FEATURE ARTICLE

Paper & Book Arts in Mexico
by Jillian M. Sico

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www.guildofbookworkers.org

Please visit the website to become a member. Membership is open to all interested persons and includes a print copy of this Newsletter, among many other benefits.

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Hello Members:

This issue features a fantastic recount of papermaking in Mexico, submitted by Jillian Sico. We also have a guest commentary by Ken Gilbert, recollecting memorable referrals. Beth Curren submitted her view on the CODEX fair—as an exhibitor; I would add that being an attendee would be memorable for any member of this organization! (Guilty: I always go...)

We also have an update from MP Bogan on the 'Standards' Seminar: who the presenters are (did you guess from the cover?), and a general idea of the Tours. Philadelphia will be fantastic.

The Photo Essay continues. There were fewer submissions this issue, with the theme of "MY BENCH". Thanks to all members who participated! The theme for the next issue is:

MY FAVORITE TOOL

Throw an old editor a bone, submit a photo of your favorite tool!

Emily K. Bell continues her series on 'Structural and Material Clues to Binding History' with a discussion on Spine Shaping and Lining. We also hear from regular contributors Iris Nevins, who has a new booklet out, and Beth Lee, with a calligraphic miscellany. There is a book review from Barbara Adams Hebard on the title *The Privately Printed Bible: Private & Fine Press Editions of Biblical Texts in the British Isles and North America, 1892-2000* by Ronald D. Patkus.

Lastly, below are two items that I can't help but plug: the OPEN • SET competition (disclosure: I am the Exhibitions Coordinator), and Bookbinder Barbie. OPEN • SET registration closes May 1, so if you plan to register, do so now! Bookbinder Barbie on the "ultimate bookish road trip" is pure fun. Let Liz know when you can host her for a couple of days this summer!

And don't forget: May 25 is Towel Day. Enjoy the longer daylight, - Lang Ingalls, Editor

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If interested in hosting, please email Liz McHugh at exmchugh@gmail.com for details by April 30th.
NOTICES from Christine Ameduri & Cara Schlesinger, Journal Co-editors:
Submissions for the 2019 Guild of Book Workers Journal are now closed, but we welcome queries and submissions for the 2020 issue. Please contact the editors at journal@guildofbookworkers.org.

Please consider joining the GBW Journal Honorary Publishers' Circle to support the Journal and other Guild publications. For information, contact Cara Schlesinger at journal@guildofbookworkers.org.

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A merry triumverate of past GBW Presidents, whose combined IQs about all things book arty, for now still exceed their ages!

Pictured are Caroline Schimmel, Betsy Eldridge and Mary Schlosser

CHAPTER REPORTS

LONE STAR :: Chair Tish Brewer reports
The chapter board is now taking nominations for the positions of chapter chair and events coordinator. Please contact the current chair if you are interested or would like to nominate someone. We are happy to answer any questions about these rewarding volunteer positions!

DELAWARE VALLEY :: Chair Jennifer Rosner reports
The Delaware Valley Chapter has been busy this winter. We held our annual bowling party in February and had a good turnout. Val Kremer taught a Fast, Friendly, Free Workshop on structures that she made by reverse-engineering interesting mailed advertisements. We will have a workshop on March 23 with Thomas Parker Williams on Animated Structures, and in April we will have another Fast, Friendly, Free Workshop on a Coptic sewing technique with Rosae Reeder. In May we are planning a workshop with Tara O’Brien on the many types of pamphlets. All this, and planning for Standards this fall, too!

ROCKY MOUNTAIN :: Co-chair Karen Jones reports
In Denver this year, the Chapter is sponsoring classes on surface decoration. At right, the class shows off work completed during Kim Hetherington’s workshop, "Emboss/Deboss". This introduction to surface decoration for book artists will be followed by several more classes this year. Lang Ingalls will be teaching "Leather Inlays and Onlays" and Madeleine Durham will be teaching her unique paste paper technique. Additionally, our chapter will have a booth at the Gathering of the Guilds, a craft fair sponsored by the Colorado Arts & Crafts Society (www.coloarts-crafts.org) in Golden. We’ve participated in this fair for several years and find it’s a great venue to share our love of the book arts and for members to sell their work.
~ check the current events websites for updates on happenings in your area ~

