The broad spectrum of book conservation

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Contents:


• New style book conservation: new materials and techniques.

• How to decide what is the best conservation method?
• Conservation = preserving the text, not the binding
  • Original material is lost
  • Original structure is lost
  • Historical evidence is lost

UB Leiden (photo: Karin Scheper)
“OLD STYLE” CONSERVATION: REPAIR AND/OR RECONSTRUCT
GOAL: USABLE
RESTORE IN “ORIGINAL STATE”

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RESTORE IN “ORIGINAL STATE”

- Interferes deep in the book’s structure
- Original material is lost
- Re-interpretation
- Unclear what is authentic and what is new
- Time consuming
BOOKBINDER

BINDER-RESTORER

RESTORER-CONSERVATOR

“OLD STYLE” CONSERVATION

GOAL: PRESERVE THE TEXT
RECONSTRUCT
TRADITIONAL MATERIALS
TRADITIONAL TECHNIQUES
The broad spectrum of book conservation by Femke Prinsen (UBL/NA)
Symposium „Handschriften und Alte Drucke“, Blaubeuren 20 October 2014
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(UBL/NA) Symposium „Handschriften und Alte Drucke“, Blaubeuren 20 October 2014
RESTORER-CONSERVATOR → “NEW STYLE” CONSERVATION
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"NEW STYLE" CONSERVATION

GOAL:

• PRESERVE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS
  ➔ STABILISE FOR FUTURE USE

• INTENDED USE

• MINIMAL INTERVENTION

• PRESERVE ORIGINAL MATERIALS

• REVERSIBLE

• DOCUMENTATION

• THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

• NON-TRADITIONAL MATERIALS

• NON-TRADITIONAL TECHNIQUES

CLIMATE CONTROL AND PREVENTING OTHER HAZARDS

SHIFTING PRIORITIES (PROJECTS, LOANS)

BOOK HISTORY BOOK ARCHEOLOGY STUDIES IN BOOK CULTURE ETC

BOOKS MUST BE AVAILABLE

BOOKS AS HISTORICAL OBJECTS

DIGITISATION

CLIMATE CONTROL AND PREVENTING OTHER HAZARDS

RESTORER-CONSERVATOR

DIGITISATION

BOOKS AS HISTORICAL OBJECTS

BOOK HISTORY BOOK ARCHEOLOGY STUDIES IN BOOK CULTURE ETC

CLIMATE CONTROL AND PREVENTING OTHER HAZARDS

SHIFTING PRIORITIES (PROJECTS, LOANS)

BOOKS MUST BE AVAILABLE

BOOKS AS HISTORICAL OBJECTS

DIGITISATION
New techniques & materials

- Boeken na 1800 (Books after 1800) at Leiden University Library
- Beat-the-binder
- Treat books in a way that the time and costs are compatible with rebinding

UB Leiden
New materials

Japanese paper
• Paper made from the fibres from the bark of the paper mulberry (kozo)
• Durable, strong chemically inert, stable, resistance to ageing
• Available in different thicknesses
Japanese paper in conservation
• Used for paper repair

HAB Wolfenbüttel
Japanese paper in conservation
• Used for mending bindings
  • Can be dyed in every color
  • Nuances by combining papers of different thicknesses
Japanese paper in conservation
• Used for mending bindings:
  • Repairing tears and holes in paper bindings
Japanese paper in conservation
- Used for mending bindings:
  - Repairing broken joints in paper bindings
Japanese paper in conservation

- Used for mending bindings
  - Filling in losses in covering material

Linen
Japanese paper in conservation
• Used for mending bindings
  • Filling in losses in covering material
  • Parchment (laminate of Japanese paper)
Japanese paper in conservation
• Used for mending bindings
  • Filling in losses in covering material
  • Leather (layers of Japanese paper)
Japanese paper in conservation

- Used for mending bindings
  - Filling in losses in covering material
  - Leather (Japanese paper as papier-mâché)
Tyvek (Dupont) in conservation
- A flexible, paper-like fibrous, spun-bonded (non-woven) polyethylene
- Different thicknesses, two varieties: smooth & perforated
- High resistance to tearing
- Durable, pH neutral, and water proof
- Chemically inert, resistant to aging*
  *tested by Instituut Collectie Nederland
Tyvek (Dupont) in conservation
- Can be dyed but with some difficulty (Deka Silk, fluid acrylic dye)
- Can be coated with (dyed) japanese paper
- Must be applied with Evacon* instead of more traditional glues

