THE BINDER COMETH!

or

The Story of the Librarian and

the Library Binder

by

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ABSTRACT
Commercial bindery methods used by library binders will be described, followed by a discussion of the decision-making processes used by librarians in the binding of their collections. Also discussed are the process of choosing a commercial library binder, the library binding contract, the inspection of bound volumes and the need for the education of librarians that will produce intelligent cooperation between the librarian and the binder.

Once upon a time...

Once upon a time in a library far way, when the season for binding was upon them, the librarian faithfully sent the books and serials in need of binding to the faithful commercial library binder. The librarian knew that the binder would "impose physical order on unruly issues of serials and revive books that would otherwise be retired" (3) What the binder decided to do with those serials and monographs was of no concern to the librarian because as all good librarians knew, the binder would provide them with "Class A" library binding. The only concern of librarians was that the bound volumes find their way back to the library on a predetermined date "with text blocks firm-
ly attached, covered in the desired shade of buckram, spines accurately stamped and all volumes neat and tidy. (3)

The Times they are a'changing...

Today we simply cannot assume that the binder will proceed in a manner compatible with the developing field of library preservation, nor can we impose on the binder the total responsibility for choosing the best method available among the new binding technologies. We must come to understand these technologies and realize that library binding as a preservation option can and should be manipulated to fit the nature of the collection that is to be bond.

The binding mystique...

The most familiar of all terms to librarians involved with binding is the term "Class A" binding. This term came into use with the introduction of sewing machines into the bookbinding process. Simply stated -- Commercial library binders used efficient oversewing machines and this type of binding was referred to as "Class A" binding. Therefore "Class A" binding was synonymous with oversewing of the text block as well as the buckram covered case enclosing the text block.

OVERSEWING is the heart of "Class A" binding and has traditionally been considered the strongest method of binding and the preferred method of leaf attachment. (4) This method requires that the spine of each volume be run over a rotary blade, milling off the glue and/or original sewing, thereby reducing the volume to a block of loose sheets. Then a small section of these loose sheets is sewn together. Next, a second section of loose sheets is sewn to the first section creating a cumulative block. More sections are added in the same manner until all the loose sheets have been sewn into a comprehensive text block. (7)

Oversewing sacrifices 3/8" of the inner margin (thereby eliminating volumes with narrow inner margins) and the paper must be in a good strong condition. In addition, the bound volume will not lie flat when opened, a distinct disadvantage in this age of photocopying.

Other alternatives to oversewing, each with its particular advantages and disadvantages are as follows:

SEWING THROUGH THE FOLD offers the best of the binding techniques, it is conservative, non-damaging to the text and rates excellent in "openability." It is also slightly more expensive than oversewing and can only be used if the text has been produced in signatures or single signature format such as Mariners Weather Log. A more modern method is DOUBLE FAN ADHESIVE binding. This binding method presents a wide range of grades of performance evaluation. (7) First the spine of the text block is shaved to produce a uniformly flat surface. Then the text block is fanned and a thin layer of long-lived, very stretchy adhesive is applied to the edge of each page, either by roller or by hand. At the end of this process, the procedure is repeated in reverse, that is, fanned in the opposite direction and another layer of adhesive applied. Double fan adhesive binding results in a book with good "openability," the loss of only a minimal part of the inner margin and unusually good strength, especially if the paper is not a stiff coated paper.

If the paper is stiff and coated, some binders use a machine called a Mekanotch machine. This machine has been used in Europe for close to a decade and is just now making its way to binderies in the U.S. (6) The Mekanotch machine cuts thin slits in adjustable patterns on the spine of the
text block and allows optimum linkage between the paper and the adhesive by increasing the surface area exposed to the adhesive. (4) This results in added bonding and strength and allows most textblocks to be bound with confidence. Since there are many binders who do not do too much with double fan adhesive binding, the librarian should explore this method with the binder and ask that he become proficient in its use.