**CALIFORNIA**

**CO-CHAIRS**
Marilyn Bonaventure & Rebecca Chamlee

**TOUR - SAN FRANCISCO**
April 25, 1:00pm
Stanford Library Tour ~ arrive at 11:30 to enjoy lunch prior

**CHAPTER EXHIBITION**
October 4 - January 5, 2020
'The Artful Book' at the Long Beach Museum of Art

**WORKSHOPS** - BookArtsLA, Los Angeles
ongoing
February classes listed: www.bookartsLA.org

**DELAWARE VALLEY**

**CHAIR**
Jennifer Rosner

**LONE STAR**

**CHAIR**
Tish Brewer

**ONLINE GALLERY**
Currently
Visit chapter website to view the Valentines Print Exchange!

**TOUR** - College Station
April 26 - 5 pm
Berger-Cloonan Decorative Paper Collection (with below)

**CHAPTER EXHIBITION**
April 27 & 28
'Contemporary Paper Bindings' With Karen Hamner

**UPCOMING CHAPTER MEETING**
June 1
Details TBA ~-

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Ellen Wrede

**NEW ENGLAND**

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Erin Fletcher

**NEW YORK**

**CHAIR**
Celine Lombardi

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Sarah Mottaghinejad

**POTOMAC**

**CHAIR**
Beth Curren

**ROCKY MOUNTAIN**

**CO-CHAIRS**
Karen Jones & Emiline Twitchell

**WORKSHOP** - Your Bindery, Denver
April 13
'Paste Papers' with Madeleine Durham

**WORKSHOP** - Ewing Farm, Lafayette
April 14
'Paste Papers' with Madeleine Durham

**WORKSHOP** - Book Arts League, Boulder
May 4-5
'The Articulated Binding' with Lucia Farias

**WORKSHOPS** - American Academy of Bookbinding, Telluride
ongoing
www.bookbindingacademy.org

**WORKSHOPS** - Book Arts Program, Salt Lake City
ongoing
www.bookartsprogram.org

**WORKSHOPS** - Book Arts League, Boulder
ongoing
www.bookartsleague.org

**WORKSHOPS** - with Alicia Bailey, Denver
ongoing

**WORKSHOPS** - Colorado Calligraphers, Denver
ongoing
www.coloradocalligraphers.com

**SOUTHEAST**

**CHAIR**
Sarah Bryant

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In this book, Wolfe examines the contributions of one of the most important figures in the history of paper marbling, and he provides English translations of several of Halfer’s ‘little texts.’ This was the author’s final project (he died in late 2017), and included are 17 examples of Halferian marbling patterns executed by Wolfe for this book.

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**IN MEMORIAM**

(more on these two luminaries in the next newsletter)

**Bernard Middleton**

**Philip Smith**

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Guild of Book Workers April 2019 Number 243
NEW YORK :: Chair Celine Lombardi reports
The New York chapter held two related events just before the holidays. On November 29 we hosted a reception at the Center for Book Arts in honor of Hedi Kyle and Ulla Warchol, celebrating their new book The Art of the Fold. (Photo right.) This was preceded by a discussion and demonstration of structures from the book earlier in the day at the nearby FIT Library. Many members joined both events. We look forward to hosting a workshop with them later in the spring in the Hudson Valley. In the near future we are looking forward to a social new year gathering this February at Judith Ivry’s studio.

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For further information and additional course listings visit www.schoolforbookbindingarts.com
CALLS FOR ENTRY

**All Stitched Up**
SUBMISSION DEADLINE: April 30, 2019
EXHIBITION DATES: September 3 to December 11, 2019

'All Stitched Up' is asking for submissions of artists' books from around the globe where stitching is a featured element. They may be visible stitches for the binding, text, or images, or any technique that leaves evidence of stitches. Artists' books may be from an edition or unique, and created from any medium. 'All Stitched Up' recognizes and celebrates the work of book artists where stitching has become an integral part of the visual design.

www.pugetsound.edu/files/resources/medium_allstitchedup-2.jpg

**OPEN • SET 2020**
REGISTRATION DEADLINE: May 1, 2019
BOOKS DUE: September 1, 2019
EXHIBITION DATES: the year of 2020

The OPEN • SET competition and exhibition is a triennial event featuring finely crafted design bookbindings. Registration closes soon, sign up now to participate!

www.bookbindingacademy.org/open-set/

EXHIBITIONS

**'Remembering the Past, Looking to the Future'**
SAN FRANCISCO, CA through April 19
The exhibit will display materials by California women printers and book artists, with a spotlight on Jane Grabhorn's test prints for the illustrations of the Grabhorn Press' Shakespeare plays. Also on display will be some of the Club's oldest and most sought-after books, including a beautifully ornamented Virgil printed by Miscowini in 1476. At the Book Club of California.

www.bccbooks.org

**'Bound Together'**
BOSTON, MA through April 30
'Bound Together: Bookbinding by the North Bennet Street School Community' is a special exhibition of exquisite hand-bound books made by NBSS students and alumni. This unique gathering of work showcases the many talents of our diverse bookbinding community, and offers insight into the renowned program at North Bennet Street School.

www.nbss.org/boundtogether

**'Long Live the Book!'**
SAN FRANCISCO, CA through May 3
Held at the American Bookbinders Museum, this exhibition samples contemporary bookbinding from the purely commercial to boldly artistic. While bookbinders still use many of the tools and processes from the Middle Ages, modern technology has added new materials and high-speed automation to the bookbinder's workbench. Bookbinding changes, yet remains the same. Celebrate the book in all its forms and formats!

www.bookbindersmuseum.org

**'A Visual Feast: The Art of Laura Davidson & David Esslemont'**
BOSTON, MA through May 3
Davidson is a Boston-based artist whose works have a vintage feel and display her adeptness with drawing and paper engineering. David Esslemont, born in England and residing in Iowa, is best known for his culinary woodcuts, but also has great skill in bookbinding, watercolor, and calligraphy. At Bromer.

www.bromer.com

**'A Matter of Size: Miniature Texts & Bindings'**
NEW YORK, NY through May 19
In this collection of diminutive books and bindings, the size restriction ranges from a grand height of 4 inches to less than 1 millimeter. Spanning 4,500 years, on view are 275 miniature examples of cuneiform tablets and other antiquities, medieval manuscripts, early printed books, and contemporary artists' books and design bindings representing a variety of artistic styles. The tiny tomes are from the extensive collection of Patricia J. Pistner and have been selected by Jan Storm van Leeuwen and Ms. Pistner. At the Grolier Club.

www.grolierclub.org

**'Monuments of Early Greek Printing'**
DALLAS, TX through May 20
This exhibition offers a glimpse into the richness and significance of materials accessible for study and appreciation at Bridwell Library Special Collections. Digital version of the exhibition at:

www.smu.edu/Bridwell/SpecialCollectionsandArchives/Exhibitions/Greek

**'20th Annual Celebration of Craft'**
BOSTON, MA May 1 - June 29
This exhibition features works from the student and alumni of North Bennet Street School.

www.nbss.org/acc2019

UPCOMING BOOK EVENTS

**GBW 'Standards of Excellence' Seminar**
PHILADELPHIA, PA October 24 - 26
See details on page 17 www.guildofbookworkers.org

**American Printing History Association 2019 Conference**
COLLEGE PARK, MD October 25 - 27
The conference theme is "One Press, Many Hands: Diversity in the History of American Printing." www.printinghistory.org

**AUSTRALIA : Bind 19**
SYDNEY, AU October 25 - 27
The conference will explore contemporary and traditional bookbinding structures and design as well as restoration techniques. In the weeks before and after the conference there will be workshops taught by key presenters from the conference.

www.bind19.com.au
A writing workshop with Sue Moon on the theme of courage
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Paper and Book Arts in Mexico

Friar Diego de Landa, in his 1566 account *Yucatan Before and After the Conquest*, writes about the finely-crafted Mayan screenfold books he frequently encountered in the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico:

“They wrote their books on a long sheet doubled in folds, which was then enclosed between two boards finely ornamented … The paper they made from the roots of a tree, and gave it a white finish excellent for writing upon.”

