

**Conservation Practice Carried Out on the Main Collection  
of the Library of The School of Library and Information  
Science at the University of Western Ontario**

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*Introduction*

The School of Library and Information Science, a graduate school in Library Science, with a masters and doctorate program, is located in Elborn College at the University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario, Canada. The school along with its computer lab, media lab, and conservation lab has its own library and archives. The library consists of a special collection and main collection (a general academic research collection). The main collection consists of 60,000 volumes, which is periodicals and monographs, varied in age, binding structure, paper quality and size.

From the founding of the school in 1967, the binding/conservation area was set up by the writer to take care of the schools collections. It was decided that the serials would be sent to a commercial library binder to be bound and that all the repairs would be carried out within the school conservation lab. The main collection became the collection with the heavy demand for repairs. Damage was accelerated with the physical stress placed on materials as a result of the constant use of the collection due to the schools trimester system.

*Policy and procedures of repair and housing materials*

- A. School librarian makes final decisions as to what must be repaired, weeded or diverted to storage.
- B. Damaged materials are spotted at times by the circulation library assistant and directed to the librarian, who in turn consults with the conservator.
- C. Materials newly acquired, that are in need of proper housing, or in need of repairs are referred directly to the conservator.

*Repair and Housing of Materials*

The repair work is carried out by the conservator and student assistants from the school who are trained by the conservator. Materials completed of their repairs are returned to the processing section to be replaced in the collection.

*Category of Materials*

- A. Monographs and serial materials leather bound from late 19th century – mid-20th century.
- B. Monographs with hard cover, cloth bound or synthetic material, sewn or adhesive bound (perfect binding).
- C. Monographs (paper back), sewn.
- D. Monographs (paper back), adhesive bound (perfect binding).
- E. Monographs hard cover, staple sewing structure through cloth support to hold the signature together.
- F. Pamphlets flat stitched with staples or thread sewn.
- G. Pamphlets saddle stitched with staples or thread sewn.
- H. Monographs/pamphlets spiral bound (plastic or metal).

*Repair Procedures*

**Monographs with sewn signatures hard cover in a state of disrepair.** Are removed from their covers, spine saturated with a poultice of methyl cellulose paste to remove paper and cloth lining. After the removal of the old lining and cleaning of the glue from the spine, the spine is wiped with a solution of calcium hydroxide which acts as an acid neutralizer. Weak signatures at front and back of the volume are

strengthened by repair and sewing if necessary. A double folio end paper is sewn on back and front of the volume which is then lined as follows:

Wheat paste is used as the adhesive, to attach lining support of a thin Japanese paper which is the primary lining material for the spine, followed by the headband. Airplane linen is used as the major support for lining up the spine, reinforced by mulberry Japanese paper. Depending on the thickness of the spine of the volume, additional paper may be used to give the spine further support.

If the old cover can be repaired and used, this is done by inserting a piece of airplane linen to reinforce the spine and joint of the covers and corners. An alternative method is to use new materials for the spine and corners, thereby converting the covers to a half-binding style, saving the original spine lettering, and using it as a label for the book.

**Monographs adhesive bound (perfecting binding) hard cover.** Are given similar treatment as far as the retention of the original covers. The exception being: old adhesive and lining material is shaved away. Then the spine of the volume is roughed, glued with PVA and given single folio endpapers, round and backed and lined up with PVA (with the same type of lining-up procedures as the sewn monograph).

**Leather bound books.** Once the cleaning of the spine is completed, original endpapers which can be marbled, decorated or with illustrations are saved and repaired if necessary. The lining up procedure is carried out as previously mentioned for sewn monographs. New leather is used to reinforce the outer joint of the cover and corners, by lifting the old leather and inserting new leather pieces. Japanese paper is used to reinforce the inner joint. An alternative method is to use a strip of Japanese paper to reinforce both outer and inner joint and then colour the new paper with water colour or acrylic paint to blend in with the old material. If the covers cannot be reused, new covers are made, labels saved. If not, new lettering is carried out.

**Monographs: paper back (adhesive bound) single sheets.** Old adhesive is shaved away. Polyvinyl Acetate is used to reglue the spine, the book is endpapered, round and backed. PVA and lining materials as previously mentioned are used throughout the lining up process. The book is then bound in a hardcover buckram binding. The original paper covers are placed on a guard in front of the title page and after the last page the textblock. The original spine label is placed on the spine of the new binding.

**Monographs: paper back (with soft covers sewn) signatures.** The paper cover is removed, adhesive cleaned off, spine treated with calcium hydroxide, double endpapers sewn on to accommodate the original paper covers which are attached inside the volume in front of half title or title page and next to last page of the text block. The book is bound in a hardcover buckram binding, and the procedures similar to the single leaf adhesive bound book mentioned above, are carried out.

**Staple bound volumes (with hard cover).** One of these volumes turns up once in a while and poses some difficulty, as most of the time these books are stapled through a piece of fabric which is in a state of decay. These books have to be taken apart (pulled and re sewn if they prove to be important). Resewing and binding procedures are carried out as needed, covers repaired and reattached or new covers made, etc.

**Pamphlets.** These come in standard sizes, 9" x 13", 8 1/2" x 11", and 9" x 6", flat stitched, saddle stitched or spiral bound. Covers for housing these materials are generally made in the conservation lab by student assistants. Pamphlets that are flat stitched usually have their original binding support removed: staples, etc. A single sheet of heavy-duty acid free endpaper is placed front and back and stabbed with an awl approximately 1/8" from the spine with five holes along the length of the spine. The pamphlet is sewn with double linen thread through the endpaper stock on which a single folio endpaper is attached. The spine of the pamphlet is lined with thin Japanese paper followed with air-plane linen. The cover is then attached. A computer printed label is made for the spine. The original cover of the pamphlet, if any, is fixed to the single

sheet endpaper stock next to the title page by cutting away most of that sheet and using the part left on the pamphlet as guard.

**Saddle stitched pamphlets.** A double end paper is placed around the cover of these materials. A strip of airplane linen is attached to the outer sheet. The pamphlet is sewn with double linen thread through the centre of the fold, along sewing style, and then placed in an hard cover, usually a square spine rather than a curve spine. This allows the computer label to be placed on the spine, making it easier to read on the shelves.

**Spiral bound materials.** These materials usually have their binding support removed. Single sheet, heavy duty acid free endpaper stock is placed on front and back, sewn through in five or more places through the original holes and given the binding treatment of regular pamphlets. If the book is 3/4" or more thick, and has a projected research value over a long period, it is round and backed, lined up as per usual, and given a hardcover, full or half bound.

### *Conclusion*

The treatment practice in the conservation lab is carried over into the conservation course taught in the school by the conservator. The procedures mentioned are part of a continued experimental process. Ideas for repairs are drawn from colleagues in the profession, my experience in archives and rare book conservation and the observation of binding structures throughout years of experience. I am open to new ideas and suggestions, and welcome further discussion on the subject.