

Paperback Rebinding at a Library Repair Station

To a great extent, the methods of paperback rebinding are imposed by acquisition and circulation policies and bindery preparation routines. Paperback “reinforcement” and paperback “stiffening” are remote from the province of conservation treatment and preservation departments typically have no option for in-house paperback rebinding. This situation may require more preservation department initiative as unsewn, paperback books further infiltrate fine edition and scholarly publications and as the maintenance of these materials starts to influence conservation repair work.

I wish to offer a personal perspective on the rebinding of paperback books. Of course, damaged paperbacks are first considered for library binding. However, I will discuss an in-house rebinding method for these items that includes new double fan rebinding of the text, but does not involve new cover production. This method is intended for on-demand production within daily operations of a library. It is produced at a small repair work station using small scale equipment that can be mobile or stored under counters.

The transfer tape binding method presented here provides a flat-backed, double fanned text with card stock boards. This is an unusual binding, but not because of the use of transfer tape. It is neither a “hardback” or a “paperback”. Instead its structure is related to the earliest codex binding which emerged almost two thousand years ago.

The uniqueness of the early codex binding structure is illustrated in its action. The boards are attached to the text at the gutter edge, that is to say, in exact registration with the folds of the supplied end papers. The board is not set back and the opening motion is transmitted directly to the book.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED

A list of equipment and supplies is attached. The double fan vise, vertical plow and small guillotine need a solid counter top, but they can be mounted on a mobile table or

the equipment can also be unclamped and stored under a counter. A stiff cutting-out knife is essential both to supplant dangerous and inadequate scalpels or dry-wall knives and to improve efficiency with book edge glided trimming. Board cutters and guillotines are contaminated with transfer tape trimming, but both the vertical plow and cutting-out knife are immune from such contamination.

PREPARING DAMAGED PAPERBACKS FOR REBINDING

Double fan binding technique can be introduced into both hardback and paperback book repair. It can be the last option for damaged sewn books that are now too brittle to be mended and resewn. It can also be applied to broken adhesive binding in paperback binding which is the subject of this discussion.

A critical issue is the preservation of gutter margin. The margin may already be small and books with bleed illustrations will not tolerate trimming regardless of the available gutter margin. Texts misshapen by heavy use can cause errors in trimming and may need intermittent hand division prior to trimming. Conventional guillotine clamping and trimming in this class of work is fairly uncontrollable across a range of items. The vertical plow is a better trimming alternative. It offers supported jogging to visible bed gauges and permits very thin, shaving trims that can be followed by intermittent hand release of any sealed pages.

MAKING A TRANSFER TAPE REBINDING

The transfer tape binding is easy. Single fold end papers are needed in an eighty to one hundred pound text weight. Proceed to forward the text as usual for double-fan, flat-back work. Sand across any fresh cut gutter edge. Re-jog the text with outer folios of endpapers and double fan using a poly-foam roller applicator and high-solids adhesive. Seal the adhesive by sliding a pinch grip along the text

back. Apply and rub down a cambric that extends onto the pastedowns. Follow this with a docile paper lining the width of the text back. Season the freshly adhered texts between stacked wooden press boards.

The tape covered boards should be prefabricated prior to a work request. Prefabrication should be extended to all possible aspects of this rebinding method to assure the quickest turn-around. A suggested transfer tape for the boards is 3M 465 or 924 in an eight inch width. These tapes release an unsupported film of adhesive from a paper carrier. Their bond is stable and the adhesive is an inert acrylic. The boards can be produced from .20 tan card stock in an 8" x 10" working stock. Using a divider, mark 7 mm from the long edge at either end of the cards. This will indicate the gutter set-back of the transfer tape film.

Working on a clean table, roll out sufficient tape and lay down a number of the cards. Make the first contact along the gutter edge matching the tape edge to the 7 mm marks. The tack is immediate and the card must be laid down carefully. Trim out the cards using a cutting-out knife, releasing them from the tape roll.

Now apply tape to the other side of the cards. In this application contact the card flush along the gutter edge. Again release the tape faced cards using the cutting out knife. Then make a score cut through the release paper about .5 cm from the set-back tape edge along the gutter. Make this score by eye. This is a "hanging-in" strip that will enable an adjustable gloving of the wrapper cover to the text. The resulting card is a production size to accommodate books in the nine by seven range. Larger production board sizes are possible with multiple tape applications.