The paper he refers to is a pounded bark paper called *amate*, or in Mayan languages, *huun*. Tragically, when the Spanish arrived in 1521, they systematically burned libraries full of books, and only four pre-Hispanic examples painted on *amate* remain. However, the art of making *amate* survived in a few scattered mountain villages, including San Pablito in the state of Puebla.

Today, some artists in Mexico are working to revitalize their country’s papermaking and book arts traditions—not only by continuing to make *amate*, but also by making other types of paper and artist books. When I started in the University of Alabama’s MFA Book Arts program last year, I jumped at the opportunity to visit Mexico and learn firsthand about some of these efforts.

My first stop was Taller Leñateros in San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas in late May of 2018. Taller Leñateros was founded in 1975 by the poet Ambar Past with the goal of reviving the Maya arts of paper and bookmaking. It employs local Maya artists to make eco-friendly paper from recycled and natural fibers and to print and bind original artist books containing Maya songs, poetry, and stories. Their books, such as *Incantations by Maya Women* and *Bolom Chon*, include images by local artists, and handmade paper and cardboard produced in the studio.

When I visited, the head papermaker, Mari, was pulling western-style sheets of recycled paper with inclusions of pansies, then stepping on a basket to make a unique imprint: *papel de canasta*. She also taught me how to make paper from maguey fiber (*agave*), the same plant used to produce tequila, mezcal, and other local alcoholic beverages. We first cut the long, hair-like fiber into small pieces, then cooked it for six hours with soda ash. Next, we blended it and pulled sheets western-style using a mould with no deckle from large wooden vats. The thick, rustic maguey paper is used mainly in books, such as the endsheets for *Bolom Chon*, and for journal covers. The Taller has also made paper from banana leaf, corn husk, coconut husk, and other natural fibers.

In early June, I took a plane, two taxis, two buses, and a shared car to get to my second destination: the tiny mountain town of San Pablito, Puebla, northeast of Mexico City. The indigenous *ńahñu* (or Otomí) in this region have been continuously making *amate* since before the Spanish arrived. I was dropped off on the single road that goes through town and eventually found Taller Santos Rojas—the same place my instructor Steve Miller had visited just a few years prior.

Juan and Jorge Santos led me through the entire process of making *amate*. First, we tromped in the woods to harvest bark from two different kinds of trees. Amate was traditionally made using fig, or *Ficus*, but most artisans now use the inner bark of *jonote* (*Trema micrantha*) and *mora*, or mulberry, to create paper for everything from decorative wall hangings to lampshades. After collecting our bark, we headed back to scrape and cook the fibers with sifted ash and lime over a small fire. The next day, I learned how to use a volcanic rock to pound the delicate fibers into thin sheets. Next to me, women with decades of experience were deftly pounding out a giant sheet of white *amate* with a border of intricate, woven designs. My small sheets dried on wooden boards on a roof overlooking the mountains, dwarfed by their 8-foot-long sheets.

Finally, I headed to Oaxaca, my last destination. Oaxaca is known not only for its rich culinary tradition, but also for printmaking, around which a lesser-known papermaking tradition has sprung up. After gorging myself
on tlajudas, I headed to the town of San Agustin Etla, home to the beautiful Centro de las Artes and several small papermaking studios established by local artist-legend Francisco Toledo.

I took a papermaking course with Alberto Valenzuela of Taller Papel Oaxaca. Although he began his career making white cotton paper for printmakers, his own studio is dedicated to paper that connects more deeply to the land he loves. Valenzuela is a true maestro of Oaxacan papermaking, having experimented with over 30 different native plants, including the native Oaxacan brown cotton, coyuchi.

During the two days I was there, we picked through a large bin of partially-fermented maguey, the by-product of a nearby mezcaleria, or mezcal distillery. After cooking the maguey over an outdoor clay oven, we put it in a hollander beater with pre-beaten cotton and pulled sheets western-style. The result was a lovely text-weight sheet with visible maguey fibers. Valenzuela showed me about fifty samples of different eastern- and western-style papers he had made from cotton and local plants, including paper tinted with Oaxacan cochineal insects and indigo. Each sheet was uniquely beautiful.

I returned to the hot Alabama summer with the realization that it is possible to make high-quality, interesting books and paper with limited resources if you look to your surroundings. It was incredibly valuable to exchange information and work with these artists who are maintaining the long tradition of book arts in Mexico.
New Marbling Booklet by Iris Nevins

A new booklet for very basic paper marbling will be available for sale later this year. It is more oriented towards the crafts community rather than the book arts community, and will also be included in a marbling kit for large craft stores. There is, however, no deviation in the instructions from true traditional watercolor marbling. There is a section on how to adapt the instructions if acrylics are used.

It is a basic little book measuring five by seven inches and 32 pages. It is nicely produced by the publisher, attractively laid out, and is full color on each page. There are four basic patterns featured: Combed (or Nonpareil), Bouquet, Stone and Spanish.

There is a follow up to this booklet coming out as well. It is for more advanced marbling. The publisher, Mud Puddle Inc. (NYC), decided to break the effort into two books, so as to have something smaller and more basic for first time crafters. The second part, I am told, will be available later this year, and will include many more patterns and advanced techniques.

