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# Plainly Spoken: A Traveling Exhibit Sponsored by the Midwest Chapter of the Guild of Book Workers

Miller, Julia

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# Plainly Spoken

*A traveling exhibit sponsored by the Midwest Chapter of the  
Guild of Book Workers*

Design bindings on *Books Will Speak Plain* by Julia Miller,  
accompanied by books in the University of Michigan  
(Special Collections Library)

Julia Miller  
Guest Curator

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31 January – 10 April 2014  
Audubon Room  
University of Michigan Library  
Hatcher Graduate Library North in Gallery Room 100  
Ann Arbor, Michigan

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You are cordially invited to attend the exhibit lecture

*Plainly Spoken:  
Remarks on the Book, the Binders, and the Bindings*

Julia Miller

4:00 – 5:30 p.m.  
11 February 2014  
Hatcher Graduate Library North in Gallery Room 100

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Acknowledgments:

The Midwest Chapter of the Guild of Book Workers thanks the following individuals who, through determination and hard work, have made this exhibit possible: Mary Uthappuru, Exhibits Coordinator, and Jurors: Richard Baker, Brea Black, and Linda Samson-Talleur, and all of the venue coordinators. From the University of Michigan Library: Pablo Alvarez, Cathleen A. Baker, Melissa Gomis, Thomas Hogarth, Mary Morris, Kirsten Neelands, Aisha Wahab, and especially Julia Miller.

Exhibition Schedule

11 November 2013 – 6 January 2014  
Kenneth Spencer Research Library  
University of Kansas  
Lawrence, Kansas

31 January 2014 – 10 April 2014  
University of Michigan Library  
Ann Arbor, Michigan

22 April 2014 – 8 July 2014  
Newberry Library  
Chicago, Illinois

14 August 2014 – 30 November 2014  
University of Iowa  
Iowa City, Iowa

6 February 2015 – 26 April 2015  
Minnesota Center for Book Arts  
Minneapolis, Minnesota

For more information, please visit: <http://midwestgbw.wordpress.com/exhibits>

In 1998, Julia Miller began the monumental task of sifting through notes and observations made during her thirty-year career as a book conservator and scholar. Eight years later, supported by a grant from the Samuel H. Kress Publication Fellowship administered by the American Institute for Conservation, she began to write a book-length manuscript. The resulting publication is the award-winning *Books Will Speak Plain: A Handbook for Identifying and Describing Historical Bindings* (Ann Arbor: The Legacy Press, 2010). This 528-page book is written for conservators, collectors, librarians, curators, and book lovers.

The Midwest Chapter of the Guild of Book Workers is delighted to showcase Miller's book in this theme-based exhibit. Bookbinders from across the country acquired the book and, months later, presented their bindings to a jury. *Plainly Spoken* includes a range of bindings: models that replicate books from an historical period, cutaways that visually reveal their hidden structure, design bindings that interpret a concept from the text, and artists' bindings that play with structures and materials to create something new. Complementing this exhibit are historical bindings from the University of Michigan (Special Collections Library), selected by guest curator Julia Miller because of their relationships to the competition bindings.

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## The Eye of the Beholder

When we look at any made object, artistic or otherwise, we record it first subjectively: What is it? Do I like it? Will I want to look at it longer? Do I ever want to look at it again? Would I want to have it/use it? What is it worth to me? What is wrong with it? And then objectively: What is it made of? How is it put together? How does it work? Is there anything wrong with it? It is the combination of our subjective and objective responses to objects in our world that result in our judgment of the value, importance, and usefulness of the things we create.

The bindings in this exhibit call forth these two responses, but since we are looking at surfaces only, the mechanical aspects of a codex, the "How does it work," are not available to us, and so we cannot judge how the binding and the text pages interact in the roles of protector and information carrier. We assume at some basic level that all codices are

equal in terms of operation, and in the opening/page-turning/closing sense, they are all equal. There is more to it than that, however, and questions can arise: How *well* does it open? How *well* do the pages move? How *well* does it fit in the hand? But in this particular exhibit, we confine our observation to the design, materials, and workmanship of the covers alone.

