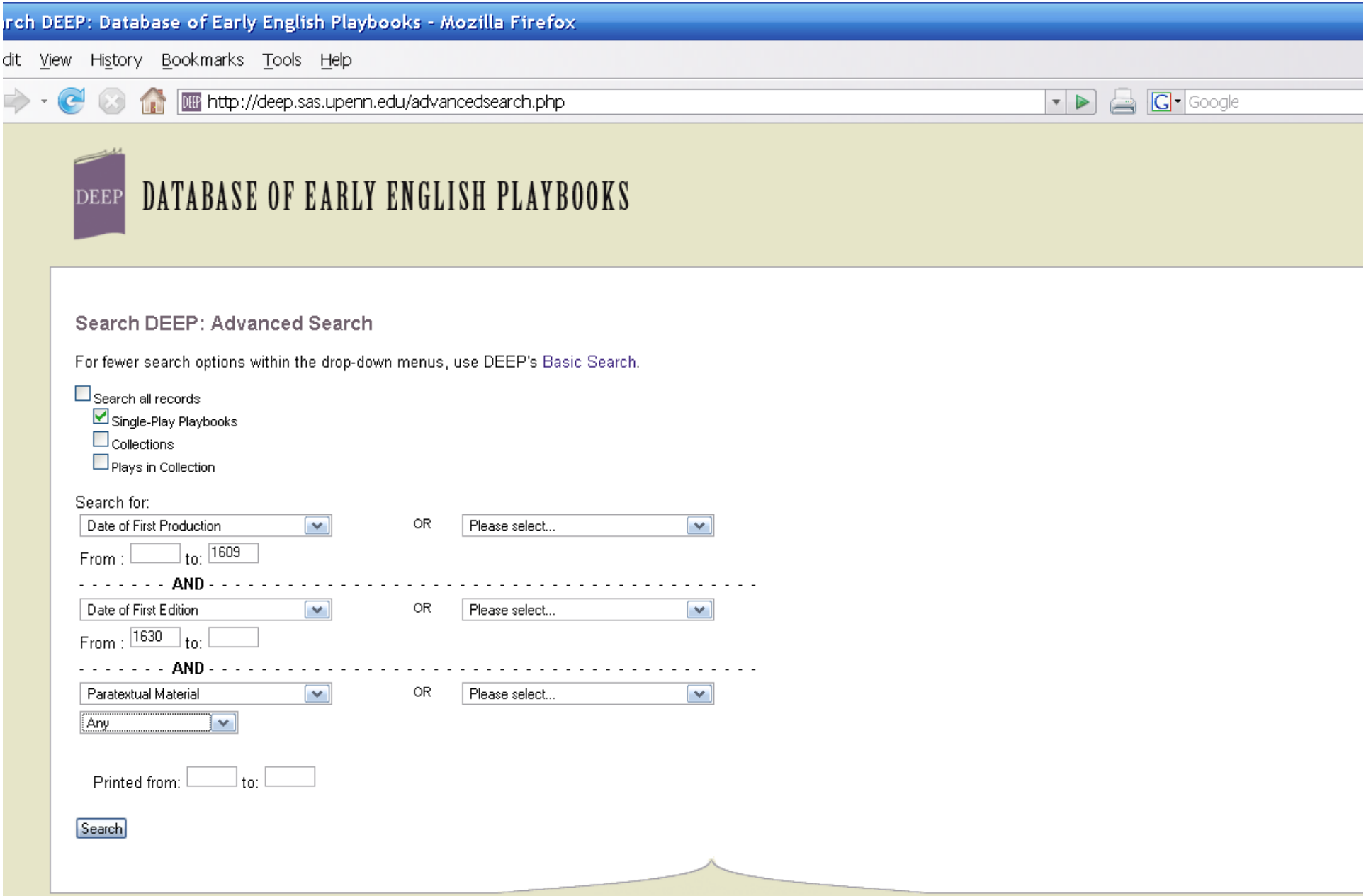
DEEP Scavenger Hunt

1) How many professional plays were first produced before 1610 but not printed until 1630 or later?

   How many of these plays contain paratextual material?