Now bond the boards to the double fanned text. It is completely satisfactory to pitch the board on by eye, removing the release layer opposite the set-back side, and aligning the gutter edge of the board exactly to the back of the text. Also align the board to the right (head or tail) edge of the text. Lay the board down carefully and seal it to the book with hand pressure. Flip the book and bond on the other board. Now trim out the overlapping card edges using the stiff cutting-out knife gliding along the book edges. It is not necessary to use a straight edge.

The spine and joints of the wrapper cover should be reinforced with a paper lining. Tear out any loose layers of paper from the spine area of the cover and bond in a light weight paper that extends well over the joint area. After pressing establish a reverse joint crease 8 mm back from the spine creases using a straight edge and folder. Attach the wrapper cover to the text beginning with the upper or front cover. Peel away the release paper from the gutter hanging-in strip. Position the cover to the book and seal it to the exposed tape strip. Turn the book over, expose the back tape strip and tightly wrap the cover around. Any short fall of the cover should then appear on the back. If

satisfied with the fit, peel out the remaining release sheets and rub down the cover. Corner rounding at the foredge will toughen the finished rebinding.

ADVANTAGES OF THE TRANSFER TAPE BINDING

The in-boards construction of the transfer tape binding eliminates case making and casing-in. Also eliminated is costly equipment such as presses and casing boards. No drying time is needed and the covers are not influenced by humidity. The waterless process of the transfer tape binding eliminates much bindery maintenance and clean-up associated with liquid adhesive. The transfer tape construction also permits stock piling of prefabricated cards which are immediately available for use on a given item.

The finished binding is attractive and will not sag on the shelf. The binding lies flat beside a key board or face down on a copier. The spine of the cover is not distorted by the opening action and spine labels remain adhered and undamaged. The finished binding is lighter and more compact than case binding and the printed wrapper cover is salvaged for its intended use eliminating the need for any label making or stamping.

It is best to think of this work outside of bindery conventions. The transfer tape binding assembly involves packaging skills and accurate, quick handling of prefabricated components. This work could be done near the circulation desk or in a corner of the stacks. At the same time, transfer tape binding is rewarding and meaningful. It recreates a structure that disappeared over a thousand years before the advent of printing. This archetype of the first codex book which was invented by north and eastern African cultures and craft workers, can now be returned to use in a different, digital era.

EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES FOR A PAPERBACK WORK STATION

EQUIPMENT

- 1) Peter Jermann "Fan Gluing Press", Gaylord Bros., P.O.Box 4901 Syracuse, NY, 13221, 1-800-643-6307.
- 2) Louet Vertical Plow, TALAS, 568 Broadway, Suite 107, New York, NY, 10012, 212/219/0770. (for trimming off damaged adhesive binding)
- 3) Martin Yale, 7000e 12" table-top cutter, 251 Wedcor Avenue, Wabash, IN, 46992, 219-563-0641. (for production of endpapers)

TOOLS

- 1) edge gilding cutting-out or "paper knife" knife, Bookbinder's Warehouse, 908-264-0306
- 2) Teflon folder

MATERIALS

1) 0.20 file folder stock, Conservation Resources International, 8000-h Forbes Place, Springfield, VA, 22151, 1-800-634-6932.

2) 100 lb. Mohawk Superfine paper or folded endpapers from Library Binding Service, Des Moines, IA, 1-800-247-5323

ADHESIVES

1) transfer tape, 3M #415 1/4" from Gaylord 800-448-6160, 3M #465, 2 mil high tack ADH, acrylic A-40 adhesive, 8" x 60 yards, from local tape/adhesives suppliers.

2) Ultraflex, double-fan PVA adhesive, Mekatronics, Inc., 85 Channel Drive, Port Washington, NY, 11050, 516-883-6805.

3) PVA for general use, Bookbinder's Warehouse 732-264-0306.

INFORMATION

1) BookLab, Inc., 1606 Headway Circle, Austin, Texas, 78754, 512-837-0479. www.booklab.com, gary@booklab.com

GARY FROST
Library Conservator
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