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The Guild of Book Workers is a national organization representing the hand book crafts. There are regional chapters in New England, New York, the Delaware Valley, Washington DC, the Midwest, California, the Rocky Mountains, Texas, the Northwest and the Southeast.

Membership is open to all interested persons and includes a print copy of this Newsletter, among many other benefits. To become a member, please visit the Guild of Book Workers website:

[guildofbookworkers.org](http://guildofbookworkers.org)

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Holiday Linocut by Jennifer Evers. Image courtesy of herself.

# Letter from the President

DEAR MEMBERS,

I am thrilled at the success of the annual Standards of Excellence Seminar in Hand Bookbinding in San Francisco!

I can't thank Standards Chair Jennifer Pellechia enough for all of her hard work in planning this amazing event. I would also like to thank the amazing local host committee for everything that they did to make this event a success. And a shout out to our Treasurer Larry Houston—who, along with Jennifer, worked tirelessly to make sure everything ran smoothly.

Outgoing board members concluded their term at the close of the annual meeting. I would once again like to thank Henry Hébert, Lindsey Jackson, Cheryl Ball, and Jay Tanner for their service over the years. Welcome to our new board members Todd Pattison as Vice President, Jennifer Buchi as Secretary, Eliza Gilligan as Membership Chair, and Susie Cobbledick as Journal Co-Chair. I'm also very happy to have Larry Houston continuing on as our Treasurer. I'm really looking forward to working with all of you!

It was great to see so many of our members at Standards. For those of you who were not able to attend or missed the annual meeting, we shared some important information. First off, after more than 10 years, we will be raising our membership dues. The current cost of dues is no longer enough to cover our operating expenses. We won't be raising dues until July of 2024, and we will have much more information and specifics in the coming months about what to expect and some new benefits for members. We all still want to keep membership as affordable as possible, but higher costs of website updates and upkeep, mailing costs, etc., have forced us to re-evaluate the actual price of membership. One perk for members that will be coming soon is a new public directory on our website. This will allow members to opt-in to a public facing page where anyone can search for book folks by speciality and location.

We will be launching it soon and sharing information on how to be a part of it, if you so choose.

I would like to share again that we have a new, centralized page on our website for volunteers, [guildofbookworkers.org/volunteer-opportunities](http://guildofbookworkers.org/volunteer-opportunities). While some committees have a specific sign-up time, we are happy to welcome volunteers any time of year. Please take a look and sign up for anything that sounds interesting to you. Filling out the form is not a commitment, it is simply a way to let us know that you would like to help. Whether it's for a one-time event or a standing committee, we are grateful for all of our volunteers.

As always, please feel free to reach out to me with any questions or concerns at [president@guildofbookworkers.org](mailto:president@guildofbookworkers.org). Wishing you all a very happy holiday season ahead!

Cheers,

Kate Levy

President, Guild of Book Workers

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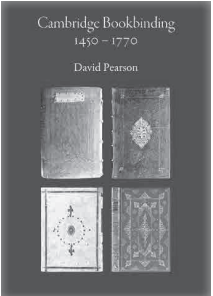
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# Letter from the Editors

DEAR READERS,

As we look forward to the holiday season, we realize how much there is to celebrate in the world. Recently the Guild enjoyed a celebration of bookbinding at the Standards of Excellence in San Francisco. In this issue of the *Newsletter* you can continue the celebration as you read reviews of the four presentations: Gabby Cooksey's *Tattooing on Leather, a Journey into a New Decorative Technique*, reviewed by Holly D'Oench; Brien Beidler's *Finishing Tool Making: An Economic Approach*, reviewed by Nicole Alvarado; Jeff Peachey's *Fifty Ways to Reattach your Boards*, reviewed by Jainabah Phillips; and Steph Rue's *Paper, Books, Art, Community: My Journey with Hanji*, reviewed by Anne McLain. You can also celebrate Standards by perusing the photo collage or marveling at Coleen Curry's leather origami animals, donated to the auction by each of the four presenters.

In addition, we celebrate the life of Doris Freitag (a godmother of the Guild's chapter structure!) as she is remembered by James Reid-Cunningham, Jeff Altepeter, Nancy Schrock, and Mark Esser. Barbara Hebard treats us to a review of *Grolier Club Bookplates Past & Present*, Iris Nevins helps us navigate the challenges of sending custom samples to customers, and Alice Vaughan gives an excellent explanation of how one can create the curve found in a Folio slipcase. Finally, Beth Lee provides us an opportunity to celebrate future events as she presents us with new books and upcoming conferences for us to enjoy.

Congratulations to York Carlisle for submitting the winning caption to our cartoon caption contest! (Image right). Thanks to all those who submitted their ideas—we had some good laughs trying to decide on a winner.

As we venture into the peaks and valleys of the holiday season we wish you all the best and hope that you can find something in your life, book-ish or otherwise, to celebrate.

## Binding Humor

Caption by York Carlisle



Detail: *The Penny Magazine*, "A Day at a Bookbinder's" New Series, Supplement, September 24, 1842, 377. Peachey Bookbinding Collection.

THE WINNING CAPTION!

**"Psst! Bill, do you think that watchful fellow standing by the wall would notice if I wore a short-sleeve shirt tomorrow instead of rolling up my sleeves?"**



Photo by Tim Zänkert on Unsplash

# Letter from the Standards Chair

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THANK YOU TO EVERYONE who attended The Standards of Excellence Seminar in Hand Bookbinding in September. It was so wonderful to see everyone in San Francisco, one of the world's great book towns, for presentations by Brien Beidler, Gabby Cooksey, Jeff Peachey, and Steph Rue—some of the world's great book practitioners!

Many accolades are due to Juliayn Coleman and the Hand Bookbinders of California, especially for the time and effort that went into such an impressive array of Bay Area tours.

Megan Gibes and everyone at Arion Press hosted a spectacular opening reception, and celebrating the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the American Academy of Bookbinding provided us with a wonderful opportunity to visit the American Bookbinders Museum as a community.

My list of volunteers to thank seems to grow by the year, as does the number of scholarships we are able to offer. For the second year in a row, our silent and live auctions netted over \$17,000 for next year's scholarship fund. I am so grateful to everyone who contributed, either by donating items, placing a bid, or volunteering during this vital and lively part of the event. I already look forward to welcoming our scholars, members, guests, and vendors back to New England from November 7–9, at the Graduate Providence in Rhode Island.

Until 2024,  
Jennifer Pellecchia  
GBW Standards Chair

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## Chapter Reports

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### CALIFORNIA

CO-CHAIRS: Marlyn Bonaventure and Rebecca Chamlee

Congratulations to Nicole Alvarado and Bonnie Thompson Norman, who were the recipients of the two California chapter sponsored scholarships for GBW Standards of Excellence this year. Each received \$1,689, which was applied toward conference expenses.

Since our last report we have presented “Generative Measures: Research and Writing for Artists’ Books,” a virtual workshop with Ellen Sheffield, in September 2023. This excellent workshop was attended over three days for two hours each day.

Our chapter’s August Garden Party—a luncheon and sharing of members’ work—was at Claire’s restaurant in the Long Beach Museum of Art. Attending members shared amazing and impressive work.

### NORTHWEST

CHAIR: Jodee Fenton

A new member of the Northwest Chapter, Misty McIntosh, will host a virtual studio visit on November 18<sup>th</sup>. Member Sophia Bogle was interviewed by Wired Magazine, which will be available after November 6<sup>th</sup>. Bogle continues to add new content to her YouTube channel, “Save Your Books,” with a recent installment on conservation of the popular Nutshell Library.

Paula Jull continues to plan programs for members; Jen Farrell (Starshaped Press) will present on January 20<sup>th</sup> about “setting yourself up for success, whether you’re designing a short run of prints of developing a complex artists’ book.” Later in the new year the Chapter will present a panel discussion about the history and status of letterpress printing in the Pacific Northwest.

### POTOMAC

CHAIR: Charlotte Mauler Hayes

We are happy to report a new iteration of the Potomac board, with Charlotte Mauler Hayes as Chair and Shireen Holman joining us as Secretary. With several members in attendance at Standards 2023, we enjoyed both reuniting with and meeting new colleagues from across the country for the first time in person we’ve known only online.

With inspiration drawn from the Chapter Chairs meeting, we find ourselves renewed and energized to expand our reach and create more activities and opportunities. We will soon convene at the 5<sup>th</sup> annual Book, Paper and Print Gathering at Pyramid Atlantic to share our goals, a bit about the Guild’s history, and how we could engage new audiences and members in the future. Plans are afoot for a workshop and meetups in the broader region.



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Photos courtesy of Doris Freitag's family.

## OBITUARY

# *Remembering Doris Freitag*

by James Reid-Cunningham, Jeff Altepeter,  
Nancy Schrock, and Mark Esser

### JAMES REID-CUNNINGHAM

Long-time Guild member Doris Freitag passed away on May 5, 2023, after several years of declining health. She was 96. Doris was a book conservator at Harvard University and mentored many conservators and binders during her long career.