We can look at the covers of each of these bindings then and discover the elements that inform us about the binder's response to the idea behind the exhibit: making a one-of-a-kind binding on copies of the same book: *Books Will Speak Plain: A Handbook for Identifying and Describing Historical Bindings*. As we study each cover, we can learn about the binder, and how the design, materials, and execution all reflect each binder's response to the original book.

Seventeen bindings were chosen by a jury of peer binders to appear in this exhibit organized by the Midwest Chapter of the Guild of Book Workers. The bindings range in design and decorative style from very traditional to very unusual. They work inside and outside the rectangular space that most book covers represent, and they are presented here for your reaction. They are accompanied by images of historical bindings that all appear in *Books Will Speak Plain*, along with historical binding examples from the University of Michigan (Special Collections Library) that are meant to give the viewer context for the historical references made by some of the covers.

This book was a challenge to those who bound it: it has 528 pages, was printed in thirty-seven sections/signatures of varying thicknesses on a fairly heavy, coated paper, and for those binders who began with the book in sheets, many hours were consumed by sewing, shaping, lining, attaching the boards, trimming the text block, and in some cases decorating the text edges, and trimming the text block before endbands were made or the cover was even begun.

The results are beautiful, strange, unsettling, comfortable, classic, plain, ornate, and puzzling. They are indeed "Plainly Spoken" but all in individual ways, and now it is up to you to interpret what is being said.

Enjoy!

Julia Miller

Photography for *Books Will Speak Plain* dust jacket and wall images: J. Wayne Jones

### Tall Case, Left • Images

- The addition of this black-leather roundel on the upper and lower covers of Jane Squire's 1743, *On Longitude*, decorated in gold with symbols taken from Squire's theory on how to determine longitude, sets this book apart from the typical trade bindings produced in the eighteenth century. The decoration of the binding breaks a long-held belief of historians of the book that binding decoration prior to 1800 did not have a direct connection to the text. Recognizing the unusual on an otherwise typical binding underscores the value of studying every type of historical binding.
- Jane Squire was clearly an educated woman. She paid for the publication of her book and for the binding as well, but her ideas were not taken seriously by the committee judging the proposals for determining longitude in eighteenth-century England. This quotation is from one of the many letters she wrote to committee members defending her thesis and asking for equal treatment of her theory among the proposals submitted by men. The quotation reveals her faith and her love of philosophy and mathematics, as well as her sense of humor.
- This is a page from Squire's book, illustrating the symbols that were also gold-tooled on the roundels on the book's covers. [BWSP, Fig. I.4–I.6]

### Tall Case, Top Shelf, Left

*Books Will Speak Plain:*

*A Handbook for Identifying and Describing Historical Bindings*

Julia Miller

The book in its dust jacket is shown here along with a copy in sheets (F&Gs), which are the printed and folded sections (signatures) of the book, collated (gathered) and ready for the binder. Many of the binders who are represented in the exhibit began with a set of sheets; others removed the book's binding and replaced it with their interpretative binding. Also on this shelf is the author's copy of Jane Squire's 1743 book *On Longitude*, which was chosen to appear on the dust jacket.

## Tall Case, Bottom Shelf, Left

Anna Embree

Half-leather case binding with marbled-paper sides; false raised bands, sewn silk endbands; blind tooling; and leather label.

*Anna Embree is Associate Professor in the MFA in the Book Arts Program in the School of Library and Information Studies at the University of Alabama. She has a strong interest in the physical and material aspects of book structures, has collaborated with printers and papermakers on limited-edition handmade books, and has exhibited widely.*

Julia Miller: Anna Embree has created a handsome half binding of goatskin with marbled-paper sides; the term “half binding” refers to the amount of leather used here for the leather spine and edging. The leather on the fore edge is elegant but also protects a heavily used area of any binding: the mid-fore-edge area. Half bindings of leather and plain or decorated paper were very common on casebound books like this one in the late nineteenth and well into the twentieth century. Compare Embree’s half binding to those of Howe and Kellar and the corners on the cutaway binding by Karen Hanmer; also compare it to the nineteenth-century Cole book [12.] among the historical examples.

