

BOOKS ON THE OCEAN ILLUSTRATING CLOTH BOOKBINDING IN THE 1800'S

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ABSTRACT: Several factors influence bookbinding: how much the publisher wishes to spend on binding; the publisher's judgment on the type of binding likely to appeal to a book's readership; the state of binding technology; and, the contemporary climate of design. Using examples from books on the ocean, this presentation will discuss developments in bookbinding in the 1800s including the Victorian influence on design.

KEYWORDS: Documents; Historical Account; Libraries

Several factors influence book binding: how much the publisher wishes to spend on binding; the publisher's judgment on the type of binding likely to appeal to a book's readership; the state of binding technology; and, the contemporary climate of design.

The Victorian influence on design dramatically shaped bookbinding in the 1800s, going so far that quantity of ornament was intended to imply beauty, sometimes verging into aesthetic excess, with decorations irrelevant to book content. Developments in cloth bookbinding are discussed by decade, keyed to the bibliography, and corresponding to books held in the Scripps Institution of Oceanography Library. Color illustrations of those bookbindings are available on the University of California eScholarship Repository at <http://repositories.cdlib.org/sio/lib/6/>

Before the 1820s, books were published in paper wrappers or within paper boards (Agardh, 1817). Books were then bound singly or in small batches, usually in leather, to specification of customer or bookseller.

In the 1820s, books were first bound in cloth, offering a presentable, inexpensive binding of permanence (Donovan, 1834). Titles were printed on paper and glued to the spine, which was common into the 1840s.

In the 1830s, gold was first used on the spine, usually for a title surrounded by a decoration (Jardine, 1837). Style was influenced by Regency tastes. Gold stamping called blocking was accomplished using gold leaf applied with heated presses, with albumen, called flair, applied to the cloth to adhere the gold leaf. Cloth patterning, called graining, was introduced in the 1830s. Graining was frequently leather-like in

appearance, and accomplished with embossing rollers (Jardine, 1837; Smith, 1833). Blind blocking, which is uncolored pattern stamping, was introduced in the 1830s (Gifford, 1850; Gosse, 1860). Paste-on paper labels continued in use through the 1830s and later (Woodward, 1851).

In the 1840s, covers almost universally had blind lines called rules and had blind cornerpieces, frequently with gilt titles and vignettes. (Gifford, 1850; Harvey, 1849; Howard, 1846). Ink blocking or stamping, nearly always with black, was introduced in the 1840s. Black was used instead of gold for economy. Black and gold were used together in the 1860s and after (Gosse, 1855).

In the 1850s, spines were commonly gilt, with one spine design sometimes used for a series (Landsborough, 1852; Sowerby, 1854; Landsborough, 1857). Blocking or stamping appeared in gilt and colors (Gosse, 1860). Bookbinding style was influenced by High Victorian tastes in the 1850s (Schmucker, 1858; Maury, 1859). After Perry's visit to Japan in 1853, trade in Japanese decorative objects influenced Western art and design. Some bookbinding designers reflected that Japanese influence in their designs (Wood, 1857). Cover designs were sometimes signed, oftentimes on the back cover (Wood, 1857). In the 1850s through 1860s, cloth was in short supply or more expensive at times, leading the development of what's called the yellowback, which has printed paper covering cheap boards (Wood, 1857). Paper onlays on covers were introduced in the 1850s, and used thereafter (Marshall, 1913).

In the 1860s, the climax of the Victorian influence on book design was reached (Lord, 1867; Mangin, 1868). Pictorial blocks were widely used in the 1860s, particularly for natural history books (Harper, 1860). Decorated lettering and asymmetrical designs were introduced (Houghton, 1870). A copper-zinc alloy called Dutch gold was used as a substitute for gold leaf for economy (Gray, 1867). There was an increasing use of black and colored ink blocking since it cost less in materials and labor than gold blocking (Emerton, 1880).

In the 1870s, increasingly ornate designs appeared in addition to the now-seemingly understated designs (Hibberd, 1872; Simmonds, 1879; Thomson, 1874). Covers became increasingly pictorial in the 1870s (Buckland, 1876; Landrin, 1875; Wild, 1877). Book design could sometimes be decoration for the sake of decoration, known as Victorian excess (Kirby, 1875). Gold, black, and other colors as well as blind uncolored blocking were used as masses in design in the 1870s, instead of being used as counterpoints in design (Ballantyne, 1874).

In the 1880s, silver blocking using aluminum was introduced (Newcomb, 1882; Whympere, 1884). Excessive designs continued, and re-use of stamps for other books could result in an irrelevant spine pictorial for a book on the ocean, like bee hives. (Anonymous, 1880; Wood, 1889). There was an increasing use of multiple colors in blocking in the 1880s (Bennett, 1889; Hartwig, 1887). Book covers could be painted

pictorials in the 1880s and later (Marshall, 1895). Art Nouveau design style appeared on book covers (Duncan & Duncan, 1912, Shaler, 1894; Step, 1901).

By the 1920s, book jackets became the vehicle to make a visual impression on the prospective buyer (Chrisp, 1958). Since bookbindings were now hiding under book jackets, cloth bookbindings were usually simplified for economy. However, interesting bookbindings continued to be produced (Johnson & Snook, 1927).

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