Doris was born in Darmstadt, Germany. Her father was a commercial artist and her mother a housewife. She grew up in Nazi Germany. Her family home was destroyed in 1944 during a fire-bombing by the British RAF. She pulled her grandmother out of the basement and then ran out of the house barefoot. As she ran, she jumped over what she thought were smoldering logs but later realized were human bodies. She sheltered in a city park as the city burned around her. After two days, she returned to their home; it was in ruins. Doris dug around in the ashes and found a pair of shoes that belonged to her brother. The shoes were too

large but she wore them as she walked through the ruins of Darmstadt, a city of 100,000 people. Approximately one third of the population was killed during the air raid.

After the war she returned to Darmstadt and in 1946–1948 was apprenticed with a local binder named Herr Rehbein. She married Wolfgang Freitag, an art librarian, in 1952 and they moved to the United States. Their two sons, Thomas and Tillman, were born in the U.S.

Doris was hired as the book conservator at the Harvard Theological Library in 1964. She joined the Guild of Book Workers in the 1960s and was present at the first Boston meeting of Guild members in 1966. The meeting was held in the home of Captain George Cunha and was attended by Laura Young, Hannah French and Betsy Eldridge, among others. They discussed the formation of a local chapter of the Guild, which was still focused on New York. At this meeting it was decided that they would not start a



new chapter or form a new organization, but this was the beginning of the idea of local chapters in the Guild. Doris was a founding member of the New England Chapter when it was formed in the late 1970s, and she organized the first Standards Seminar held in Boston.

In the late 1970s, Doris was asked by the Harvard University Librarian to set up a conservation program for the university and was initially given one hundred dollars to fund the program. From such meager beginnings, Doris set about to transform book conservation at Harvard. Like many large universities, library conservation involved a great deal of simple mending of circulating books, with many volumes sent out to library binderies. Rare materials were sent out to private conservators. One of her first steps was to work with Paul Parisi of Acme Bookbinding to steer library binderies away from whipstitching textblocks in favor of sewing through the fold and double fan adhesive binding. Doris wrote the very first disaster response plan for Harvard University Libraries at a time when planning for disasters was rare among librarians.

In the mid-1980s, Doris was a founding advisor to the bookbinding program at the North Bennet Street School in Boston, along with Sam Ellenport and Paul Parisi. She brought the same focus and determination to assisting the bookbinders at NBSS as she did to her work at Harvard. She served as an advisor until the very last years of her life. Doris finally retired in 2012 after forty-eight years as a conservator at Harvard.

I first met Doris in 1984 when I started working at the Harvard Design School library doing simple repairs on circulating books. This was early in my career when I really knew nothing. She invited me to her workshop and was generous with her time. She would visit my library on occasion and examine what I'd been doing. She criticized my work in a firm but rather kind way. Each time she left, I

felt that my knowledge of conservation had expanded. Doris believed that every task, no matter how minor or seemingly unimportant, should be done correctly and done well. One was meant to learn binding and conservation by mastering simple tasks and moving on to more difficult tasks. No detail was too small. I was one of many people who Doris mentored over her decades in our profession. We are all fortunate for her guidance. I use what I learned from Doris every day of my career.

JEFF ALTEPETER

When I started as an instructor in the bookbinding program at the North Bennet Street School in Boston, Doris was one of the program advisors. She made it clear that she wasn't sure I was ready for the job. I wasn't really, of course! When Doris visited for the spring advisory meeting, she talked with the students and examined their work carefully. She listened to my class progress report at the meeting intently. Then she gave some stern but generous comments of approval. I knew I was going to figure it all out and learn to do the job. Over the years Doris continued to give her thoughtful feedback and advice, and her approval built my confidence. At the last advisor's meeting she attended, Doris gave her compliments and feedback and then noted, "And these students are also a very good-looking bunch."

NANCY SCHROCK

I met Wolfgang Freitag when I was librarian at Winterthur Museum and we were both involved in the founding of ARLIS, the Art Libraries Society, in 1972. At Winterthur, my interests shifted to conservation, and I met Doris when I moved to Boston in 1975. It was an exciting time, as the field of library conservation was in its infancy. She and I crossed paths at Guild meetings, workshops, and then at Harvard where I worked on grant projects. As others



Reprint of photo from the 1975 Guild of Book Workers Newsletter.

have noted, Doris was both nurturing and frank. When she told me that she thought my skills would be best used in library preservation, I was offended, as I was sure she was criticizing my bookbinding skills. In fact, she was right. I had the privilege of designing and managing the Collections Conservation Lab in Widener Library with David Moore, which was the culmination of Doris's many years of effort to train and build a program for Harvard, and a highlight of my career.

MARK ESSER


Doris Freitag was an advisor to the bookbinding program at the North Bennet Street School in Boston when I arrived there, as its first instructor, in 1986. She, and the other advisors, Sam Ellenport and Paul Parisi, worked with the school to lay the groundwork for the new program, and contributed enormously to its success.

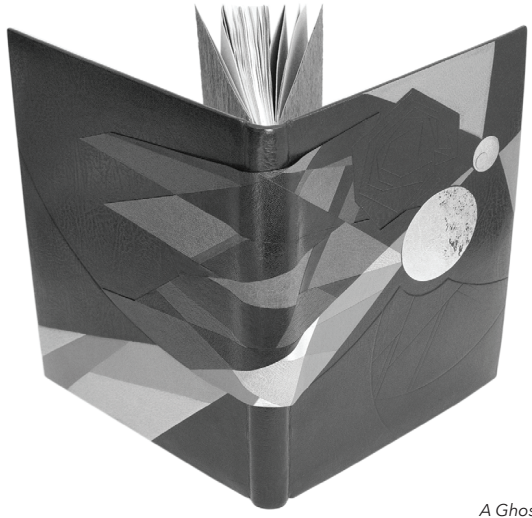
Doris always enjoyed getting to know each new class. She took the time to talk with everyone, learning about their backgrounds and goals and examining the work they were producing. She made every effort to support both the program as a whole and the individual students. While I'm deeply grateful for all that Doris did for the bookbinding program, my indebtedness to her runs deeper. Without her

intervention I would never have been teaching at North Bennet Street in the first place.

I met Doris in 1973. I had recently graduated from college and was working as a curatorial assistant at Harvard's Farlow Library and Herbarium. I'd become interested in bookbinding as a possible career path and learned that Doris was the book conservator at the Harvard Divinity School. I made an appointment with her to ask about opportunities for training in bookbinding, and to see if she would ever hire an assistant. We had a good conversation, she was focused and kind, but wasn't really able to help me at that time.

Later, when the North Bennet Street School was searching for its first bookbinding instructor, I saw the job posting, and promptly dismissed it. I was completing my apprenticeship with William Anthony, and would have welcomed moving back to Boston, but simply didn't see myself as a teacher. It developed that the school was having trouble finding the right person for the job and Doris suggested that they try contacting me. I was hired and embarked on a challenging and exciting new chapter in my life and career. I know that I was not alone in benefitting from Doris's generous and engaged outlook, and I remain amazed and thankful that she remembered me 13 years after our brief meeting.

