

Conservation Book Repair: A Training Manual

by
Artemis BonaDea



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CONSERVATION
BOOK REPAIR:

A
Training Manual

Artemis BonaDea
Conservation Technician
Alaska State Library
Alaska Department of Education
Juneau, Alaska

ILLUSTRATED BY

Alexandra Prentiss
Tigard, Oregon

1995

CONSERVATION BOOK REPAIR

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PREFACE

Many conservation book repair programs in Alaska owe much to the author of this work. Artemis BonaDea has spearheaded the education of Alaska library personnel in these techniques since 1988. Beginning with brief presentations and one-on-one training in the 1980s, she has presented workshops in several Alaska locations since 1990.

In 1990, the Continuing Education Committee of the Alaska Library Association (AkLA) and the Library Coordinators of the Alaska State Library identified training in book repair and conservation as a high priority. In response, AkLA applied for and received an Interlibrary Cooperation Grant to offer three conservation-style repair workshops across the state. When added to previous presentations, at least one or two sections of this publication were presented in Palmer, Homer, Sitka, Juneau, Fairbanks, and Anchorage. In varying the length of presentation and location during the workshops, we determined what worked best in training and what hand-outs proved most useful. We also discovered that, while the hands-on workshops were very helpful, the trainees inevitably had questions when they returned to their libraries to face repair problems on their own. In addition, not all portions of the state could be offered these workshops, although we still believe that hands-on training works best for this subject. We considered a video tape as an alternative, but soon settled on a medium which would be universally accessible to all small libraries in the state: the written word with numerous illustrations.

As the workshops came to an end, this book began to take shape. Artemis had developed handouts for the presentations and in response to telephone requests. Subsequently, several individuals volunteered to follow the methods of conservation book repair found in this volume and offer suggestions in the attempt to make the language and illustrations as clear as possible. The explanations found in the publication have been field-tested in workshops as well as by individuals who have not been able to attend the workshops.

The Alaska State Library and the Alaska Library Association collaborated in producing this publication, but primary credit must go to Artemis BonaDea who has worked very hard to make this a successful publication. Artemis received training at the University of Washington, the University of Iowa, and Johns Hopkins University. Her work on this volume is artful, accessible, knowledgeable, and exacting: the same as her repairs. We are delighted to present this book to Alaska libraries and hope that it proves to be helpful. We will appreciate any comments and suggestions.

Kathryn H. Shelton, Librarian III
Alaska Historical Collections, Alaska State Library
Alaska Department of Education
Juneau, Alaska
August 1995

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Many professionals in the broad field of conservation/preservation have also given time and support to this project. Kate Leonard of the University of Washington deserves special mention as time and again she answered my basic questions and explained her reasoning for various repairs. Her input has made this a better volume.

In addition, Normandy Helmer of the University of Oregon; Carol Pratt, a private conservator in Eugene, Oregon; and Joyce Jenkins of the Petersburg Public Library, Petersburg, Alaska, also deserve special thanks for reading various drafts and sharing their comments.

I wish to gratefully acknowledge Jane Greenfield, the Library of the New York Botanical Garden, the American Library Association, Andrea Krupp of the Library Company, and the staff of the American Philosophical Society for permission to reprint some of the illustrations and instructions in this volume.

It has been a pleasure to work with Alex Prentiss. I can only wish every author as fine an illustrator and co-creator as she has been.

Artemis BonaDea
Conservation Technician
Alaska State Library
Alaska Department of Education
Juneau, Alaska
August 1995

I. INTRODUCTION

Most of a public library's resources are spent on collecting, cataloging and circulating material. While much effort goes into acquiring books and paper materials, little follow-up occurs in caring for that same material.

Book and paper materials receive a great deal of use: they are pulled off the shelf roughly, stuffed into backpacks, forced onto photocopiers and dumped into book drops. In addition to ongoing patron and staff use, the books in a library collection are constantly aging; many are expensive and difficult to replace.

Caring for a library collection is a large task. Each library, regardless of size, must choose how to care for its collections. Successful book repair is an important component of a collection development and maintenance program.

In the past, maintaining a library collection was usually accomplished with plastic tape and household glue. Unfortunately, these products do not lead to successful repairs. Books return for repairs again and again or are discarded when they are damaged beyond repair. In many cases, the fault lies with the repair choices, not the book.

The basic concepts used in conservation book repair, such as using materials that are stable and reversible, were originally introduced to care for rare book collections. These same practices and materials can be successfully adapted to repairing non-rare books, and it is the intent of this manual to teach these techniques for use in circulating and reference collections.