Scott Kellar

Modified laced-in lapped component binding using laminated paper printed from polymer plates; sewn over four tapes; text-block edges trimmed and colored; goatskin “pre-pairs” (patches) pasted, sewn, and/or laced-on; ink, vinyl, and acrylic-paint decoration. This binding references those intriguing books that have accumulated layers of history, home repair, and minutiae that often work to obscure one another. The composite often reveals an engaging makeshift elegance, offering clues to the history of its long and varied life.

*Scott Kellar has been binding and restoring books for over forty years. He worked in the bindery at the Newberry Library and was Collections Conservator at Northwestern University. He is now in private practice in Chicago.*

Miller: As Scott Kellar explains, his binding on *Books Will Speak Plain* is composed of layers that reference the history of bookbinding, reflecting his long career in book conservation and his deep understanding of the history of the craft. Reasons why old books continue to retain value for us beyond their intellectual content are the marks and mends and the very wear patterns that books exhibit when they have been handled again and again. Kellar's binding refers directly to the traditions of recycling materials and repairing-rather-than-replacing traditions that have been strong for almost the entire history of the codex. Kellar adds a sly reference to the many types of indicator tabs owners themselves often attached to pages in their books with his inked fore-edge "tabs."

### Tall Case, Center • Images

Caii Suetonii Tranquilli (ca. 69–122 CE)

*De vita XII Caesarum*

Florence, P. de Giunta, 1510

This copy of Suetonius's *Lives of the Twelve Caesars* is a wonderful example of what might be called a "skeleton binding." Almost all of the original red goatskin has detached from the wooden boards, revealing a rich amount of structural information, much as Korbel's sampler binding below informs us about material choices, and Karen Hanmer's cutaway on the shelf below reveals binding materials and structure. Damage to an historical binding is unfortunate, but it can also be a mine of information for scholars. [*BWSP* Figs. 2.17, 2.17XI]

Mich. Ms 131

*Hassein*

15th or 16th c.

Mich. Ms 131 is an Ethiopian manuscript believed to date from the fifteenth or sixteenth century. The exposed spine and bare wooden boards of this very typical Ethiopian binding style can also be considered a kind of skeleton binding, though it was never intended to have a cover. This book has many repairs, both on the cover and within the text block. The images show the repaired spine, the strip of parchment visible on



the inside and outside of the lower board, holding the two halves of the board together, and a page of text with a mend crisscrossing a split in the parchment. [BWSF Figs. 1.7x2–1.7x5]

### **Tall Case, Top Shelf, Center**

Barbara Korbel

Quarter alum-tawed leather; sewn on five raised cords; sides covered in a variety of materials historically used on books: vellum, papyrus, wood, leather, linen, bookcloth, and paper; boards decorated with various sewing supports; front panel features first lines of the text printed on paper and covered with transparent vellum; blind-stamped title.

*Barbara Korbel is the Collections and Exhibitions Conservator at the Newberry Library in Chicago. She has been making historical models for fifteen years as a way of understanding the evolution of the craft. She teaches workshops across the country.*

Miller: Barbara Korbel has used her cover to create a materials sampler for historical bindings. Samplers are a useful teaching aid and the old sampler cards and books that many trades created to show off and sell their products are a wonderful resource for scholars interested in the history of all types of materials. Korbel also refers to underlying structure by bringing the ends of her sewing supports out onto the cover. The binding design refers to two major didactic opportunities for binders studying examples of historical binding: structure/underlying materials made visible by design (see the exposed sewing/spine linings on the Nishizu, Howe, Krase, and Ensign bindings) and structure/underlying materials made visible by damage, also well illustrated by the image from Suetonius's book above this binding.