  
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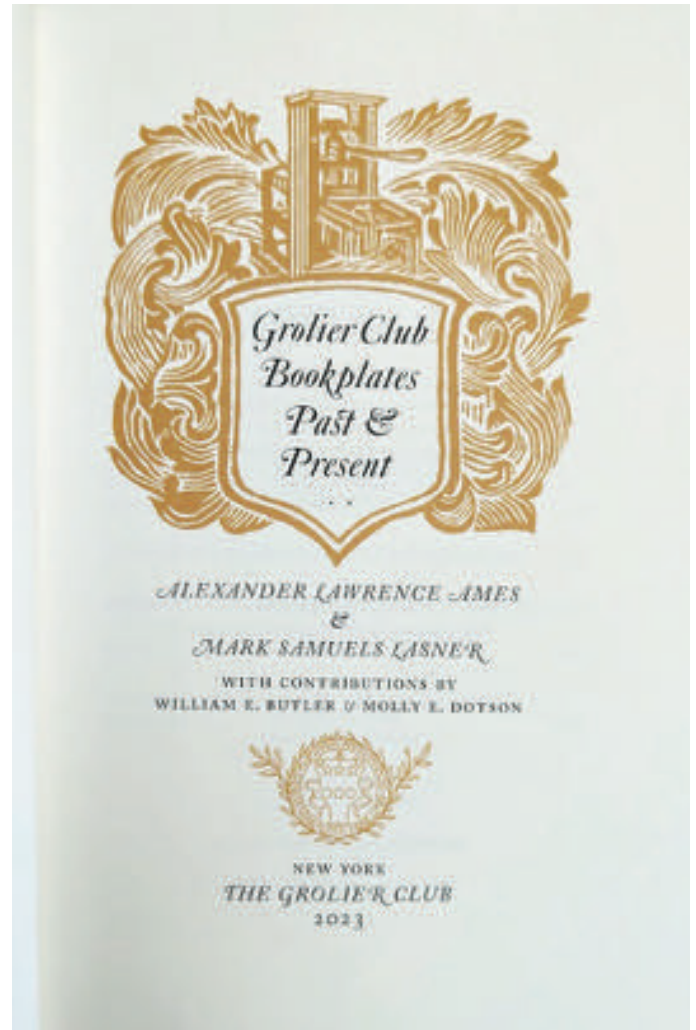
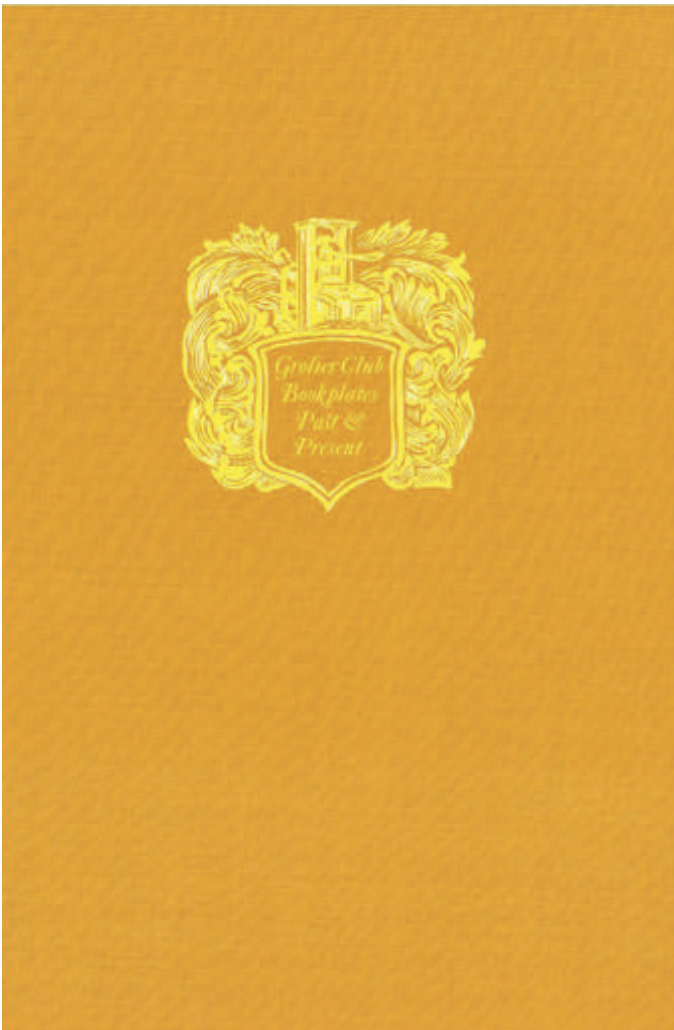
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*Grolier Club Bookplates Past & Present*, by Alexander Lawrence Ames and Mark Samuel Lasner, with contributions by William E. Butler and Molly E. Dotson, New York: Grolier Club, 2023. Left: Front Cover. Image provided by the publisher. Right: Title Page. Image Provided by Barbara Adams Hebard.

## BOOK REVIEW

# *Grolier Club Bookplates Past & Present*

Reviewed by Barbara Adams Hebard

THIS PUBLICATION WAS beautifully planned by the Grolier Club, both in terms of its content and the physical components of its production. Before delving into the essays within, a look at the physical book is merited. GBW members who are bookbinders, book illustrators, calligraphers, printers, and those interested in book design, will appreciate this volume. It was set in Caslon type and printed in the Czech Republic by PB Tisk. The design and typography are by Jerry Kelly, a Grolier Club member. The eye-catching case binding has bold yellow cloth covering, ornate gold titling and vignette stamped on the upper cover, and a maroon-toned spine

label. A lovely cream-colored stock makes up the text block. Because it is sewn through the folds with the grain parallel to the spine, it is pleasing to handle. The fabric endbands echo the maroon accent tone of the spine label. Printed in a light terracotta shade on the title page are the Grolier Club seal and a repeat of the cover vignette. The latter is based on the bookplate of Grolier Club founding member Robert Hale. The frontispiece illustration, the 1894 Grolier Club Bookplate Exhibition invitation, serves to herald the lavish bookplate illustrations (116 color plates, 20 halftones) that grace the pages of this handsome book.

In the preface, written by Ames and Lasner, we learn that the 1894 exhibition was the first of its kind in the United States and that the Grolier Club and its members have maintained a “long interest in the art of ex-libris.” The authors state that, although bookplates had come into use to identify ownership, “for centuries bookplates have also served as visual testaments to book collectors’ personalities, passions, and legacies.” Indeed, the illustrations in *Grolier Club Bookplates Past & Present* attest to this. The bookplates, so varied in style, size, color, and typography, proclaim the individuality of the club members.

This volume speaks to not only the collectors, but also the graphic artists, engravers and printers who produced these petite works of art. Ames’s essay, “Refinement, Taste, & Book Culture: The Place of the Bookplate In Book History,” addresses a number of the artisans involved in bookplate production, as well as giving case studies of the development of bookplates for Eleanor Roosevelt and Henry Elkins Widener. Ames asserts that bookplates have an important role in the history of the book, “As works of artistry, artifacts of printing technology, and primary sources of bibliophilic identity formation, bookplates illuminate otherwise dark corners of the republic of letters.”


William E. Butler’s essay, “Bookplate Collecting & Commissioning: An Introduction,” provides an overview of the history of bookplate-collecting organizations or groups, with an emphasis on those in the United States. Should the Grolier Club bookplates kindle your interest in acquiring your own bookplate design or beginning a bookplate collection, Butler’s essay has ample information for you to move forward. Topics covered here include commissioning a bookplate, forming a bookplate collection, joining bookplate societies, and bookplate literature.


Molly Dotson’s essay, “The Curiosity of Bookplate Collecting: Irene D. Andrews Pace, Within and Beyond the Book,” shows the all-consuming passion for bookplates that can overtake collectors. Dotson states that Pace “commissioned nearly 100 artists to design nearly 300 personal ex-libris.” Using her preferred collector name, Mrs. Edmund Andrews, Pace “amassed a collection of at least 15,000 individual bookplates, plus supplemental materials, all of which now constitute one of the cornerstones of the Yale Bookplate Collection.” Dotson’s essay sets out to explain what she means by one of the “fundamental curiosities,” that is, giving away the very label that was meant to show personal possession. Through Pace’s activities, Dotson explores the material and cultural significance of bookplates as art objects and looks at collectors’ patterns of behavior.

After encountering these three well-written foundational essays, the reader is properly prepared to appreciate the bookplates of past and current Grolier Club members gathered in this volume. In the case of bookplates owned by past (deceased) members, each image is accompanied by

a brief biography and additional information, such as their book-collecting areas or details about the artists involved in creating the bookplates. The current members have given short descriptions of their bookplates, tell why they chose certain images or typefaces, mention their book-collecting interests, or elaborate on their choice of graphic artist (who is sometimes the bookplate owner). Tipped onto page 156 is a Grolier Club bookplate, allowing those who purchase this book to have the beginning of their own bookplate collection. Armed with the breadth of bookplate history and knowledge contained in this attractive book, as well as its images of stellar bookplate examples, an aspiring collector can confidently add to that initial piece. A word of caution, though, culled from Dotson’s essay: “In fact, Pace eschewed invitations to luncheons, matinees, and the like because such daytime engagements would have taken precious time away from her bookplate collecting.”

BARBARA ADAMS HEBARD was trained in bookbinding by Mark Esser at the North Bennet Street School. She is the Conservator at the Ricci Institute for Chinese-Western Cultural History. She is a Fellow of The International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, a Professional Associate of The American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works and was a long-time member of GBW.





*Frankenstein*

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# COULD YOU PLEASE SEND ME A CUSTOM SAMPLE?

BY IRIS NEVINS

**C**OULD YOU PLEASE SEND me a custom sample? Or... Just send me a “Strike-Off,” which is what it is called in the textile industry. The meaning of *Strike-off* is a print color swatch for approval. Usually we will hear that term from interior decorators, while people in the paper arts will simply say something like, “Run me off a quick sample.”

Sounds simple, right? Well, actually, no it is not! In marbling, it means setting up your size and trough the day before. It means mixing colors to match, even making paints. This is very time consuming. And those of us who marble know all too well, once these paints hit the size bath the next morning, the shades will be too dark or too light. Then, the adjustment of the colors to make them look like the color swatches the customer sent, can mean some good time spent fussing to get things right, and quite a few papers marbled, until the paper looks pretty close shade wise.

Customers who do not know the process will think it's a matter of a few minutes to run to the marbling studio and whip out a sample. How could they know otherwise, really? We have to explain this to them.