RECASE (NEW CASE ONLY) is used when the text block is sewn in signatures, the sewing and thread are sturdy and all the leaves are attached. The binder cleans the old glue from the spine, reglues and relines it, and attaches the textblock to a new cover or case. This method preserves the testblock in its original condition while giving it the protection of a new case. If the volume to be bound is too damaged or consists of paper in a brittle condition a CASE or PHASE BOX can be custom made to protect the volume from further deterioration. Other options are BINDING FLUSH WITH THE BOTTOM which will probably result in dirty page edges but will prevent the text block from tearing loose from the cover; SIDE-STITCHING and CLEAT LACING which will not be discussed since in both instances the same or better results can be obtained with double fan adhesive binding. TRIMMING of serial issues is no longer considered necessary, as wide margins and easy issues separation are preferred to nice uniform edges, that serve aesthetic purposes only.

The ultimate choice...is up to you

Choosing a binder actually begins with learning about binding technologies and putting that knowledge to practical use in the library. One way to begin is to develop a flow chart for making library binding decisions. The first step in drawing up a flow chart is to define the collection being bound (i.e. describe its nature and intended use). Based on that definition and careful consideration of the binding methods previously described a set of guidelines for the library binding staff can be constructed. (2) The following flow chart suggests a possible approach. In it binding techniques have been put in priority order based on their ability to fulfill these requirements.

1. Minimal alteration of the text block.
2. As non-damaging to the text block as possible.
3. The bound volume should open easily to a 180 position to facilitate photocopying.
4. Bound volumes should stay open on a flat surface so the reader will have his hands free to take notes.

In choosing your library binder, look for one that follows the specifications of the Standard for Library Binding as set forth by the Library Binding Institute. This will insure that all major specifications are met and that you will receive the most suitable binding that is technologically available. It is also worthwhile, if you are choosing a binder to request that each binder under consideration submit samples of their work. Samples are selected by the library and should be typical of a normal bindery shipment. The samples should be as uniform as possible so that all binders under consideration are working with similar problems.

If bids are required by your institution, the bid sheet should include all items required by the LBI specifications. When the bids are returned, the prices and types of service can be compared and a binder chosen. In some cases, more than one binder may be selected and different types of binding sent to each binder.

The last and most important item is the binding contract. Its major concern is the type of service the library will receive from the binder.
The binding contract should name the person(s) authorized to make decisions on the method of leaf attachment and the specifications should comply with those of the Library Binding Institute Standard. The contract will also include delivery schedules (books should be returned within 4-6 weeks), insurance (for your materials), transportation, responsibility for binding or lost material, authority for changes in specifications and, of course, price, manner of invoicing and terms of payment.

The Return of the bindery shipment....

When the bindery shipment has been safely returned, it is the librarian’s responsibility to check the shipment for errors and quality of workmanship. Shipments should be checked, ideally, by visually checking each volume, but at the very least by the inspection of random volumes. The following page illustrates the inspection guidelines used by the University of Connecticut Libraries.

The *Library Binding Institute, Standard for Library Binding* has been mentioned several times in this paper. These standards, first published in 1923, have just been issued in their 8th edition (1986). Earlier editions of the Standard specified sturdy materials, strong methods of leaf attachment and widely accepted production techniques. (5) Strength was judged to be the best measure of quality and all Library Binding Institute Standards prior to the 8th edition had set out to embody that principle. (5) The 8th edition introduces the need for decision making and describes the five methods of leaf attachment. It introduces many options such as end-paper construction, mending, trimming of text block and "casing in flush." (5) The new Standard requires a greater degree of understanding and communication between librarian and binder, to insure that the appropriate match of problems and solutions will occur. For this to take place, the binder and librarian must be aware of their respective abilities and needs.

GUIDELINES FOR INSPECTING LIBRARY BOUND VOLUMES UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT LIBRARIES

1. INSPECT THE UNOPENED VOLUME

- **Spine Stamping**: Is the spine stamped correctly (i.e. does it match the binding slip and text)? Are lines properly positioned, both vertically and horizontally? Are letters evenly impressed and crisp?

- **Covering Material**: Is the covering material clean (i.e. free from dust and greasy fingerprints)? Is it smoothly and completely adhered to both boards?

- **Joints**: Are the joints (grooves on either side of the spine) parallel to the spine, and uniformly and adequately deep?

- **Rounding and Backing**: Is the spine of the text block properly shaped at both the head and tail? Do the boards fit correctly below the shoulders of the spine? (If the volume is very thin, or has been recased, the spine may be square or somewhat misshapen. This is acceptable only in these cases.) Lopsided: Flat Concave Correct

- **Squares**: Are the squares (the edges of the boards that extend beyond the text block at the head, foredge, and tail) even, and an appropriate width (1/16" to 3/16", depending on the size of the text block)?
Trimming: Do the edges of the text block appear to have been trimmed? They should not be if the library has a no-trim policy. If trimming is allowed, has text or have parts of illustrations been trimmed away?