Whitney Baker

Full-leather binding using two contrasting colors of leather sewn together to mimic a former repair; top edge colored to highlight knife marks; upper and lower covers blind-tooled; sewn silk endbands; and handmade paste-paper endsheets.

*Whitney Baker is Head of Conservation Services at the University of Kansas Libraries in Lawrence, Kansas. She studied bookbinding at the University of Iowa Center for the Book and conservation at the University of Texas at Austin and the Library of Congress. She has been a professional conservator since 1998.*

Miller: Whitney Baker references common historical binding practices in her design: the thrifty piecing of odd bits of material together for covers and the use of sewing to mend a cover, to mend a slit in a cover, or simply to add decoration. The warmth and beauty of the materials Baker employs recalls the many plain but handsome historical bindings contained in our book collections. Compare Baker's binding to the spines of the Kellar and Nitzberg bindings where the makers employ stitching to attach and enhance a secondary spine, and to the O'Connor binding with its reuse of materials pieced together for the binding.

### **Tall Case, Bottom Shelf, Center**

Karen Hanmer

Full-goatskin binding sewn on flattened cords; handsewn silk headbands; marbled endpapers with leather hinge; head sponged with acrylic inks and sprinkled with gold leaf; original dust jacket bound in; and blind and 24K gold-foil tooling emphasizes the location of sewing supports, board attachment, turn-ins, fills, sanding of boards, and formation of corners.

*Karen Hanmer's artist's books and design bindings intertwine cultural and personal memory and are often playful in structure or content. She exhibits internationally, and her work is included in collections ranging from the Getty Museum and the Library of Congress to Yale University and Graceland. She lives in Glenview, Illinois.*

Miller: Karen Hanmer has created a cutaway-style binding to show the stages of forwarding a book (all the steps through covering) and finishing the book (decoration and titling). The binding reveals structural elements (sewing supports, sewing, linings, endbanding) and board preparation

steps (lining, sanding, back cornering). Cutaways are a useful teaching tool for explaining and replicating all types of book structure. Compare this binding to other didactic bindings in this exhibit (Ensign, Howe, Korbel, Krase, Nishizu), which reveal structural elements to greater or lesser degree, and to the wall images and historical bindings from the University of Michigan (Special Collections Library) included in this exhibit.

Robert Hanmer

Full-calfskin tight-back binding with laced-in boards; sewn on raised cords with handsewn silk endbands; marbled-paper endsheets made by Pam Smith; top edge colored with acrylic paint; Cambridge panel with goatskin onlay; and label stamped in 23K gold foil.

*Robert Hanmer has always liked books and now bookbinding, which he has been studying for more than ten years. Employed as a software architect, he has also written two technical books. He lives in Glenview, Illinois.*

Miller: The use of linear frames achieved by scoring, stamping, or tooling is one of the oldest methods of decorating the usually rectangular shape of a binding. Robert Hanmer's binding refers to a traditional style of binding decoration—the Cambridge panel—so called because it is believed to have originated with Cambridge binders in the late-seventeenth century. Such blind-tooled and stained panel designs were a less expensive alternative for those who wanted a decorated binding but did not want to pay for gold tooling. Hanmer has created a retrospective binding that remains close to the traditional while including non-traditional touches.

### Tall Case, Right • Images

Mich. Isl. Ms 247

Egyptian or Syrian manuscript, undated

Crummer Ms 3

St. Albertus Magnus (1193?–1280)

*De Creatures: De Homine, Pars II*

Late 14th or early 15th c.