How do you handle this? I would struggle for hours sometimes, to get the sample where it would be acceptable. I'd always make at least two, because I would have to mail one. I would need a sheet for reference to do the final order... IF it got approved! Furthermore, I would usually have maybe up to ten papers that were not quite there, color and shade wise. Those would just go into stock on the

shelves, in hopes they would someday find their way into the hands of someone who loved them. Let's not forget though... sometimes we are asked to make a paper that is, well, not that attractive. Then you have gift wrap!

All too often after sending the sample, and usually paying for the tube and postage, in addition to time and expensive materials, I would get the call, saying it is very pretty, but they changed their mind. They'd like another sample, or please send another “quick strike-off” but this time, let's remove the green they asked for, and let's use blue instead. Or some people can be very creative with the color names, and ask for Lemon, Lime, Aubergine, Mint, Apricot. I'd find myself both frustrated and hungry!

The worst possible scenario with all this “please send a quick sample” business, is when you have lots of back and forth with numerous samples, and in the end they say they decided not to go with marbling after all! I am sure many working marblers can relate to this. Generally the samples are never returned even if asked for.

So the big question is how to deal with this. As a young marbler, back when the dinosaurs roamed the Earth (has it really been 45 years?) I wrote in my catalog—that I would supply free samples. I had to change that. I still send “free” samples, but they will be a #10 envelope stuffed with cuttings, showing a wide variety of patterns, and all in different colors. With a little imagination the recipient can apply, in their mind, any color to any pattern.

What about the people who are planning a large order, though? They may be a bookbinder whose customer is doing an edition run, and there should be a way for them to see what they will be getting. Fair enough. My solution, after explaining that this is not a “quick run-off,” is to charge for the sample paper and the materials used to create it, plus the shipping. I also suggest that while I am at it, why not marble several different variations, so we can minimize the back and forth shipping, and setting up to marble again and again. Pick a few different color themes. It is easier and less expensive for everyone in the long run. If it is a very large order and they actually come through with it, I would be inclined to credit the sample fee towards the order.

There is another point to mention in doing samples, which is that it is a good idea to mention that the actual order could differ slightly from the sample. It will be very close, but depending on temperature, humidity and just the mood of the “Marbling Gods” that day, shades can vary slightly, lighter or darker. If it is too way off, those papers go onto the shelf for eventual adoption by someone else. Bookbinders understand this, but often their customer does not. It is not a Xerox copy. They should be aware, too, that each paper is slightly different in little areas. The overall look, however, must be close enough so you could call them “Matched.” One bookbinder came up with a wonderful phrase I have used for decades... “Each paper is like a snowflake, each is a little different.” Another said, “It is a sign of their authenticity that there are little differences. Each is an edition of one.” Both are very true!

I hope this advice will be helpful to marblers selling their work, or trying to go into the marbling business. Hopefully it will enlighten others happening to read this, as to what an ordeal it can be to “Go run off a quick sample sheet.”

IRIS NEVINS is a self-taught marbler, and began marbling in 1978 as a hobby. Much to her surprise, bookbinders started buying her papers, and it became her full time career. She has written four books, plus reprinted a facsimile edition of *Nicholson's Manual Of The Art Of Bookbinding*, with 18 marbled samples tipped into the marbling section.

Iris also is a Celtic Harper, and Guitarist. She plays professionally, teaches both instruments and builds harps. She also makes Ancient Style and Celtic Jewelry.

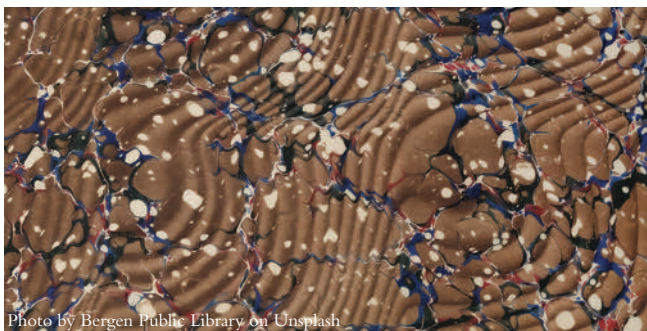
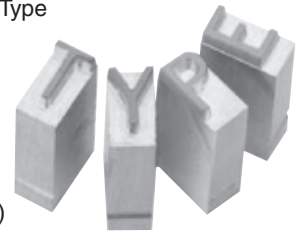


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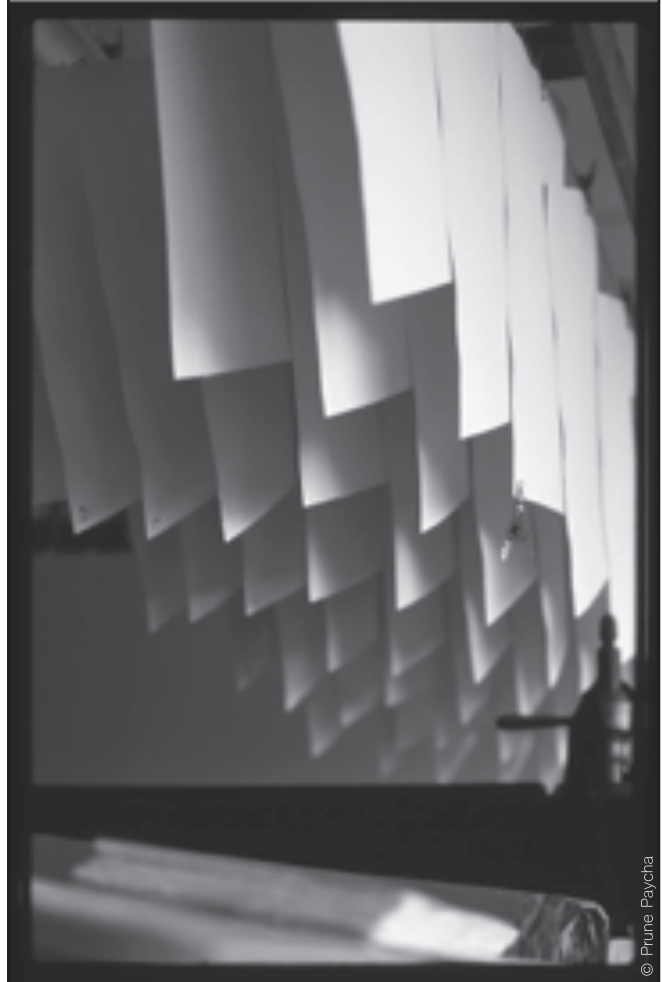
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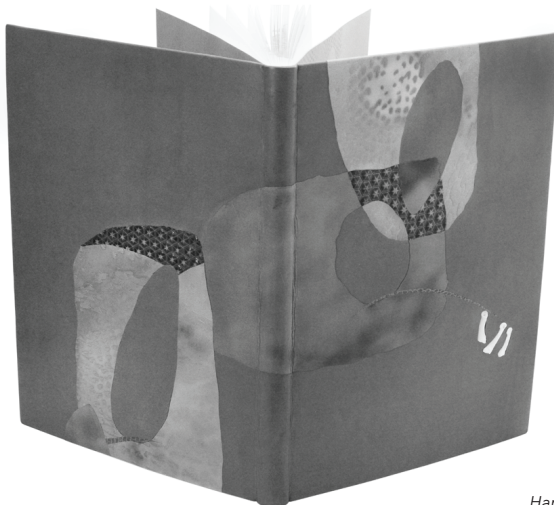
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# Standards of Excellence 2023





# Standards of Excellence 2023



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# Origami Animals

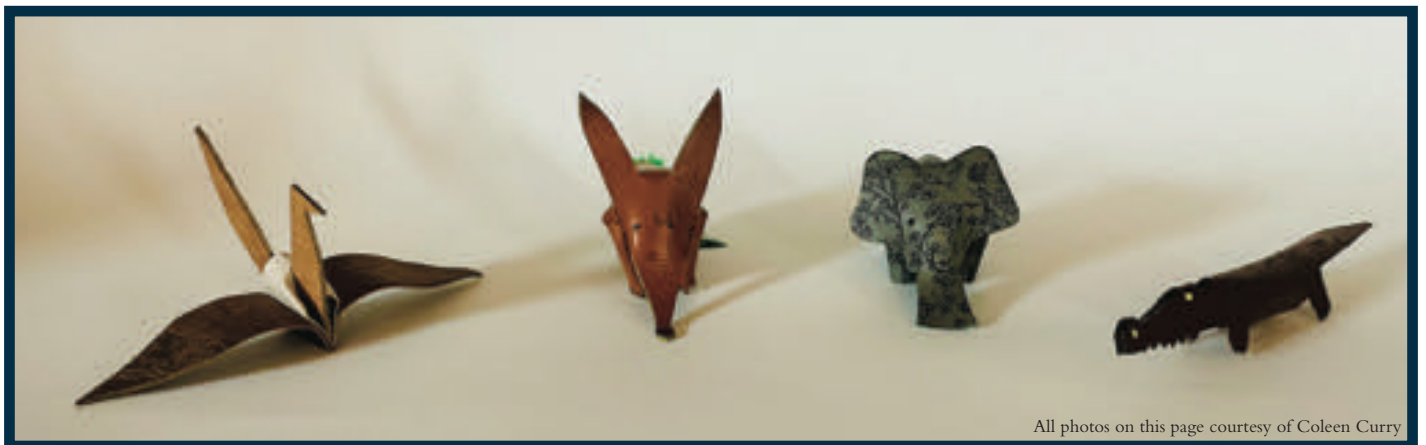
by Coleen Curry

**A** LITTLE BACKSTORY FOR the *Newsletter*. I had made a little elephant and alligator and showed them to Nicoline Meyer and Jennifer Pellechia when they took their 2-day workshop at my bindery in August—this is the one they had bid on at the GBW Standards in Atlanta last year. Jenn thought they would be great to have in the GBW auction.

