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FRIDAY NIGHT FORUM
PROVIDENCE '04

Hand Trimming Book Edges

Question:

How to successfully hand trim or cut the edges of a text block when no plow or guillotine is available.

Solution:

Usually the text block is placed on a board and a metal straight edge is clamped into position on top, sandwiching the text block in between. The text block must be carefully positioned: the edge to be trimmed off is left exposed and the spine edge left off of the board, particularly if the "swell" from the sewing is pronounced.

Then the edge is trimmed off with a sharp knife. While cutting, the knife must be kept absolutely vertical and perpendicular to the surface of the board, which can be difficult. Any deviation or angling of the knife will result in a text block that is "out of square", which is a nuisance and an aggravation.

Two useful tips come from observing the Japanese paper conservators at work, who generally use wooden straight edges and moon type knives.

Tip #1:

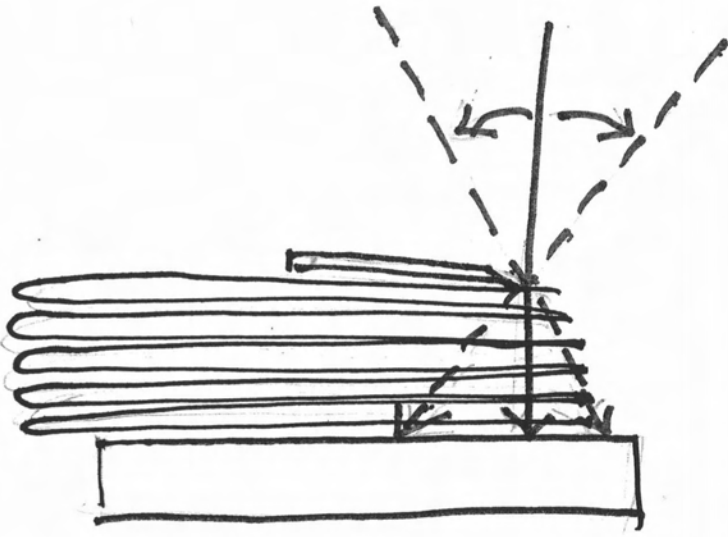
Instead of using a metal straight edge with a narrow profile, use a wooden board with a wider profile as a guide. The wider edge of the board is a better support and guide for the knife, keeping it consistently vertical and preventing any angling.

Tip #2:

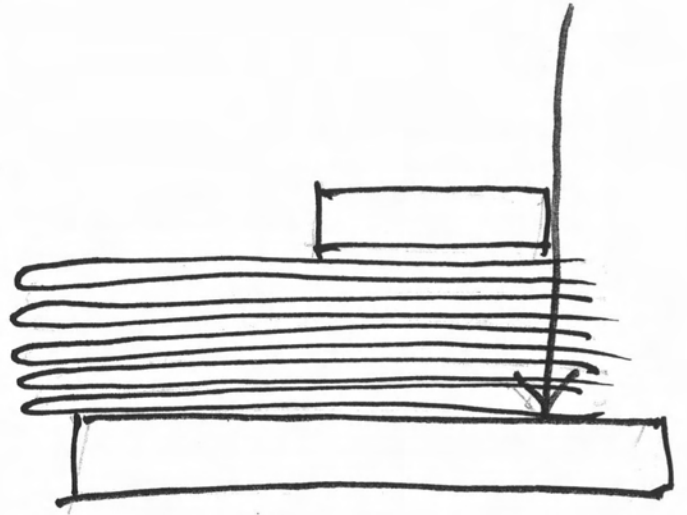
Instead of a knife with a pointed blade, use a knife with a rounded blade, such as a "moon" knife, or a French paring knife, or even a surgical knife with a #23 blade. The rounded blade gives a longer cutting edge that can be rolled as it draws along.

With a little practice, quite good results can be obtained even without a plow or a guillotine.

#1

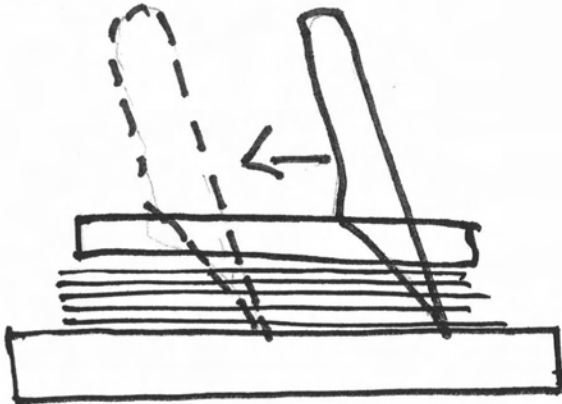


METAL
STRAIGHT
EDGE
SUPPORT

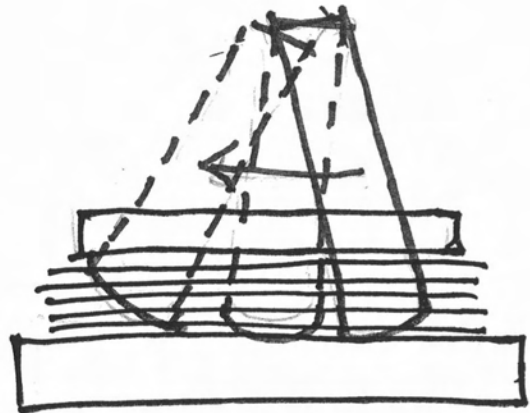


WOODEN
BOARD
SUPPORT

#2



POINTED
BLADE



ROUNDED
BLADE

TRIMMING EDGES

