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For the last seventeen years, Indiana University’s *Chymistry of Isaac Newton* project has been editing the famous scientist’s voluminous alchemical writings online (see [www.chymistry.org](http://www.chymistry.org)). This week the National Endowment for the Humanities announced that the *Chymistry* team has been awarded the American part of a highly competitive, international “New Directions for Digital Scholarship in Cultural Institutions” grant. The project, under the supervision of William R. Newman at IU’s Department of History and Philosophy of Science and Medicine, includes Joel Klein of the Huntington Library and James R. Voelkel of the Science History Institute as Co-Principal Investigators. The award is made in conjunction with an identical grant given by the British Arts and Humanities Research Council to the *Chymistry* team’s international partners. These include Cambridge University and the British National Archives as direct partners, and the French Ecole des chartes as a contractor.

The project, called “Digital approaches to the capture and analysis of watermarks using the manuscripts of Isaac Newton as a test case,” will attempt to solve a vexed problem for historians of manuscripts and early books. It has been known since the early twentieth century that watermarks could be used to date the paper on which they are found, and could in principle serve as a means of determining when documents were composed. But watermarks present stubborn difficulties for the scholar. Capturing them reliably is problematic, since they are frequently buried under heavily inked writing (which sometimes even eats holes through the paper), and once they are recorded, one encounters an even more daunting task, namely identifying the watermarks in repositories of dated examples. The pioneers of watermark analysis such as the Swiss paleographer Charles-Moïse Briquet, compiled “dictionaries” of dated watermarks, but failed to take account of the many variations among examples of the same type. The NEH/AHRC-funded project will combine sophisticated digital image capturing and artificial intelligence to assemble and process watermarks found in Isaac Newton’s papers, comparing them against other examples where Newton himself provided the dates at which he wrote the documents. This will not only clarify the chronology of Newton’s own compositions, it will also lead to tools that will benefit the scholarly community over a broad range of disciplines.