I contacted each of the presenters explaining what I was going to do. Gabby sent me tattooed leather; Brien used his handmade tools to tool on leather; Jeff stamped his 'Peachey' on leather; and Steph sent me some of her Hanji.

I made:

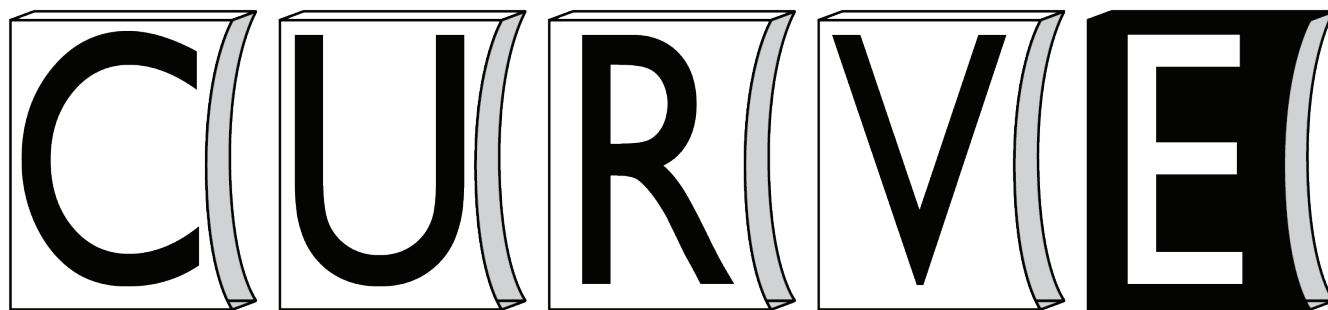
- 'Gabby' the elephant with her tattooed leather, micaceous iron oxide wash, backed with metallic garment leather and a silk tail.
- 'Brien' the fox with the tooled leather, backed with metallic garment leather and a feather tail. Edged in gold.
- 'Peachey' the alligator with stamped leather backed with goat leather, and chartreuse linen thread.
- 'Steph' the crane with Hanji backed with leather, gold leaf.



All photos on this page courtesy of Coleen Curry

# The Slipcase:

# The Folio Society



by Alice Vaughn

**T**HE DEEPER ONE DELVES into slipcase structure, the more its vast delights reveal themselves.

What is it to be? What does the client envision?

For a single book, the considerations:

- 5 piece
- One piece
- Front opening
- Back opening
- Ribbon pulls
- Back pushes
- Closures
- Triangle-wrapped thumb notches
- Overall design beyond the central structure

A slipcase for multiple books? The fun begins:

- The Shoe, essential for access to individual volumes
- No closure
- Stage door closures
- Door closures
- Garage door closures
- Secret spots
- and a feast of design opportunities.

This short exploration will concentrate on and encourage the use of what I call the *Folio Society Curve* (see image 1).

This is a favorite of mine for the housing of a single case-bound volume. Check your shelves, there is probably an example there. It features a subtle and yet functional pull grab. It easily adapts to paper sides, adding myriad design

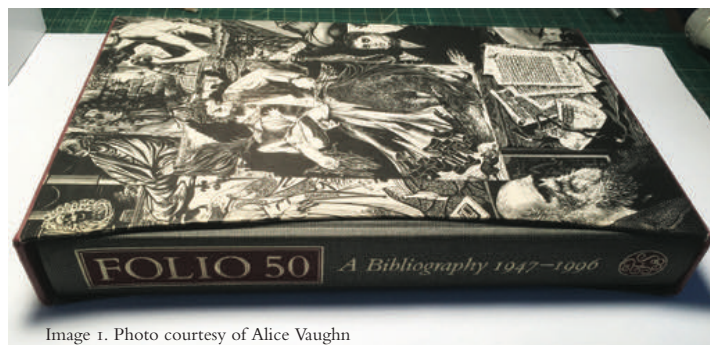


Image 1. Photo courtesy of Alice Vaughn

features, with rub-resistant bookcloth for shelving. What I love about this, and what makes it a little tricky, is that the turn-in is uncut, a clean surface unlikely to mark the book it houses.

## MISE-EN-PLACE

Cut the 5 pieces for a 5-piece slipcase. Perhaps .070 board, your choice.

Carefully measure for height and book thickness—making the width or depth one board thickness wider.

Line with paper, with the grain direction parallel to that of the spine.

And now....

## THE MARKING AND CUTTING OF THE SUBTLE CURVE

The important point is that at the middle, you do not want to have much more than ¼ inch indent. Remarkably, this is all that is needed to get purchase. I use yardstick compass points with an X-acto blade popped into one.

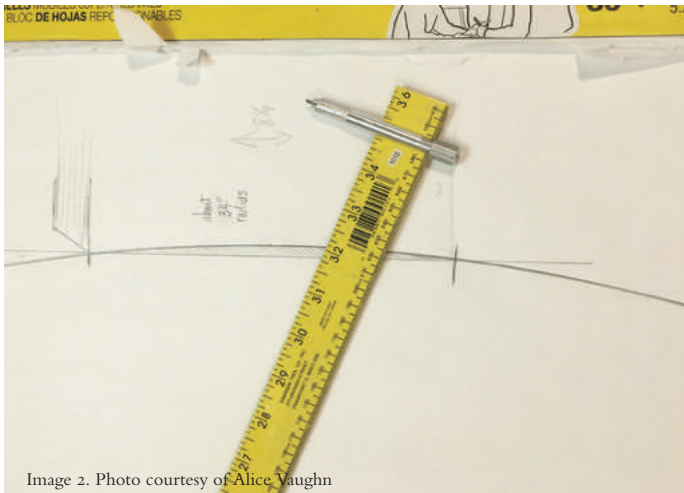


Image 2. Photo courtesy of Alice Vaughn

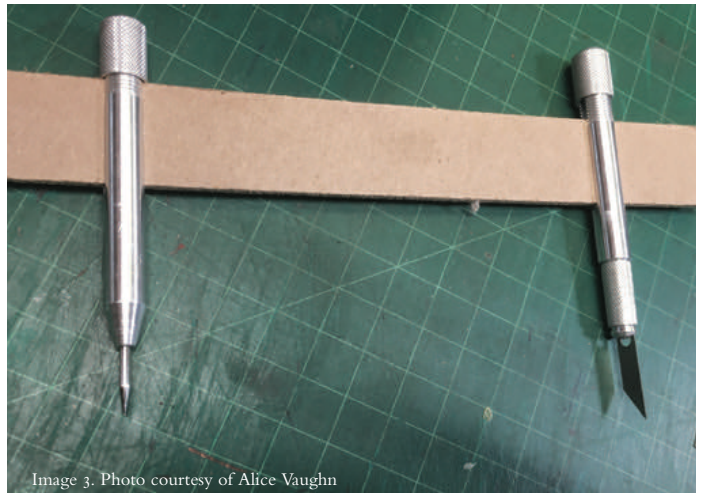


Image 3. Photo courtesy of Alice Vaughn

Then I adapt a yardstick with binders board to make it the length I need (see images 2 and 3).

(Once you have this down, try ellipses.)

The easy slippage version has bookcloth top, back and tail, with the material rolled on and ¼ inch to ½ inch wrapped on to the board sides. Top and tail pieces are tucked evenly in. Infill if needed. It is as often a simple one-piece cloth slippage covering. Time for...

#### COVERING THE SIDES

The fundamental difference from a straight-sided slippage is that the curve covering is done slowly, and the turn ins are *pasted*.

Fit and mark the turn in. Here is the important part: *p a s t e* the part to be turned in, paste across the line and let it expand. Apply PVA, or PVA-mix to the rest of the board paper or material. Yes, this works with both paper and bookcloth.

Place the material on the board, leaving the turn-in unattached, not yet turned in.

Turn on to clean paper, apply more paste if needed, or just tidy up what you have.

Too much paste will make the inside messy.

Resting the case on its back, carefully bring the turn-ins in, massaging as you go. This will allow them to stretch and expand.

No need to over stretch. Make sure the edge is adhered. Be prepared to wipe up any excess adhesive.

Repeat on other side.

The fitting. Place the book in and add the back piece board needed to make it exactly flush.

