

Gary Frost

Recipient of The GBW Lifetime Achievement Award
2010

Gary Frost was a key player during that pivotal period in the '70s when the book-binding field turned its attention from the traditional focus on the decoration of the book to the new fascination with the structure of the book. Gary's artistic talents created distinctive detailed line drawings of structures and meticulously crafted models that caught the attention of the book world and brought these new interests to the fore. Eventually these interests in structure were to play a major role in developing the new specialty of book conservation and the emerging specialty of artists' books.



In 1969, fresh from obtaining a Master of Fine Arts from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Gary joined the staff of the Newberry Library in the conservation department under the direction of Paul Banks. Gary became the supervisor of Paul's new conservation lab. As such, he was responsible for the management of the library's conservation facility and the evolution of its practices, including the treatment of the research library materials, the conservation of historical bindings, and the design of rebinding structures. Under Paul and Gary, the Newberry became the cradle of the new thinking about conservation practices. It attracted an impressive group of talented young people, many of whom went on to hold prominent, influential positions elsewhere in the country.

In 1981 Gary moved to New York City to help Paul start a Graduate Program in Library Preservation and Conservation in the School of Library Service at Columbia University. As an Assistant Professor, Gary was responsible for developing and operating the training facility, and for providing instruction in the conservation treatment of book materials. After ten eventful years the Columbia program moved to a new home in Texas, at the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the University of Texas in Austin. In 1992 Gary joined the Columbia/Texas program as an Adjunct Professor, again in charge of developing a training lab, and teaching conservation treatment. During that period in Austin, he also worked

with Craig Jensen at BookLab Inc., a company noted for its high quality edition binding that developed a library conservation facility. In 1999 Gary left Texas and moved to Iowa to take up his present position as Conservator at the University of Iowa Libraries in Iowa City, becoming an Instructor in its School of Library and Information Science as well, his third such program since his early days at the Newberry.

Along the way, Gary served a ten-year stint from '83 -'93 as a Co-Director of PBI, the Paper and Book Intensive. PBI, a summer program of educational workshops and lectures in the book arts,

always had an impressive roster of participants. In addition, Gary worked briefly in private practice as a consultant to various institutions, including the National Library of Venezuela.

Throughout his career, Gary has applied his talents to a wide variety of challenges in the book field, leaving his mark and influencing many. Gary has spoken frequently, taught widely, and written extensively, particularly in regard to his forte on historical structures and modern applications. He has also often been involved in an amazing variety of projects such as cleaning up after a flood on the Mississippi, dealing with the aftermath of hurricane Katrina, and preserving historical libraries in Arequipa, Peru. Above all, Gary has always asked questions – unflaggingly and unflinchingly – about the whys of book practices in the past, and now about the fate of the book in the electronic future. His current website is www.futureofthebook.com.

Gary is a rare bird who over four decades has become a monumental personality in the book world. For his many achievements he merits the GBW Lifetime Achievement Award... and hopefully he is not finished yet.

Betsy Palmer Eldridge
Research and Article