I will keep everybody updated of course, with more details when the books are commercially available. At right is a picture of the cover of the basics booklet.

---

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My Favorite Referrals

Six or eight years ago I wrote about my first big conservation referral. Since then, there have been numerous noteworthy events and I thought it was time to document the most memorable.

The first one that comes to mind began, as they do, with an email. A woman needed help and guidance with making decisions regarding the conservation of her book collection. She wanted me to go to her home and agreed to pay me for my time and for any work thereafter. My heart began to pound. This could mean work for months to come. Fantastic. Upon arriving at her home, the reality of the situation became clear. Her book collection turned out to be about 30 contemporary books on a modular book shelf. The conservation consultation was in reality a soothing talk designed to stop her from being upset because she thought that mice had walked on her books. She wanted me to clean the mouse cooties off of her books using Clorox wet wipes. She even had rubber gloves and a mask for me to wear.

For bookbinders, “private practice” means that you have to be on the hunt for business all the time. Fortunately, regular customers do emerge and experience helps to guide you to opportunities—but no matter how long you’ve been in this business, referrals are exciting to get.

First of all, getting a referral means that someone knows that you are in the business. It’s like being almost famous. But it also means that someone thought that you are in some special way the best person for the job. And when the referral comes from a colleague...wow!

Another exciting referral came from a colleague who sent a fellow to me with a book he wanted repaired as a present for his girlfriend. I invited him to my house, which is where I work. His head was partially shaved, with many tattoos depicting acts of violence. Well, at least he loves books. Then he said, “I didn’t know you were so far away, I’m not supposed to travel this far.” He motioned to the ankle transponder placed there by the criminal justice department. He paid me up front and I mailed the book to him when it was done.

While there are many more characters of note I will just mention one more referral from another colleague. This fellow came to my house and brought a book that he kept in a velvet sack. He wanted me to make a box...a very special box for his book. It had to be leather on the outside and any part that would touch the book had to be suede. One rule though, I could look at the book all I wanted but under no circumstances could I touch it.

The all-time best (of course) is still the first one: cleaning cat poop off of six books. A woman had a sick cat that had pooped on her boyfriend’s father’s book legacy. She was crying...how could I say no? It was an exciting time to be a bookbinder.

Despite these examples, I love to get referrals. I do wonder what special quality I possess that caused my colleagues to think that I was best suited for these “special” referrals.
BOOK REVIEW by Barbara Adams Hebard

by Ronald D. Patkus
(New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, 2017)

In his opening introduction, Patkus explains that The Privately Printed Bible: Private & Fine Press Editions of Biblical Texts in the British Isles and North America, 1892-2000 was a project that came about as a result of his teaching at Vassar College. When preparing a syllabus for his course “Bible as Book” he discovered that, while there are numerous general histories of the Bible and specialized works on the Bible, those resources did not give significant attention to the output of private and fine presses. Patkus felt the need to address this gap in the literature on the Bible.

After completing diligent research and visiting multiple special collection libraries, Patkus was able to produce a broad survey of the history of private and fine press printings of biblical texts. He wisely chose to focus on English-language examples from the United Kingdom, Ireland, and North America, and, even though he set those limitations, his study includes more than 500 works. In addition to focusing on one language and using selected geographical locations, Patkus also narrowed the time-frame of his study to the late nineteenth century printing revival through the twentieth century. In these pages he describes well-known texts, such as the Doves Bible, the Oxford Lectern Bible, the Golden Cockerel Four Gospels, the Spiral Press Ecclesiastes, the Pennyroyal Caxton Bible, and the Arion Press Bible. Luckily, for those who are not printers or printing historians, he also brings up lesser-known works for us to learn about and admire.

Patkus has written the volume in five chapters, dividing them by generations of printers. Within each generation, the author first offers general comments and then concentrates on individual presses, providing context on their history and their interest in printing biblical texts. Surprisingly, despite the many presses covered, a satisfying amount of detail about each is provided. Because Patkus was writing this in the context of teaching book history, he gave attention to the production and physical appearance of the books.

Over 100 attractive images successfully support Patkus’ remarks about the aesthetics of layout, design, and illustration produced by the presses. The book contains a number of helpful checklists, tables, and graphs that present the reader with opportunities to consider the books from a variety of perspectives. GBW members will be delighted to find that Patkus mentions colleagues Carol Blinn and Claudia Cohen among the noteworthy people involved with biblical texts.

This book would make a worthy addition to a reference library for those interested in the book arts. Patkus has created a publication that will work nicely on a syllabus for educators who teach the history of the book, or could serve as a useful training manual for individuals studying private press printing aesthetics.

Barbara Adams Hebard was trained in bookbinding at the North Bennet Street School. She was Book Conservator at the Boston Athenaeum and became the Conservator of the John J. Burns Library at Boston College in 2009. Ms. Hebard writes book related articles and book reviews, gives talks and presentations, exhibits her bookbindings nationally and internationally, and teaches book history classes. She is a Fellow of IIC, a Professional Associate of AIC, chairperson of the New England Conservation Association, and has served several terms as an Overseer of the North Bennet Street School.
A Miscellany of Matters Calligraphic

*Paper* is an obsession with many calligraphers, especially those who are book artists. Paper may have a nice surface for lettering but buckle under the accompanying illumination. It may be the perfect color but lack the necessary internal sizing. It may be unsuitable for use in the planned book—too stiff, too hairy, too transparent, too too-many things. My very favorite paper is decades old and no longer made, so there’s no point in talking about it, except to say that it’s possible that paper needs to be aged to become the perfect writing surface.

Like many calligraphers, I know a lot about the five or six papers which I use for most of my work, and which qualities make them suitable for different uses.