Remember to line this piece. The back spacer can be dropped in with adhesive transfer tape.

The essentials are:

- Subtle curve, grain direction parallel to spine.
- Paste and stretch the curve.
- Time and tide, *don't hurry this*.
- Simple, Elegant, Functional.

The debate about slippage titling will have to wait for another time.

ALICE VAUGHAN started bench work in London in the 1970s. She has been a GBW California Chapter member since the early 1990s and is now binding at the Hudson River Bindery, New York.



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# Gabby Cooksey on Tattooing Leather for Bookbinding

Reviewed by Holly D'Oench

**T**HOUGH SHE HAS BEEN wanting to tattoo on leather for some time, Gabby Cooksey had the perfect opportunity to begin exploring the technique when she bound a copy of *Dark Archives* in 2021. This project launched her into months of research, learning from tattoo artists, and experimentation.

Gabby delivered an enlightening talk that showed the audience the fascinating intersection between tattooing and bookbinding. Her presentation was divided into two main sections: the history of tattooing and a demonstration of her process of tattooing leather.

Beginning with a journey into the history of tattooing, Gabby detailed its social and cultural significance across different civilizations. Tattoos have held various meanings across cultures and time periods. In Maori culture, tattoos are a rite of passage and a social status marker, while in ancient Greek and Roman societies, tattoos often indicated servitude or punishment. In Japan, tattooing has been both an art form and a social taboo. Native American tribes used tattoos for ceremonial markings. The choice of tattoo placement on the body can also be affected by culture and beliefs. For instance, in the Maori culture, facial tattoos are highly significant. Sailors, on the other hand, often opted for arms and chests, communicating their life stories or beliefs through symbolic imagery. They often chose tattoos with conventional meanings, such as anchors for stability and swallows to indicate having traveled a certain number of nautical miles.

The methods of tattoo application also changed significantly over the years, from basic needles to advanced machinery. A highlight was the explanation of the 'stick and poke' method and how the depth of the needle affects the final tattoo. The mechanization of tattooing started in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, revolutionizing the art form and making it more widely accessible. There are two types of machines, rotary and coil, and both are used in the tattoo industry today.

Gabby touched on how tattooed individuals found employment in circuses, adding a visual allure to the spectacle. Following on the idea of a tattooed form being art, we learned that tattoos can be preserved from a person's body after they pass on. There are companies that provide



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this service as well as places like the Welcome Collection that have real tattoos in their possession.

After discussing how tattoos age on people, the natural next question is how they would age on leather. Gabby addressed this by sharing photos of her experiments where she placed pieces of tattooed leather in a sunny window for several months. Surprisingly, the tattoo lines held up remarkably well, even as the leather changed in color significantly over time.

In a collaboration with Sam Feinstein, extensive testing with gilding and onlays on tattooed leather was performed. No adverse effects were found and they found it is possible to gold tool over the tattooed areas as well as use onlays.

The second half of the talk was dedicated to demonstrating the process of tattooing leather. Gabby provided clear instructions and wisdom on how to tackle this work yourself; here is a brief summary of the process.

Start by preparing your leather for covering by getting all the paring done. Once this is done, copy your paring lines from the leather onto a binder's board that is slightly larger than your leather piece. Paste the leather onto this board, aligning it with the copied lines, and allow it to dry. This preparation serves as the foundation for your tattooing project.

Before tattooing, it's crucial to stencil your design onto the leather. First, print out your chosen design. To use stencil paper, start by removing the loose onion paper between the thin white sheet and the blue ink. Place your design atop the stencil paper and trace the lines with a thin ballpoint pen. This ensures the blue lines are transferred onto the white sheet. Opt for a thin pen to prevent any residual halos around your stencil. To guide you later, make crop marks on the stencil.

Once your stencil is ready, don a pair of latex gloves to maintain cleanliness. Tape your stencil onto the Davey board where you want the design to appear on your leather, using your crop marks as a guide. Apply a product like Stencil Stuff to the leather to create a thin, even layer. Lay your stencil on the leather according to the crop marks, rubbing



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it down with your gloved hand. If you're unhappy with the placement, know that removing the stencil lines can be tricky and will likely smudge with no good way of fixing it. Let the stencil dry for about five minutes but you can leave it for however long you need.

Prepare your tattoo machine by setting it to a needle depth of about 2mm. Arrange your workspace by gathering all the necessary supplies: plastic cups, ink, A&D ointment, towels, diluted green soap, a cup of water, and a copy of your design for reference.

Once your machine and workspace are set, rub a sheen of A&D ointment on the whole piece of leather. The ointment helps prevent ink from going into the leather in places you don't want.

The clean-up process starts with spraying the leather with diluted green soap from a spray bottle. Use shop towels and a brayer—or simply your hand—to lay the towel atop the tattoo and roll off as much ink as possible. For cleaning the tattoo machine, wipe off the tip with a paper towel and dip it into water while the machine is running.

After your tattoo has dried for 24 hours, inspect it for areas that may need touch-ups. Tattoo again over any areas that need it. When satisfied, you can peel the leather off the Davey board. Once peeled off, spray the back of the leather with water and remove any remaining Davey board. You're now ready to cover your book or box with your beautifully tattooed leather. After covering, apply Renaissance Wax on the tattooed portions using a rag or a q-tip. This should be the last step, as the wax seals off the leather, preventing any further absorption of water.

The talk was a lovely combination of history, art, and craftsmanship. It was not just about the art of tattooing, but also a testament to how two seemingly disparate crafts—bookbinding and tattooing—could intersect in such an engaging manner.

HOLLY D'OENCH, a painter turned bookbinder, embraced the craft in 2021 and now studies at the American Academy of Bookbinding. [BlackOakBindery@gmail.com](mailto:BlackOakBindery@gmail.com)



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# Finishing Tool Making

## An Economic Approach

by Brien Beidler

Reviewed by Nicole Alvarado

**T**HE GOAL OF THIS presentation was to show how making your own finishing tools can be more affordable. By making your own tools, Brien emphasized that you will be able to not only save money, by buying and refurbishing old or damaged finishing tools, but you can also create a unique collection of finishing tools that are all your own. Brien recommended learning additional metal working techniques by checking out past Standards presentations like: “Metal Working for Book Workers” by Jeff Altepeter (2019), “Finishing Tools” by Michael Wilcox (2008), and “Tool Repair” by Tom Conroy (2009).

Brien was the perfect opener for this Seminar. He was the right amount of enthusiasm and nerves, resulting in the most attention-grabbing demo I may have ever experienced.



Not to mention that his work with finishing tools is beyond impressive. He generously shared his techniques and tips for making your own finishing tools, from using what is available to you from your local hardware store to all the high-tech equipment that he has slowly invested in for a full production of various designs and shaped finishing tools. He went over different compositions of finishing tools and the pros and cons of each. For example, he cautioned against using stainless steel or aluminum.

He started off with stock-reduction tool making, highlighting that anyone can create a cool-looking finishing tool with a few tools. Recommended tools include a small vise with protective jaw inserts (copper, aluminum, or horse butt leather), a hack saw for cutting down stock (or tapering if using a wider stock), files (one coarse for stock reduction and finer ones for shaping and polishing the face of the tool), a Sharpie or Micron pen to draw your design, 3M microfinishing film sheets of decreasing microns (increasing grit) for further polishing, and a strop made of horse butt (or kangaroo leather per Jeff Peachey’s recommendation), for the final polishing of the face. Brien also discussed the ideal shape for the tang, to ensure a securely seated tool and increased longevity of the handle.

Brien then proceeded to demonstrate making a simple tool. Starting with brass 360 half-hardened stock of at least a ¼ inch square rod—he typically works both ends of the rod—Brien marked his desired length of the tool and scribed a line on all sides to indicate where to cut once tapering the

tang is completed. Using the coarse file, he tapered the tang up to two thirds of the way up the brass stock, working on opposite sides to achieve an even taper. Next, he carved notches on the lower third, using a 00 checkering file (a triangle file also works well). The tapered brass rod is then cut along the scribe line with the hacksaw. The face is filed and lightly polished to a shine. Further polishing with microfinishing film allows the slightest curve to form, creating a belly that produces a better impression. Your design can then be drawn onto the face, and stock reduction can begin. Brien recommends a long taper of your design so that when using the tool, you can more easily sight where the design will land.

He shared with us several useful tips, including how to drill a hole in your tool face to make a more complex design using a spring-loaded center punch and an Archimedes hand drill, using Japanese screw punch bits to create a set of various sized perfect circles, and using a sharpened finishing nail punch to make annular (concentric) circles.

