



ANN FRELLSEN
LAURA S. YOUNG AWARD

BY PRISCILLA A. SPITLER

IF YOU HAVE ATTENDED the Guild of Book Workers' Standards of Excellence Seminars over the years, you have probably been met with the cheerful smile of Ann Frellsen. Since joining GBW in the early 1990s and as a 1995 charter member of the Guild's SE Chapter, Ann has actively participated in our organization. She is now being recognized for her years of service with the 2023 Guild of Book Workers' Laura S. Young Award.

Until her retirement in 2017, Ann Frellsen was the Book and Paper Collections Conservator for 27 years at the Library Preservation Office at Emory University, Woodruff Library, in Decatur, Georgia. The training that led her to this position had been built on years of hands-on experience, a rarity today, that culminated in focused bench work and program development in library preservation, repair and conservation, and disaster preparedness.

Born in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in 1956 to a military family, Ann was used to traveling. It was natural for her to follow a career path that took her to Louisiana, Hawaii, Rochester, NY, and finally Decatur, GA, a suburb of Atlanta. An artist in ceramics and glasswork, Ann earned a degree in Studio Arts in 1982 from Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge. Work framing fine art in Hawaii qualified her for employment at *Light Impressions* in Rochester, NY, at a time when the company was increasing their conservation framing services. While in Rochester, Ann continued study in glass sculpture at the School for American Craftsmen, and received a Masters degree in Fine

Arts from RIT in 1987. In 1990, she was hired at Emory University's Woodruff Library. There, she was trained at the bench by Debra McKern in conservation and library preservation, in order to teach students library book repair.

At Emory, Ann was encouraged to seek further, short-term training in production library repair and box making to house rare books. She applied methods that she learned at the University of Connecticut and the University of California at Berkeley to the Woodruff Library preservation and conservation department. Ann also increased the full-time bindery staff and added part-time student employees, whom she mentored in the conservation lab. Her studio arts background aided in the tactile understanding of various mediums, materials, and three-dimensional objects when she established a program for the rehousing and care of the library's special collections books and manuscripts. Her art framing experience contributed to her ability to professionally display library holdings and traveling shows, including the Guild of Book Workers' 2003 *In Flight* and 2009 *Marking Time* traveling exhibitions.

As a GBW member living in the southern United States, Ann took part in the important revival years of the Southeast Chapter, which, though established in 1995, had experienced a lull in activity. Starting in 2001, Ann was Chair of the SE Chapter for over two years until Anna Embree became Chair and Ann the Programs and Events Chair, a seat she held through 2011. She first informed her Chapter members with news and publicity via printed

newsletters. Later communication became more efficient with the advent of the international Book Arts Listserv, followed by the GBW Listserv, and with the growing use of email announcements. SE Chapter workshops drew attendees from long distances, with visiting artists such as Karen Hanmer and Alicia Bailey. Workshops even featured international book artists, including Martin Frost from England to do fore-edge painting, and John and Joy Tonkin of Australia to teach miniature books and box work. Workshops were held in the Jones Room at the Woodruff Library.



Photo courtesy of Ann Frellsen

Most importantly, Ann Frellsen served GBW as Library Chair from 2011 to 2019. Under her tenure, she furthered the conversion of the recorded Standards presentations from a video format to compact disks, which are now transitioning to digital streaming. From afar in Decatur GA, Ann lent out these Standards presentations to GBW members, as well as other library books and resources from the Guild's Library at the University of Iowa Libraries. Researching the provenance of books in the GBW collection, Ann discovered that many of them were bound by historically important Guild members, like Edith Diehl, Bill Anthony (and his students), and Gary Frost. In 2022, the GBW library was incorporated into the permanent collection of the University of Iowa Libraries.

Ann's work through Emory's Library Preservation Office required supervision of nine libraries in the University system. It put her training in disaster preparedness to work, and confirmed her belief that each emergency situation builds unique hands-on experience. Earning a reputation in disaster response, Ann was invited to help salvage damaged and wet collections at university and public libraries in the southeastern United States following Hurricane Katrina in 2005. She even went as far as Puerto Rico after Hurricanes Maria and Irma.

When sent to Italy for an intensive study of a 16th century wooden boards binding at the Montefiascone Conservation Project, Ann returned to Emory prepared to treat important

wooden boards bindings in the Pitts Theology Library's Reformation collection of books from 1520-1560. Many of these bindings are exhibited at the library, seen by GBW members attending last year's Standards meeting in Decatur.

Not only a GBW member, Ann Frellsen has been a

member of other professional book and library associations. The American Institute of Conservation (AIC) awarded her with the Conservation Advocacy Award in 2017. She has attended numerous annual Paper and Book Intensives as a student, but also as an instructor, when she taught *The Book Doctor is In*. But Ann says she has favored her membership in the Guild of Book Workers for its broader interest in book



Photo courtesy of Ann Frellsen

arts, in addition to

library preservation and conservation. Her association with GBW members has been more than professional, and it has contributed to life-long friendships.

Upon retirement, Ann worked in private conservation practice and taught bookbinding classes, but that slowed down after the 2020 pandemic. Today, she is a trainer for the Georgia Heritage Responders and the AIC's National Heritage Responders. She also continues volunteer work to preserve collections at the Robert C. Williams Museum of Papermaking, which, last year, held a wonderful reception and open house for GBW members during the 2022 Standards of Excellence Seminars in Georgia.

Congratulations, Ann, for this well-deserved Laura S. Young Award, for your service to the Guild of Book Workers!

PRISCILLA SPITLER has specialized in fine binding and edition work for over forty years. She has been a GBW member since 1983 and received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Guild in 2015.