A. USING THIS MANUAL

While it can be difficult to learn practical, hands-on skills from a book and tempting to jump right into a repair technique without reading the introduction, PLEASE resist the urge. The introduction to each technique explains how to choose a particular technique and why that technique works while others do not. With a solid understanding of these principles and techniques, it is possible to quickly evaluate damaged books and choose the treatment that will lead to a successful repair.

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A **GLOSSARY** on page 173 explains some of the terms used in this manual that may not be familiar.

B. CHOOSING BOOKS TO REPAIR

Choosing which books to repair is the first step in any successful book repair program. Because each library is unique, one library's guidelines for retaining or repairing books may be very different from another's. Taking the time to create guidelines that are realistic and consistent with the needs of a collection can insure the well being of library materials and the effective use of staff time.

Before choosing to repair a book, ask questions such as:

- Is this book a candidate for weeding? Is the information misleading or has it been superseded by a new edition or a better book on the subject? Is the information trivial, of no discernible literary or scientific merit or irrelevant to the needs and interests of the library's patrons?
- Has the book previously been repaired using improper or damaging techniques? Is the book worn beyond mending or rebinding? Should this book be replaced or sent to the bindery? Is it easier and cheaper to purchase a replacement copy rather than repair the old volume?

It can be a difficult decision to not repair a book. However, the urge to save every book is unrealistic because some books cannot be effectively repaired and should be replaced. Learn to choose the books that can be repaired and those that cannot so the library collection will be in better condition and staff time will be better utilized.

Choosing the proper repair for a book and carrying out that repair takes knowledge and skill. In a small library, the person who makes the repair decision will probably be the person who repairs the book. In a larger library, that process might be shared by two staff members, in which case, both people need to understand the principles of book construction and repair.

After deciding to repair a book, choose the best kind of treatment. If a volume is to be replaced or withdrawn after one more circulation or when a replacement is purchased, mending it quickly using non-conservation repair methods such as clear plastic tape, might be an option. If the book is needed for a longer period of time or is part of a permanent collection, always repair it using conservation repair techniques such as those outlined in this book.

C. DETERMINING WHY A BOOK NEEDS REPAIR

It is important to determine why a book needs repair.

- Has it been damaged through carelessness or simply through use?
- Was it manufactured in a way that caused the damage?
- Has an old repair failed or caused more damage?
- How have previous repairs hindered the mechanics (the way the book opens and closes, the way the pages turn) of the book?

Look at the kind of paper used in the book and how the book is constructed.

- Is the book constructed in signatures (folded pages that can be sewn or glued together)?
- Is the book constructed in single sheets glued or oversewn together?
- Is the paper coated and shiny?

All these factors should be considered when choosing to repair a book and deciding what techniques to use.

Examine the volume carefully and determine how it is constructed. **BOOK STRUCTURE CONSTRUCTION** is discussed in detail on page 7. Determine which part of the structure failed and which repair technique is most suitable. Some books were not constructed to be repaired and will never successfully be put back together. Repair time and skills are valuable so use them on the books that are worth repairing and have lasting value. Remember, choosing not to repair a book is not a value judgment about the contents of a book. The concern is to choose the type of treatment that a book will receive.

D. PLANNING REPAIRS AND THE WORKSPACE

- Read the directions for any repair thoroughly before attempting the repair.
- Make sure the workspace is large enough to work comfortably. Clear away excess objects and have the tools and materials needed close at hand.
- Think about where the repaired books will dry. Materials that are glued or pasted must dry under weight or the paper will buckle.
- If the book has several problems, start with the simplest and work toward the most complex. In general the text block is repaired first (torn pages, damaged signatures, etc.) then the cover (rebacking, mending damaged corners, etc.). The last part of the book to be repaired is the attachment of the text block to the cover (the crash and endpapers).
- Try to group similar types of repairs together. In addition to saving time and materials, repeating the same repair several times is a good way to improve repair techniques.

E. PRACTICING REPAIRS

- Initially, it's a good idea to practice each repair either on a book that has been withdrawn from the collection or on plain paper. Different types of paper and different book structures will react differently to the paste or glue. For instance, shiny, coated paper will not absorb as much moisture as uncoated paper so less paste is used on the latter kind of paper. See page 12 for a discussion of types of paper.
- Read the explanation and instructions before beginning a repair. Take time to assemble all the tools and materials called for in the instructions.

- Reread the instructions after practicing a repair two or three times. They will probably be more understandable and some questions that came up during the repair may be answered. Once it is clear why and how a repair works, it is easier to choose a technique to match a particular repair need and not rely on the written instructions.

The materials and techniques used in conservation book repair should not damage books and, if a repair is not successful, it can usually be reversed and repeated. Be aware of your skill level and limitations. If a repair is too advanced, wait until you have more experience. Practice these techniques to improve your skills. Above all, keep working.

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