One thing paper does not need to be, though, is “easy”. I recently bought a package of paper that many calligraphers have extolled as a lovely writing surface. I was disappointed. Yes, the pen glided over the surface and the edges of the letters were crisp. But this paper was to calligraphy as white bread is to a good hearty loaf, disappearing under rather than interacting with the content. The experience highlighted the fact that pen, paper, and writing fluid all interact, and that this collaboration should be respected, even utilized. Khadi and many other handmade papers, for instance, require a slower writing tempo, and this is often a very good thing.

**Handstyle Lettering**

This book caught my eye in a shop in Belgium last fall. When it was still on my mind a month later, I ordered it. Subtitled “From Calligraphy To Typography”, this is a diverse collection of hand lettering from designers around the world, most of them new to me. The drawn lettering is interesting for many reasons, but some of the lettering written with brush or pen were a revelation. While the first 192 pages are wonderfully inspiring, the remaining 50 pages of instruction seemed superficial to me. A graphic designer with little lettering experience might find them helpful.

**Rendez-vous 2019**

The annual calligraphy conference will be held in Canada for the first time. The conference dates are June 29 to July 6, and the venue is Bishop’s University in Sherbrooke. This international conference has skewed strongly toward the United States and Canada, but this year that is not as true: 15 of the 32 faculty members are from outside North America.

There are several new faces on the faculty this year, and some interesting new areas of study. Rick Paulus (US), chief calligrapher of the White House during the Clinton & GW Bush administrations, will teach design process and pointed-pen lettering. Andrea Wunderlich (Germany) is offering a class with an arresting title: “Who is Afraid of Rudolph Koch?” Lieve Cornil (Belgium) will teach “Monoprint with Saul Bass Letterforms”. Pierre Tardif (Canada) is offering two sign painting classes. Also, I’m happy to see that Benoit Furet will share his knowledge of Gothic filigree work; I’ve followed his blog for a while at intheworkshop.blogspot.com.

I salute the director, Marco Chioini, and his team for putting together an educational program that will suit a wide range of abilities and interests.

Registration for the conference is open at rendezvouscalligraphy.org. Even if you don’t plan to attend the conference, head over to the website and read the 28(!) informative and well-written interviews of faculty members that have been posted on the blog.

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**An Exhibitor’s Viewpoint**

The seventh biennial CODEX International Book Fair & Symposium was held at the Craneway Pavilion in Richmond, California, from February 3 to 6. The CODEX Foundation is directed by Peter Koch, printer and book artist, of Berkeley. In addition to the exhibition schedule, there were seven presentations on two consecutive mornings at the Berkeley City Club. The schedule is designed so that exhibitors and symposium attendees are able to participate in both parts of the Fair.

This year’s fair featured CODEX Nordica, a special subset of exhibitors from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Iceland; exhibitors from those countries were grouped together at the Fair. The Symposium presentations included artists from these countries as well as a special tribute to Jack Ginsberg, a collector who has donated his archive to the University of Johannesburg in South Africa.

The exhibition had over two hundred exhibitors and vendors this year, and was again held at the Craneway Pavilion on the waterfront in the industrial park of Richmond. Its floor-to-ceiling windows face the bay and provide a beautiful view of the San Francisco skyline.

As an exhibitor, I had applied for a spot and been accepted the previous July; GBW Potomac member, Dorothy Haldeman, had asked to come along and this made the experience much easier. We shared a hotel room and Dorothy assisted at the table each day. A second stroke of luck was that our table was positioned next to that of Alice Austin, book artist and conservator from the Delaware Valley chapter. Between the three of us, we were able to cover the tables and allow for an occasional respite, providing the opportunity to get a brief look at other tables filled with beautiful books, broadsides, tools and supplies.

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work and supplies ahead of time so that when exhibitors arrive for set up, their boxes are sitting at their assigned tables. On Sunday, the first day, a gong is sounded as the Fair opens (noon); visitors are already lined up at the front door, and within minutes people are wandering up and down the aisles, interacting with exhibitors and vendors. Everyone, visitor and exhibitor alike, has a booklet with a map of the tables, along with names and information of the exhibitors/presses/vendors. I have no way to estimate the numbers of people attending each day, but there were an awful lot. The crowds are great: no one asks what an artist book is; virtually everyone is polite and interested in the work (even if they are not buyers); there is an excited buzz throughout the Pavilion.

Artists display their work in many ways: within height restrictions, exhibitors use upward space; many books are spread open on supports; there are clever little constructions to show the work at its best. One can learn a lot by examining these different methods to make the best use of a six foot by two foot display table, covered by the required tablecloth and within very close quarters to neighboring exhibitors.

As a group, the attendees and visitors represent a very eclectic cross section of interests: bibliophiles, curators, collectors, educators, scholars and everyday people who are interested in fine press, bookbinding, papermaking and artists’ books. Many have attended the Fair in previous years, while others are first-timers. There is a reduced entry fee for school groups and scouts; it’s fun to think that they might come to see books a little differently after visiting CODEX.

At the final gong and closing of the Fair on Wednesday afternoon, there was a round of applause and then a scramble to pack up and prepare for the UPS shipment. That night the Gala dinner was held at the Berkeley City Club; it is a beautiful old building, full of surprises: its own library and swimming pool and gathering rooms. It was lovely to talk and eat together and share our wonderful CODEX International Book Fair experiences.

For those who want to learn more: www.codexfoundation.org

THE 2019 ‘STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE’ SEMINAR UPDATE

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PRESENTERS

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(grahampatten.weebly.com)

Graham Patten
pieintheskypress.com

Rebecca Chamlee
handbookbinding.com

TOURS

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University of Pennsylvania ~ Conservation Lab
SA Neff, Jr. ~ Exhibition & Talk

TOUR 2
Temple University ~ Library & Book Arts Collection
Wagner Free Institute ~ Library & Museum

TOUR 3
Free Library of Philadelphia ~ Rare Book Department tour & Art Department book arts collection
Free Library of Philadelphia Exhibitions ~ The Five Senses & GBW Delaware Valley Chapter
**Structural & Material Clues to Binding History: A Series by Emily K. Bell**

**Part 5: Spine Shaping and Lining**

In the fifth article in the series, we turn to the shaping and lining of the spine.