2. OPEN THE VOLUME TO ITS APPROXIMATE CENTER; LOOK DOWN THE HOLLOW OF THE SPINE, BETWEEN COVERING MATERIAL AND TEXT BLOCK

Spine Lining: Does the spine lining extend to within 1/2" of the head and tail of the spine? Is it smoothly and completely adhered? If the volume is heavy or thick, has an extra paper lining been adhered over the cloth one? If the volume has been recased, was the spine well cleaned before relining? It should be free from old adhesive and paper.

3. OPEN BOTH BOARDS SO THAT THE INNER SURFACE OF EACH BOARD CAN BE INSPECTED

Endpapers: Are the endpapers smoothly and completely adhered to the boards? Are they properly positioned so that the squares of the boards appear uniformly wide? Are the edges of the endpapers straight-cut and smooth?

Turn-ins: Are the turn-ins (the margins of cloth that wrap from the front of the boards onto the inside) uniform, and approximately 5/8" wide? Are the edges straight-cut and smooth?

Spine Lining: Does the spine lining extend onto each board at least 1"? Is it uniformly wide, head to tail, on each board?

4. EXAMINE THE BINDING SLIP; LEAF THROUGH THE TEXT BLOCK

Specific Instructions: Have all instructions on the binding slip been followed, including choice of method of leaf attachment (if one has been made)?

Endsheets: Is the style of endsheet appropriate for the method of leaf attachment used? Have endsheets for recased volumes been sewn on through the fold?

Interface between endsheets and text block: Open the volume between the endsheets and the first and last pages of the text block. For text blocks that have been double-fan adhesive bound, is the endsheet tipped no more than 1/4" onto the first leaf? (Ideally it should be less.) For text blocks that have been recase, is the gutter between endsheets and first leaf neat and free from the residue of old spine lining?

Text Block: Are all leaves securely attached? Are their edges free from adhesive that inhibits their opening? Are leaves in the correct order? Have all paper repairs been made neatly, and with appropriate materials? (If the library has a policy for making all repairs in-house, have paper tears been noted by the binder?) For volumes that have been oversewn, does sewing run into the print?

5. A WELL BOUND VOLUME SHOULD OPEN WELL AND STAY OPEN.

For various reasons, this is sometimes not an achievable goal. The paper may be stiff, for examine, or its grain may run at right angles to the spine of the volume, rather than parallel
to it. A high percentage of all volumes, however, should have good openability. If this is not the case, the library and the binder should reconsider existing guidelines for selecting methods of leaf attachment.

The Learning process...

The process of self-education (and it will be self-education, for where in most library schools do we learn how an Ehlermann fan guier works?) can begin in the following manner.

1. **READ** Since we do not have, as yet, a comprehensive textbook on library binding we must rely on significant articles in library publications such as the *New Library Scene*. Librarians should also be thoroughly familiar with the *Library Binding Institute Standard for Library Binding*.

2. **OBSERVE**—Visit the bindery with which you do business or any bindery close to your own library. Watch closely to see what happens to material as it is bound and inspect text blocks in various stages of processing.

3. **INSPECT**—Carefully check binding shipments checking to see if they fulfill such requirements as "openability" and conservation of text block.

4. **ATTEND CONFERENCES**—Don’t pass up the chance to learn from other librarians and binders. Keep an eye out for new training and self-education opportunities.

5. **WRITE**—If you have unanswered questions, write to the Library Binding Institute, or the Library Binders Relations Committee (PLMS/R-TSD/ALA) with your questions and/or suggestions for desired information or publications.

And they lived happily ever after... Even with the advent of the "on-line library," we continue to collect veritable mountains of information on paper and to rely on the library binder for assistance in the control and preservation of that paper. As librarians learn more about library binding and concern themselves with the choice of binding methods most suitable to their collections, the dialogue between librarian and binder will become that of informed colleagues instead of suspicious adversaries. Librarians will be taking an active role in the decision process necessary to bind and preserve the collections they have worked so hard to acquire.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**