Isl. Ms 247 is believed to have been written sometime in the fifteenth century in a Mamlūk Syrian or Egyptian hand. The text is on prophetic

medicine and the beautiful names of God. These two bindings have several things in common with the Pullman binding below. Both bindings employ gold decoration in variations of the panel-frame style Pullman uses, a style that is perhaps the oldest and most natural use of space when decorating a rectangular surface. The use of semé or repeat-pattern decoration to fill frame space and the center-and-cornerpiece style seen on the Islamic binding would both become part of the standard repertoire of binders for centuries. The major difference between the gold decoration on the Pullman binding and that on the two manuscripts is that the latter was made with incised patterns inpainted with liquid gold, rather than by the use of heated tools that affixed gold leaf to the leather, the technique that Pullman used. The “new” technique of gold tooling is believed to have originated among Islamic binders in the fifteenth century and was carried to the West by craftsmen, perhaps via Venice. [BWSP Figs. 1.10, 2.5]

Mondino dei Luzzi (d. 1326)

*Matthaei Curtii...in Mundini Anatomien Commentaries Elegans....*

Leiden, apud T. Paganum, 1551

Whimsy as an element of decoration is not confined to any period of hand bookbinding, as this small vellum binding on a 1551 imprint from Leiden illustrates. The diagonal painted stripes in gray, green, and brown are very attractive and enhance what would otherwise be a very plain little binding. The text gatherings are sewn on three tawed-skin supports, the ends laced into the cover. The endband supports at head and tail are also tawed skin and also laced in. Nishizu’s “dots” along the sides of the spine reference such lacing. Nishizu uses translucent vellum that is scraped very thin but is still very tough, while the vellum used on the 1551 book is also thin but very flexible, and has been prepared with talc to achieve a creamy surface. The two holes on the fore edge of the older book are anchorage holes pierced in the upper cover for two tawed ties that would have had mates on the lower cover; all four ties have now broken or been trimmed away. [BWSP Fig. 2.4]

## Tall Case, Top Shelf, Right

Jana Pullman

Bradel binding with black-goatskin spine and fore edges; boards covered in brown goatskin; handsewn silk endbands; marbled endpapers with leather hinge; and gold and blind tooling represent historical tooling patterns: Aldine: fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; semé: fifteenth century; frame work: seventeenth century; and Roger Payne: eighteenth century.

*Jana Pullman is a bookbinder, book conservator, and book-arts instructor. She is the owner and operator of Western Slope Bindery, a fine-press and book-conservation business based in Minneapolis, Minnesota. She teaches workshops around the country.*

Miller: Jana Pullman's binding is to decoration what the Korbel and K. Hanmer bindings are to materials and structure: a sampler of historical blind- and gold-tooling designs, all typical of a given period of book decoration. Pullman's binding design refers to the book salesman's samplers of the nineteenth century, when salesman visited homes, taking subscriptions for popular titles. Their samplers showed the purchaser the available cover materials, decoration, titling styles, and price. Comparisons to Pullman's sampler are: the Aldine cameo binding on *Il Libro del Cortegiano* (1528) [2.], the semé binding on the Estienne Bible (1551) [3.], the semé spine on the Condillac book (1776) [9.], and the panel bindings on the Boethius (1656) [6.] and Dalyell (1835) [10.], all in the Short Case.

Elaine Nishizu

Non-adhesive *dos rapporté* book structure; sewn on cords and blue Japanese paper concertina using black-linen thread; translucent vellum spine; University of Iowa Center for the Book (UICB) paper over the boards and endsheets; title and author's name embroidered on handmade Japanese paper; and black-parchment and linen-thread decoration. Drop-spine box (not shown) with integral cradle covered in bookcloth and UICB paper.

*Elaine Nishizu lives and works in Los Angeles, California. She has studied*

*bookbinding at the American Academy of Bookbinding, Centro del Bel Libro Ascona, various workshops, and with Eleanore Ramsey.*

Miller: Elaine Nishizu has made a binding that combines translucent but tough vellum and the strong handmade paper made at the UICB, still referred to by some as “Barrett Papercase Paper.” Nishizu used a construction technique called *dos rapporté*, an interesting choice for a very heavy book and related to ledger bindings. The spine construction allows the book to lay completely flat when opened, a desirable characteristic for a book of reference. The translucent-vellum spine reveals the black-linen thread wrapping the cord supports on the back of the text block. The whimsical black parchment and colorful stitched “dots” along each side of the spine emphasize the line of sewing and reference the lacing points for sewing supports seen on many historical vellum and paper bindings.