Ever since the unsupported stitch gave way to sewing over supports that were laced into the cover boards, binders have been attempting to improve the connection between textblock and cover. In spite of these efforts, the attachment of the cover to the textblock continues to be a point of weakness in even the best-made bindings. Some techniques intended to improve this connection have included adhering the spine of the covering material to the spine of the textblock, adding linings to the spine that attach to the boards, and altering the shape of the spine to counteract the tendency of the textblock to slump away from the cover when a book is shelved upright.

What can the spine shape tell us about when or where the book was bound? Two significant changes that affected the shape of the spine were the adoption of paper and the shift to vertical shelving. Parchment pages have a tendency to cockle, counteracting any swell caused by the sewing and sometimes even causing the foredge to be wider than the spine. In a paper textblock, on the other hand, folding and sewing cause bulk that makes the spine thicker than the foredge. One consequence of this bulk is that the spine of a paper textblock spontaneously takes on a rounded shape when compressed—as the thicker parts of the signatures push against each other, the middle ones are squeezed out—and this natural tendency began to be deliberately encouraged as paper textblocks became the norm.

Prior to the mid-15th century, most collections were small enough that the books were typically stored flat on a table or shelf, or in a chest or cupboard. The widespread use of the printing press and innovations in papermaking machinery resulted in an explosion in the number of books in the typical library. As the number of volumes increased, upright shelving developed as a space-saving technique. However, changing the orientation of the way books were stored put new strains on the textblock. As we shall see, vertical shelving led fairly directly to the deliberate rounding and backing of the spine.

**Spines Before the Printing Press**

Early books made from papyrus or parchment usually had flat spines, in part because the cockling of the pages compensated for any swell caused by the sewing. It was not until the widespread adoption of paper that it became necessary to pay attention to the shaping of the spine, so a book with a flat spine was likely bound before the 15th century. There are exceptions, but in combination with the material of the pages, the shaping of the boards, and other details of the binding, a flat spine can often confirm an early date. Coptic, Carolingian, and early Romanesque bindings frequently had flat spines to begin with, though over the years many have collapsed into a concave shape from being stored upright. The change in shape is largely due to their relatively loose sewing and lack of spine linings.

Szirmai credits the invention of packed sewing with contributing to the stability of the rounded spine on Gothic bindings, noting that a binding with single sewing over cords is not stiff enough to counter the tendency to become concave. Diehl suggests that one reason early books were titled on the foredge rather than the spine may have been this tendency for an un-rounded spine to become concave, making it likely that the titling would be distorted. Petroski, however, notes that books stored in chests were sometimes depicted with their foredges facing up, in which case titling on the foredge could have developed as a way to identify the desired book in its chest.

Contrary to other scholars, Pollard gives the mid-13th century as the point when the “flat” spine disappeared, but I think the word “flat” in this instance is misleading, and he does not say that it was replaced by a rounded shape. I believe that what he means by flat is either the “loose” spine, where the covering material is not adhered to the spine of the textblock (so the sewing supports do not leave noticeable bands on the spine), or the smooth spine that results from using an unsupported stitch. He mentions specifically that pasting the covering material to the spine of the textblock was probably bound between the 12th century and the 15th.

Coptic books were sewn without supports, and had flat spines, both in the sense of shape and smoothness. They typically had loose hollow spines, in which the covering material was not adhered to the spine of the textblock. Middletons notes that the tight back binding, in which the covering leather is glued directly to the spine of the textblock, dates from the adoption of the raised thong and cord sewing methods, around the 12th century in England. Pollard’s description of pasting the covering material to the spine in order to make the bands more apparent is consistent with this timing. So a book with a flat-shaped spine but with the covering material adhered to the spine of the textblock was probably bound between the 12th century and the 15th.

**Later Flat Spines**

There is an exception to the rule that a flat-shaped spine dates from before the 15th century. The flat spine became somewhat fashionable again in the 19th century, long after the rounded and backed spine became the norm. Prideaux mentions by name a specific French binder, Jean-Georges Purgold, who was known for flat backs (which suggests that this was somewhat uncommon at the time). Two of his contemporaries in France, Laurent-Antoine Bauzonnet and Georges Trautz, were more likely to round their spines, and in her opinion Trautz was even prone to overdoing the rounding, making his books difficult to open. Dutton agrees that Trautz was prone to over-rounding, but the Etherington & Roberts dictionary, on the other
hand, calls Trautz's bindings “exceptionally well bound”.\textsuperscript{14} Middleton also faults some 19th-century binders for over-rounding, including Francis Bedford, who he nevertheless calls “one of the greatest binders of his day”.\textsuperscript{15}

Flat backs also returned to favour among some English binders around the end of the 19th century, including such notable names as T. J. Cobden-Sanderson, Douglas Cockerell, and Sarah Prideaux.\textsuperscript{16} It’s not clear why it became popular among these binders, since it seems likely that not accounting for the swell of the spine caused by sewing would have caused these bindings to function less well than a rounded spine would. The practice did not become widespread, which does, however, make it helpful for dating purposes.