*Ethyleen Vinylacetaat, (strong, flexible, water soluble, pH neutral, reversible, inert)
Tyvek (Dupont) in conservation
• Alternative for parchment: filling losses
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Tyvek (Dupont) in conservation
- Alternative for parchment: filling losses
New techniques & materials

- BOEKEN NA 1800
  - Early (semi) industrial books
  - Case-bindings in (half) leather and (half) linen
  - Hollow backs
New techniques for hollow backs:
• Reattach detached spine covers with a hollow
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New techniques:
Supporting layer
New techniques: Reattaching detached boards
New techniques: 
Reattaching detached boards
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New techniques for older books: taken the new methods to the next level

Tight backs, laced-in boards, raised sewing supports in (half) leather
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New techniques:
Adopting the methods for hollow backs for binding tight backs
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New materials and techniques

- Advantages:
  - Less intervening in the book structure
  - More material is preserved
  - Faster & easier

- Disadvantages:
  - Not yet proven itself in course of time
  - Negative gut feeling about ‘synthetic’ materials
  - Danger of choosing the “easy way”
…sometimes a traditional conservation method is the only option
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Is treatment always necessary? → Alternatives for treatment

Protective housing: boxes & conservation wrappers
Is treatment always necessary?  → Alternatives for treatment

User instructions

HAB Wolfenbüttel
Is treatment always necessary? → Alternatives for treatment
Use digitised versions instead
Is treatment always necessary? → Alternatives for treatment
Wait for new treatment methods...

... or new research techniques

Apocalyptico Project
(High contrast X-Ray Microtomography)

Educe Project
(High Resolution Micro-CT scanning)

HAB Wolfenbüttel
Is treatment always necessary?  → Alternatives for treatment
To repair or not to repair?

Sometimes broken is better:
The binding functions even better
Is treatment always necessary? → Alternatives for treatment
Alternatives: to repair or not to repair?
Sometimes seemingly broken is better
Is treatment always necessary?  → Alternatives for treatment
Alternatives: to repair or not to repair?
Sometimes seemingly broken is better
Is treatment always necessary?  → Alternatives for treatment
Alternatives: to repair or not to repair?

Sometimes seemingly broken is better

• History is acknowledged
• Book structure is visible
• Psychological effect in handling the book
How to decide what’s best?

- Value of the book (functional, material, aesthetic, financial, historical etc)
- Personal experiences, skills and preferences
- Wishes of the client
- Available resources (financial, practical etc)
- Alternatives to treatment
- Risks of treatment
- Available treatment options
- Necessity of conservation
- Function and future use of the book
- DECISION

Value

- How to decide what's best?
- Wishes of the client
- Available resources
- Alternatives to treatment
- Risks of treatment
- Available treatment options
- Necessity of conservation
- Function and future use of the book
- Value

DECISION

- How to decide what’s best?
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DECISION

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Thank you for your attention
(I would be happy to answer any of your questions)
New techniques

- From pilot project for books from the 19th century
  ➞ method for much older books, such as medieval manuscripts

HAB Wolfenbüttel
Japanese paper in conservation
• Used for mending bindings
  • Japanese Paper Method by Don Etherington:
    Strips of japanese paper to repair broken joints and
    reattach board of small, light-weight leather and
    linen bindings

Picture taken from: Grandinette and Silverman, “Book Repair in Research Libraries”, in
_Abbey Newsletter_, (1995) Vol. 19, Nr. 2
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New techniques: Detached boards, lose spine covers and losses in leather
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Breviarium Cisterciense (Strasbourg, late 15th century)
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[Hunc librum] Monialibus in Woltingerode pertinet
cum duabus clausuris pulchre dominus laucha disposit

[This book] belongs to the nuns of Wöltingerode,
With two fastenings Herr Laucha had provided it really pretty
Once more: thank you for your attention