### **Tall Case, Bottom Shelf, Right**

Ethan Ensign

Packed two-on sewing on partial accordion fold with double cords; Plexiglas boards with inset materials and titling; leather hinges with suede doublures; silk endbands with bead on the back; painted text-block edges; reverse endcaps; and leather onlays.

*Ethan Ensign has been a bookbinder and conservator for nineteen years. He still cannot stop dreaming about books.*

Miller: This complex binding and design by Ethan Ensign combines historical elements with twenty-first-century exuberance. The use of leather for the cover is the earliest historical element: leather has been used for codex book covers since at least the fourth century. His use of cut-outs is also ancient, and his leather onlays recall the very old decorative technique of appliqué used by many cultures and on many Coptic book covers from the eighth to the tenth century. His use of onlay also refers to the black-goatskin roundel added to the covers of the Squire book used for the dust jacket of *Books Will Speak Plain*. Ensign reveals a bit of packed sewing around raised supports on his spine, a sewing style used since the twelfth century on Western bindings.

## Anne McLain

Full-leather; hand-marbled paper used as pastedowns; “Ingres”-paper flyleaves; acrylic-paint edge decoration with silver-foil tooling; handsewn silk endbands; blind and silver-foil tooling on cover.

*Anne McLain is a graduate of the North Bennet Street School Bookbinding program in Boston. She is a Book Conservation Technician at the Northeast Document Conservation Center in Andover, Massachusetts.*

Miller: Anne McLain has made a quiet binding of gray leather decorated with silver-foil tooling. She uses line and decorative rolls and a variety of small ornamental tools to create a feathery, tall-grasses effect. She sprinkles the book title among the lines of decoration with the author’s initials tooled in a bright-red circle of leather. The simplicity of the design is charming, and McLain, like Ensign, breaks free of the usual rectangular imperative of the book cover. Scholar Sue Allen described book-cover designs of the 1880s as “bursting the bounds” as the cover became a palette, and the restrictions of designing only within a rectangular framework, mental or actual, ended forever. Traditional binders and many designers still love the rectangle, and many artists love to break out of it.

### Short Case, Left • Images

Roger Asham (1515–1568)

*The Schoolmaster, or, Playne and Perfite Way of Teasching Children*  
London, Printed by Abell Ieffes, 1589

Emily Brontë (1818–1848)

*Wuthering Heights: A Novel*, vol. 1  
New York, Harper Bros., 1848

These two books are separated in time by over 250 years, but the paper bindings share a common denominator: they were both intended as temporary covers to be rebound in something a little more sturdy and permanent, once purchased. We are fortunate to have these two books, both containing very important texts, as originally bound. Compare these to the papers used on Nilan’s cover, Nishizu’s paper sides, and the flax papers

used on the Krase and Woodrick bindings. Today thousands—perhaps millions!—of books are published each year with paper as the permanent cover, unless wear or damage intervenes and the book requires rebinding. [*BWSP* Figs. 5.8, 6.32]

### Short Case, Top Shelf, Left

Jeff Nilan

Cover is a collage of paper and photograph fragments adhered to a sheet of Japanese paper, waxed, and used to wrap the boards. In his work as a photographer and book artist, Nilan generates leftover trimmings from large paper pieces, fragments of paper weavings, and snippets of photographs, all of which were used for this binding.