   Read the paratextual material in a few of these plays, including any addresses to the reader, prologues, epilogues, dedications, etc. (Note: DEEP will not give you the texts themselves; you should use EEBO to read them, or see if they are available in the rare book library). Do the paratexts address the fact that the plays are "old"? In what ways?

What hypotheses might you formulate based on your findings? How would you go about investigating them further?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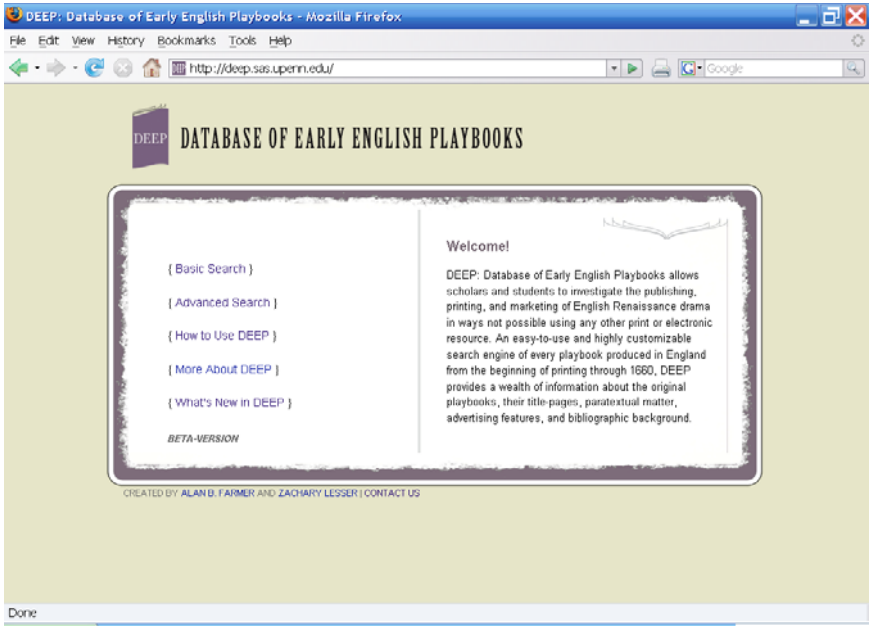

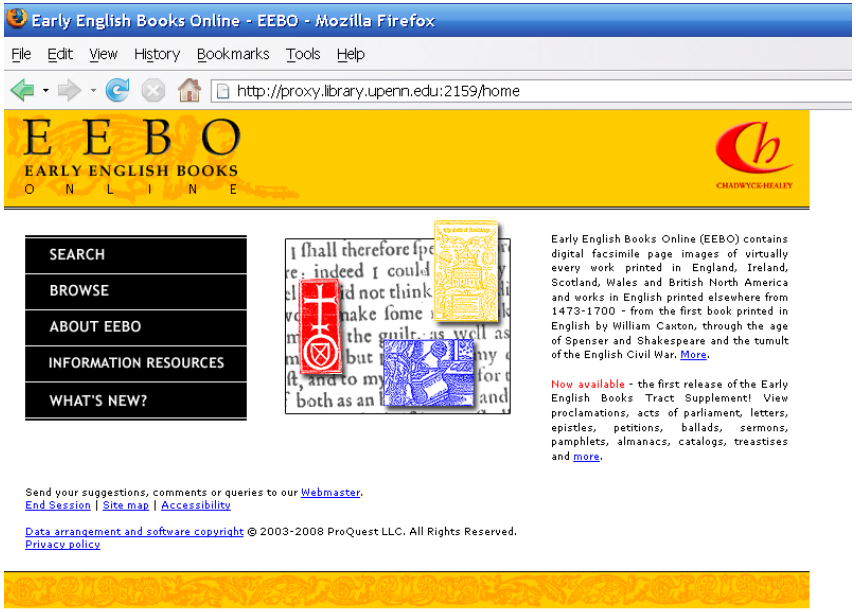

DEEP	EEBO
metadata	facsimile
narrow	comprehensive
analytic	archival

Introduces students to the kinds of research on printed plays that scholars do

Allows students to immediately jump to high-level research

Integrates knowledge *about* primary sources with reading *of* primary sources