#### Additional Tips:

1. Start simple so as to not get overwhelmed or discouraged
2. Don't use stock smaller than 3/16" as it will cool too fast
3. Doming the face is more important when working with 1/2" stock or larger
4. Use square or rectangular brass stock to increase heating surface and for better bite when seating the tang into the handle
5. Use Transfer Magic for computer designs
6. Files only cut on the push!
7. Maintain directionality when filing/polishing to have a smoother-appearing finish
8. Orient your hacksaw for a pull cut for more stability
9. Corners can be sharp! Polish/file off burs except for the lower inch of the taper
10. Turn the vise rather than the graver when engraving
11. Use your nondominant hand to guide your tools i.e., files, gravers, etc.
12. Maintain an upright posture whenever possible to reduce neck and back problems
13. Use dowels for handles
14. Make a flat side of the handle to prevent tool from rolling off the table (should be the bottom to the top nick of the tool)

After the break, we returned to the presentation room where Brien had set up for engraving using a similar setup to Michael Wilcox's 2008 presentation, with a leather pillow and a wooden vise to hold and rotate the finishing tool while maintaining a safe distance from the tool face. He emphasized the importance of stretching and led us through his routine of stretches before continuing. Brien spent some time talking about scribes and the different shapes



that he uses depending on which set up he is using. For his demo, he engraved an acorn to have its distinctive cap line, shadows, and crosshatching on the cap. He started with the cap line, cutting left to right and then right to left on the face to create an even line. He then cut the shadows on the body of the acorn starting shallow to deep, ending at the cap line. The crosshatching, which was the most difficult of the techniques he showed us, requires extra care and control as to not slip and cut somewhere undesired. This was difficult because making this design element requires cutting through already cut lines, which hardens the brass increasing the likelihood of slipping. To avoid this, Brien annealed the brass prior to engraving. Once he's finished engraving the tool, he adds a patina to the surface, as well as a nick in the tang to indicate the top of the tool.

Brien next showed us recordings of how he makes his handles on a woodturning lathe, then demoed how to fit the finishing tools into the handles. Brien uses a small drill bit to create a pilot hole that goes about a quarter to a third of the way down the handle. He then uses a drill bit that is roughly the diameter of the finishing tool at the top of the tang to drill out part of the pilot hole. He soaks his handles for at least 10 minutes before drying off and tapping in the finishing tool. This is when the tapered tang and cut teeth along the tang go to work to grab hold of the handle. Since the wood can become rough after soaking, Brien recommended some light sanding of the handle once it has dried, to create a smooth finish.

Many jokes were made (largely by Brien) and the inspiration to make our own finishing tools could be felt in the room. Brien graciously donated all the tools he made at the presentation and in preparation for the presentation, including his setup for engraving, to the live auction.

NICOLE ALVARADO is a Book & Paper Conservator and has been at the UCLA Library Preservation & Conservation Department since September 2022. She can be reached at: [alvarano1@library.ucla.edu](mailto:alvarano1@library.ucla.edu).



# Cutting-Edge Legacy: Jeff Peachey's Bookbinding Brilliance at Guild Standards 2023

Reviewed by Jainabah Phillips

“GOING ONCE, GOING twice, SOLD!” With the slap of a palm on the podium, Jeff Peachey's Lifting Kit was mine. Seated amongst eight other fellow Guild of Bookworker scholarship awardees and before no fewer than one hundred book working professionals, I began to reflect on Jeff Peachey's profound legacy.

As a budding bookbinder, I wanted to learn who's who within the craft, seeking workshops and to source an ever-growing list of new tools for my bindings. My favorite style leans towards full leather bindings, but I knew that I needed more time to learn the ins and outs of the various methods. Committed to reproducing the bindings I knew while I learned, I spent my free time researching what I could find on leather works, eventually coming across the name “Jeff Peachey” on a web search.

According to his website, [peacheytools.com/about-1](http://peacheytools.com/about-1), he strives to make the highest quality bookbinding and leather working tools possible. It's true. He indeed invents and makes the finest paring knives in the industry, to the extent that many binders don't refer to the tools by technical name, instead calling their investment a “Peachey.” Fast forward to the Guild of Book Workers Standards 2023 and I'm in the same room as him!

“Excuse me, Mr. Peachey?” I asked a gentleman, politely tapping him on the shoulder.

“Jim! Jim Croft!” he said, hand extended while turning to face me. After begging forgiveness and introducing

myself, I saw the face that I recognized from the website approaching us.

“See! I told you he was around here somewhere!” Jim exclaimed as Jeff joined our circle, the two men greeting and patting each other on the shoulder.

Inventors are a special. Double that with the fact that the art of bookbinding is so niche and you have an expert, someone committed to solving your problems before you encounter them. Layer those two characteristics with the desire to share their knowledge and you have a leader, but Jeff Peachey is something more; he's enigmatic. The fight that others put up during the Live Auction for his items proved that. Jeff Peachey is a bookbinding legend, forever cemented in American history.





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“I just got my first Peachey! Oh, and I’m writing an article about you for the Guild,” I confessed, hoping to keep our conversation going.

“Which one?” he asked curiously.

“The M2 Hybrid,” I shared as he nodded in acknowledgment, my excitement bubbling at the exclusive one-on-one. I wasn’t fishing for information for that article at that moment. I simply relished our short time together; me, nodding at his words, unable to wipe the smile off of my face. Standards 2023 wasn’t just offering me an opportunity to write about him, or attend his presentation titled, “Fifty Ways to Reattach Your Boards,” I was getting an exclusive, on the spot, meet and greet with the legendary man himself!

The following day I jealously watched another scholarship awardee assist Jeff during his presentation. She did very little, assisting him by scouring unbleached muslin by simmering it in soda ash, but it was clear that I wanted to be that person. Sitting front and center, I took notes, photos and videos of them both. (I use the word jealous loosely!) He suggested literature, including Sydney Cockerell’s 1958 publishing of “The Repairing of Books” and a journal from the Institute of Conservation titled, “An elegant method of board reattachment,” comedically pausing from time to time to ask his assistant to check on the muslin. Continuing with his demonstration, he shared his 50/50 mix of fish gelatin and wheat paste for spine glue, suggesting that the fish gelatin be tossed after use. A nifty board with a slot for inserting text blocks while tooling covers was demonstrated; not his invention, but simple enough for an ambitious bookbinder to replicate. Other simple tools like an EMT scalpel were discussed as well before more comedic relief as he introduced a picture of Rodger Payne bent over a lying press with a series of questions.

“What’s with the tiny, knee high lying press? Pots in the window, pots on the mantle, pots in the fire? Books on the floor?” We all burst into laughter before folding over at his final question, “Which bookbinder in the audience has a similar taste (to Mr. Payne) in footwear?” As he shared an image of a fellow bookmaker’s black leather slides and socks. Finally, he concluded with an excellent demonstration of

board reattachment, equipping me and my mentor, Ramon Townsend of the Colonial Bindery with information that we would value so much, we’d quietly commit to investing in his Lifting Kit, at his mention that it would be in the auction.

“We gotta get that Lifting Kit, Jainabah,” Ramon declared with conviction.

So, on that last evening during the Live Auction, my heart hummed as the bidding began. With an upward sweep, I’d lift our number to the auctioneer, eventually holding it up as the price increased from \$300 to \$400 and upward until the roaring applause met our small table in the corner, the other attendees impressed with our determination. Sifting through the box of items, we proudly smiled at each other, realizing that we underpaid for all of what we received.

Colleen Curry crafted small leather ornaments as spirit animals, Jeff Peachey’s being an alligator. It seemed appropriate considering that I grew up in and traveled from Florida that I’d have some sort of connection. It was through the Guild of Book Workers Standards 2023 that I was able to meet the legendary man who has inspired so many to continue crafting. His technical aptitude, an inspiration for those who seek to not just craft books, but to solve the problems that future bookbinders, like myself, may encounter. People like him serve as the vanguard of this craft, ensuring that those who follow may create more easily, more fluidly and if they’re repairing, that they do so with the proper tools and information.

Thank you to Jeff Peachey for all that he does and thank you to all who support the Guild of Book Workers. It is through your continued efforts that the knowledge we collect has an outlet to power the next generation of bookbinders, conservators, craftspersons and more. I look forward to attending Standards 2024 and invite you to join with the hope that you may also meet someone as inspiring and influential to the science of bookbinding as Jeff Peachey.

JAINABAH PHILLIPS’ dream is to become a full time bookbinder. Visit [journeymadejournals.com](http://journeymadejournals.com) to see her work. She lives in Florida with her mother, cousin and 15-year-old Beagle mix, Oobie. [jainaba.phillips@gmail.com](mailto:jainaba.phillips@gmail.com).



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# “Paper, Books, Art, Community: My Journey with Hanji”

## Steph Rue’s presentation at GBW Standards

Reviewed by Anne McLain

While I was already familiar with Steph Rue’s name within the book arts community, I had not yet seen a great deal of her work. It was therefore a real pleasure to hear her talk about not only her materials and processes, in bookmaking and papermaking, but also the community she has fostered around those processes.

Steph spoke about growing up in Cleveland, Ohio. Not having learned how to speak Korean, she felt disconnected from her heritage. But she did lean into the arts, music in particular, playing piano and later oboe. Carving her own reeds foreshadowed the hand skills and attention to detail that would later be so necessary for bookbinding and papermaking.