**ROUNDING, SPONTANEOUS AND DELIBERATE**

Spontaneous or semi-spontaneous rounding, caused by the bulk of folding and sewing paper, may have begun as early as the 14th century. Szirmai characterizes Gothic bindings as being the first to have rounded spines.\textsuperscript{17} His samples are mostly Swiss/German and Netherlandish, and include examples from as early as 1300.\textsuperscript{18} While he does not give a specific date for spontaneous rounding, he dates deliberate rounding and backing using a hammer to the mid-15th century, when there begins to be evidence of occasional damage caused by hitting the spine the wrong way.\textsuperscript{19}

Marks dates the development of rounding to the early 16th century.\textsuperscript{20} Middleton agrees with the end of the 15th century as the timing for the introduction of the rounded spine, and the beginning of the 16th century for the rudiments of shoulders to appear.\textsuperscript{21} Etherington and Roberts, however, concur with Szirmai’s earlier date of the middle of the 15th century.\textsuperscript{22} The discrepancy may be geographic. Marks and Middleton are primarily looking at English bindings, whereas Szirmai’s examples are mostly from the continent. It may be that deliberate rounding and backing started in Germany or nearby, and later spread to England. Information about the spines of books from other parts of continental Europe might help clarify this evolution.

**GLUING UP**

Applying a layer of adhesive to the spine allows it to be consolidated, so that its shape can be both manipulated and stabilized. Because early adhesives have often dried up and failed over the centuries, it is not always clear whether a given textblock was once glued up. There may, however, be some residues that can be identified, and if a loose spine lining is present it seems unlikely that the spine did not originally have a layer of adhesive applied to it before the lining was added. If there is evidence of rounding and backing using a hammer, it is also likely that the spine was glued, in order to facilitate the shaping process.

We could consider the earliest examples of gluing up the spine to be Pollard’s description of pasting the covering material to the spine of the textblock to enhance the prominence of the raised bands,\textsuperscript{23} but that does seem to be a different enough purpose to separate it from the rest of this discussion. The adoption of gluing up for the sake of spine shaping is difficult to pinpoint in time, but Szirmai mentions that it is described by Anshelmus Faust’s Netherlandish binding manual of 1612.\textsuperscript{24}

Gothic textblocks were often glued up using an animal glue, with or without linings, partly to maintain the rounding of the spine.\textsuperscript{25} John Bagford makes a distinction between pasting and gluing the spine in his discussion of English bookbinding from around 1700, noting that using paste is the “old way” and that glue is now preferred.\textsuperscript{26} Jean de Gauffecourt’s 1763 manual, on the other hand, describes how to make paste, using alum and starch, to glue up the spine after rounding it but before backing using a scraper, suggesting that paste was still the adhesive of choice in France at that time.\textsuperscript{27} We will discuss in detail the evolution of the use of pastes and glues in bookbinding generally in a later article.

**BACKING**

Backing, usually done after gluing up, was a further refinement to the rounding process, bending the spines of the signatures outwards to create a shoulder against which the edges of the boards can sit.\textsuperscript{28} The shoulder allows for a smooth transition between the spine and the boards in the case of a binding with no joint, typically one with lace-on boards, and also serves to support the spine edges of the boards when the book is shelved upright.\textsuperscript{29} Marks notes that backing helps the spine to maintain its rounded shape, because each signature is folded over the one outside it, and dates it to the second quarter of the 16th century.\textsuperscript{30} Anderson uses the square shape of the spine edge of the boards in her samples of Netherlandish and Italian bindings to argue that many 15th-century textblocks were not originally rounded and backed, since boards intended to be placed next to a backed textblock would likely be beveled at the inner spine edge to match the profile of the shoulder.\textsuperscript{31} Szirmai, on the other hand, sees evidence of backing as early as 1410 in his (primarily German) examples.\textsuperscript{32} Again, the discrepancy may have more to do with the geography of the three samples, with backing starting earlier in Germany, spreading to the Netherlands and Italy before moving later to England.

The shape of the rounding and the extent of the backing varied over time. English books from the late 15th or early 16th century had nearly flat spines with slight rounding and small, shallow shoulders.\textsuperscript{33} Middleton describes the shape at this time as about a third of a circle.\textsuperscript{34} Later bindings, from the late 18th and early 19th centuries, had much more pronounced rounding, more of a semi-ellipse, with heavy backing creating almost 90-degree shoulders.\textsuperscript{35} There was a brief fashion for flatter spines in the 1820’s, but after a few decades the spines tended to be more prominently rounded again.\textsuperscript{36}

**SPINE LININGS**

Once the spine is shaped, a lining is often added to stabilize the shaping and, if the lining is wider than the spine, reinforce the attachment of the cover. Spine lining materials and methods vary from country to country and over time. Romanesque bindings, for example, could have a full leather spine lining as well as patch linings between the sewing supports to even out the spine.\textsuperscript{37} The lining might
also be wider than the spine, with the edges attached to the inside or outside of the boards. Szirmai’s mostly English (but also French and some German) Romanesque bindings show a variety of lining patterns, many incorporating a “tab” lining that extended from the outer sewing supports beyond the head and tail, and were used to support or protect the endbands. The material for the linings and patches was typically leather, sometimes with a textile facing on the tab linings, but vellum patch linings can also be found. Szirmai also notes that while many Romanesque linings are now loose, it is likely that they were originally pasted on and that the paste has since failed.

The tab-shaped spine linings that extend from the head and tail of some Romanesque books may have been used to lift the book from a chest in which they were stored spine-up. Once those books began to be shelved upright, however, the tabs (especially those on the tail) became a liability and were sometimes simply cut off. The same was true for clasps and bosses on the covers, which were also removed to make space on the shelf and to protect adjacent books from abrasion. So if you have a book that you think is Romanesque, except that it lacks projecting tabs and clasps, it is worth checking for evidence of them having been removed.

Parchment was a common spine lining in Germany and England in the 18th century. Some binders used gold-beaters skin on smaller books, or linen or canvas for vellum bindings. According to Foot, parchment was typically applied as patch linings between the sewing supports, wide enough to attach to the insides of the boards. Some late 15th-century English bindings (and, rarely, into the 17th and early 18th centuries) had partial parchment linings as well, though they do not typically extend onto the boards and so do not serve to help with the attachment between textblock and cover. Faust’s manual from 1612 discusses lining the spine between the bands with old parchment, probably waste manuscript. He does not say whether these linings should be wider than the spine or not, so it is unclear whether they would contribute to the attachment of the boards.