After completing her BA at Stanford, Steph’s interests took her to the University of Iowa and its Center for the Book. There she earned an MFA, studying papermaking and learning the foundations of multiple traditions with Timothy Barrett. A 2015–2016 Fulbright Research Grant took her to South Korea, where she studied traditional Korean bookbinding, papermaking, and printing, and got hands-on experience in conservation labs. I was especially interested in her account of her hanji apprenticeship at Jangjibang, which is a small paper mill in Gapyeong, Gyeongji Province. Her teacher was a 4<sup>th</sup> generation papermaker named Jang Seongwoo whose father, Jang Yonghoon, was designated ‘Important Intangible Cultural Property No. 117’ in 2010 by South Korea’s Cultural Heritage Administration. Steph kept a blog during the

grant period, which I highly recommend exploring. It’s a fascinating account of her learning journey, accompanied by really beautiful photography. The whole process of making hanji is so arduous, before you even get to sheet formation, that it honestly all feels like magic.

Steph outlined the steps of making a Korean book, which I won’t go into here as her handout and other sources she’s compiled are available (see Resources below). A fun sidenote is that she uses food-grade wheat starch from the Korean grocery store in her bookbinding. As someone who’s into details, I loved hearing about her trip to the workshop of the woodblock carver, Bak Youngduk (who I believe made her own carved block that she demonstrated



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the cover burnishing on). Like all these components, those blocks are their own beautiful examples of craftsmanship.

We segued into an introduction of Steph's recent project, commissioned by the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco. The museum's collection of *bojagi*, which are traditional Korean wrapping cloths often made with fabric scraps, was an influence on the work. Her patchwork *bojagi* quilt is made with found bible pages and hanji, inkjet-printed with images of generations of women in her family and found bible pages, and is dyed with persimmon juice. Steph spoke movingly of working on the piece during the cluster of violent attacks on Asian women in Atlanta. It's a beautiful piece called 'Daughter' and the quilt was conceived as a letter to her 5-year-old daughter:

우리 딸, 너는 안전하게 보호받을 자격이 있어. ~엄마

which roughly translates as, "My daughter, you deserve to be safe. ~Mom." A colleague of mine had the privilege of seeing it in person at the museum, and I wish I had too. It looks amazing. There was a lovely short film made about it that can be viewed on the museum's YouTube page (see below).

The last thing Steph talked about, and probably my favorite bit, was her series of hanji workshops for members of the local Korean diaspora, for which she received a grant from the City of Sacramento Office of Arts & Culture. This endeavor is generously documented in 'Field Notes,' the blog portion of her website, which is worth a read. It was touching to hear her talk about the wide array of folks of all ages who showed up for these workshops, their enthusiasm for the process, making connections, some sharing initial hesitation and vulnerability about being there. The thoughtfully-prepared survey questions she had them all answer on scraps of hanji had answers both funny and poignant. She spoke of this hoped-for connection in the first post for the blog, handwritten on a piece of hanji the night before the first class and photographed. The note ended with "I feel at home when I make paper. Maybe if I



invite others (who perhaps also are looking for belonging), together we can build community around HANJI"

It struck me, as I was writing this, that I felt a tiny bit of all of what she talks about in that 'note to self' when anticipating my first trip to a Standards..... "excited, nervous, hopeful, anxious." Being in that big room with presenters and attendees, that are talented on both a details level and a big-picture level was intense and comforting at the same time. The book arts community I experienced there are people passionate about what they do, generous in the sharing of it, helpful about making connections, and about bringing more folks into the book arts community. The room almost felt like it was vibrating from all that fantastic energy, and I am grateful to have been there for it all.

#### RESOURCES

Video: Making Hanji and "Daughter"

Steph's notes from the Standards presentation: [bit.ly/gbw-st2023-rue](https://bit.ly/gbw-st2023-rue).

Link to 'Field Notes' about the hanji workshops on her website: [stephrue.com/fieldnotes](https://stephrue.com/fieldnotes)

ANNE MCLAIN is a graduate of the North Bennet Street School's Hand Bookbinding program and currently works as a book conservation technician at Harvard's Widener Library.



# New Books and Upcoming Conferences by Beth Lee

## NEW BOOK: *THE HIDDEN FACTOR*

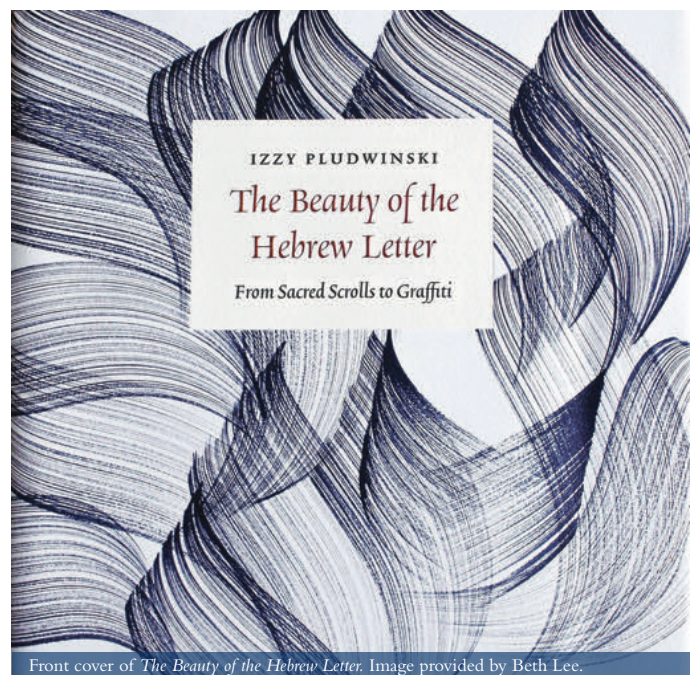
I'm eagerly anticipating Steven Skaggs' new book, *The Hidden Factor*. Published by MIT Press, the book will be out on November 21. Who could not be intrigued by the description: "An exquisitely illustrated introduction to the gestural mark in the designed world, exploring the tension between marks, which are felt, and images and words, which are conceptual." Any discussion of the way that marks combine with image and word is, or certainly ought to be, a matter of interest to calligraphers.

Steven Skaggs is an engaging writer, and he's been thinking about mark-making for a good while now. His 2001 article in *Letter Arts Review* (Vol. 16, No. 4) was an important one for me to read at that time. In it, he described in eloquent detail the problem of Western calligraphy as an art discipline, laying out the historical roots and causes of the rift between craft and artistic expression, and pointing out the reasons that this rift has not been problematic in ceramics or photography. His explanation pointed a way forward for Western calligraphy in the art world, and it gave me a reason to look past pen angles and serif shapes to the bigger picture. That's why I'm looking forward to reading his new book.

## NEW BOOK: *THE BEAUTY OF THE HEBREW LETTER: FROM SACRED SCROLLS TO GRAFFITI*

In his new book, *The Beauty of the Hebrew Letter*, Izzy Pludwinski showcases lettering art from such diverse sources

as medieval sacred manuscripts to modern abstract work to street graffiti. Other books on the Hebrew lettering concentrate on illuminated manuscripts and scrolls or the construction of the Hebrew alphabet, but I have not seen another book that addresses the full spectrum of Hebrew lettering. The range of calligraphic expression is truly breathtaking. The book is published by Brandeis University Press.





Front cover of *The Beauty of the Hebrew Letter*. Image provided by Beth Lee.

## LETTERING ARTS CONFERENCES IN 2024

The 40<sup>th</sup> annual calligraphy & lettering arts conference—and the first in-person conference in five years—will be held at St. Ambrose University (SAU) in Davenport, Iowa during the week of June 22–29, 2024. SAU was the home of Father Edward Catich, author of *The Origin of the Serif*, and his extensive archives are housed there. The book, published in 1979, revolutionized ideas about how Trajan Roman capitals were constructed and has been a major influence on the calligraphy community ever since. There is still time to register for the conference. The scope of the week-long and half-week classes is wide and interesting. They are described in detail online. Visit [calligraphyconference.org](http://calligraphyconference.org) to be directed to the website.

IAMPETH will hold its 75<sup>th</sup> annual conference the week of July 1–6, 2024, in San Antonio, Texas. Registration usually begins in early March. Check the website for updates: [iampeth.com](http://iampeth.com).

BETH LEE is a book artist and freelance calligrapher. She holds a fine arts degree in graphic design, and has taught calligraphy and book arts for more than 30 years. Her work may be found in university and private collections around the US.



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## CONTENT SUBMISSION DEADLINES FOR UPCOMING NEWSLETTER PUBLICATIONS

*January 1st* for the February 2024 Issue (No. 272)

*March 1st* for the April 2024 Issue (No. 273)

*May 1st* for the June 2024 Issue (No. 274)

*July 1st* for the August 2024 Issue (No. 275)

*September 1st* for the October 2024 Issue (No. 276)

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