In France, one might find paper linings instead of parchment. In particular, de Gauffecourt recommends using a strong paper, usually marbled, between the bands and at the head and tail. Johann Zeidler’s 1708 manual claims that all French bindings are done this way, but Foot points out that many French manuals describe the use of parchment for lining. Jacques Savary de Brûlons, for example, mentions that the spine should be lined with parchment that extends past the width of the spine, passing between the textblock and the inside of the boards. He seems also to suggest that paste (“colle de farine”) is to be used to attach this parchment lining, but that to strengthen the attachment, strong English glue (“colle-forte d’Angleterre”, probably gelatin-based) should be added on top. Middleton notes that French bindings from the 17th and 18th centuries often had parchment spine linings (often waste manuscript) that extended onto the boards and were pasted under the endsheets, similar to Savary de Brûlons’ description.

**LOOSE SPINES AND HOLLOW TUBES**

Some bindings have a deliberate space between the spine of the textblock and the spine of the covering material. One of the benefits of this lack of constriction is that the spine of the cover is not distorted by the opening of the textblock, the way that it can be in a tight-back binding. The flexure of the covering material caused by a tight back has a tendency to damage the lettering on the spine and even cause gold tooling to flake off with repeated use. It can also cause the leather itself to split, making it vulnerable to flaking off and exposing the under layers of the spine. Damaged tooling on the spine might therefore indicate that the binding was originally a tight back, and that it probably dates from before the 19th century.

The earliest tight-back bindings did not have separate spine linings, but later different types of linings were added to either support the sewing of the textblock or to create a smooth, stiff spine to make the gold tooling on the spine more durable (because the spine did not flex as much when the book was opened). Tight-back bindings persisted until the early 19th century, when the hollow back returned, this time usually as a hollow tube rather than simply an unglued portion of the cover material.

A variation of the loose hollow spine, the hollow tube is formed of folded paper glued to the spine of the textblock, the other side of which is glued to the inside of the spine of the covering material. Hollow tubes are usually with recessed cords, and are often combined with false raised bands in the case of leather covering material. A tube can be constructed with one or two layers of paper adhered to the textblock spine and one or two layers on the inside of the cover material, so that you can sometimes find references to a hollow tube that is “one on and one off”, “one on and two off” (probably the most common), “two on and one off”, “two on and two off”, with “on” referring to layers on the textblock side and “off” referring to the cover side. Middleton dates the adoption of the hollow tube in France to 1770, but in England not until 1800 and not common until about 1820. Another variant, a graduated hollow tube, was made of several “on” layers, each stepped back from the shoulder. It was developed in the workshop of Francis Bedford in the late 19th century, and was meant to equalize the strain of opening across the width of the spine. According to Middleton, hollow tubes were usually made of brown paper on the best bindings, but it is not uncommon to find odds and ends of poor-quality waste paper used in many 19th-century bindings.

The spring back binding, patented in 1799, may be considered to be an exaggerated version of the hollow back. The rigid spine of the cover pins the shoulders of the textblock, so that when the book is opened, the spine of the textblock “springs” up and the pages lie flat. Because the cover spine does not flex at all, it is not subject to the strains of a tight back binding.

In the next article, we will discuss developments in endbands, which are closely related to changes in spine shaping and lining. Like spine linings, endbands help to stabilize the shape of the spine and can reinforce the
STRUCTURAL & MATERIAL CLUES TO BINDING HISTORY: A SERIES by Emily K. Bell (con't.)

attachment of the coers. In some cases the boundary between what is called a spine lining and an endband is blurred, such as the tab linings on Romanesque bindings. Both can be used to refine the dating and location of a given binding, offering clues based on their materials and structure.

Please note that for all of the articles in this series, if you would like a full-sized copy of the charts in colour, you may contact the author at ekh.bookscare@gmail.com.

ENDNOTES

1An entertaining and informative discussion of the various strategies used over the centuries to cope with the ever-expanding library can be found in the following: Petroski, Henry. The Book on the Bookshelf. (New York: Knopf, 1999)


4Petroski, p. 44.


6, 7, 10, 24, 25

8, 9, 21, 29, 54, 56, 57, Middleton, Bernard C.


19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 42, 45

22Foot, Mirjam M. Bookbinders at Work. (OCLC WorldCat Identities). (viaf.org/viaf/9965957/), accessed 27 February 2019.

32, 33, 35Middleton, Restoration, p. 102.

36For an image, see Middleton, English Craft Bookbinding, p. 61.


38, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45


42, 43, 44, 45


49, 50, 51

50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57


62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67Bagford, p. v (introduction by Michèle Valerie Cloonan).


69Foot, Mirjam M. Bookbinders at Work. (OCLC WorldCat Identities). (viaf.org/viaf/9965957/), accessed 27 February 2019.

70Savary des Brûlons. His dates are from Hathi Trust’s catalog record for the original 1612. (OCLC WorldCat Identities). (viaf.org/viaf/137250886/), accessed 31 October 2018. The main entry does not include dates, but under “alternative names” some catalogers have included them.

71de Gauffecourt, p. 9 & 14.

72Foot, Bookbinders at Work, p. 41.


76Middleton, English Craft Bookbinding, p. 271, 273.

77Middleton, English Craft Bookbinding, p. 271, 273.

78Prideaux, Sarah. Treveronian. 1853-1933.


84Middleton, English Craft Bookbinding, p. 271, 273.


89Middleton, English Craft Bookbinding, p. 271, 273.

90Middleton, English Craft Bookbinding, p. 271, 273.


95Middleton, English Craft Bookbinding, p. 271, 273.

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