*Jeff Nilan received his MFA from Indiana University where he also taught for a number of years. His work is influenced by his roots and upbringing, as well as the landscape and culture of the Midwest. He is an Associate Professor of Photography at Ohio Wesleyan University, Delaware, Ohio.*

Miller: Jeff Nilan uses a collage of many small pieces of paper so well joined together that the cover is completely smooth. Shades of indigo, black, pale green, and cream predominate, and the overall effect is like an architectural layout, and it also reminds me of what the fields of the Midwest look like from an airplane. Nilan's binding is solidly rooted in the ancient bookbinding tradition of saving bits and recycling them into a binding. His use of paper covering recalls the long history of that material; paper was used as early as the fifteenth century, though such examples are very rare, and of course, paper cardstock is a familiar book-cover material these days. Nilan's book cover is both gorgeous and tough as nails; his use of red typewritten letters for titling is a nice blast from another past.

Deborah Howe

Cutaway vellum spine with alum-tawed leather over bands; sewn on raised cords; endbands and corners based on an historical binding found in library collections; handmade papers for covering and endsheets; and



blind-stamped title. Relief under the covering and along the spine edge reveals the simplicity of the structure beneath as found on the worn cover of the historical binding.

*Deborah Howe is Collections Conservator at Dartmouth College Library in Hanover, New Hampshire. She has taught classes at Columbia Center for Paper and Book and the Newberry Library, and currently teaches bookbinding classes at the Book Arts Workshop at Dartmouth.*

Miller: Deborah Howe has loosely based her binding on an existing historical example; she uses a vellum spine with large vellum corners and plain blue-paper sides. Vellum corners are extremely strong and resistant to wear and bending that is the most common damage they tend to sustain. (See the Condillac [9.] for an example of a quarter-leather binding with vellum tips.) Howe has cut away the vellum over her raised bands to reveal tawed-skin overbands, added as an extra support and protection for the sewing and the spine of the text block, an interesting structural experiment. Look at Embree's half-leather variation: a leather spine, marbled-paper sides, and a leather fore-edge lining.

### Short Case, Center • Images

Mich. Ms 141

*New Testament*

Written by the scribe, Vasil

Edessa, Armenia, 1161

Pairing this Armenian binding with the O'Connor binding was irresistible given the strong materials and massive presentation of both bindings. The metal studs used to decorate the cover of the *New Testament* are referenced by the metal boot catches on the spine leather of the O'Connor binding. The spine-restraining effect of traditional Armenian sewing and binding structure is echoed by O'Connor's use of a thick-leather boot top. The inside of the lower cover of the Armenian manuscript shows the sturdy nature of this binding: leather turned in over a thick wooden board and the wrap of the cords through holes along the spine edge of the board, visible beneath the red-cloth lining. Note the notched area of the leather turn-ins at the head and tail of

the spine edge on the inside of the cover, with the ends of wooden pegs visible. There are three holes surrounded by adhesive residue and leather debris on the fore edge of the board where a piece of leather, serving as a fore-edge flap, was once attached; there would have been braided leather straps extending from the holes and across the fore-edge flap, catching on metal pins that would have been set in the upper cover. [BWSP Figs. 1.12, 1.12XI]

### Short Case, Top Shelf, Center

Todd Pattison

Full-leather binding with twelve detachable miniature books in a range of historical styles.

*Todd Pattison studied bookbinding with Fred Jordan in Western New York state in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and went on to study with Hugo Peller and Edwin Heim in Ascona, Switzerland. He has a Master in Library Science from the University of Alabama and is currently senior book conservator at the Northeast Document Conservation Center, Andover, Massachusetts.*

Miller: Todd Pattison has created a sort of puzzle binding (a historical binding style known as *reliure à surprise* in French and *Vexierbücher* in German). His sober black-goatskin covers are peppered with recesses for twelve miniature books, each a fully realized historical binding, each detachable and functional. The twelve miniatures cover the history of Western binding traditions from the early medieval up to the nineteenth century. Successful miniature binding requires proportional reduction in scale of materials and binding structure to achieve the correct proportion between size and decoration; it is not easy to do. Pattison has done a wonderful job, not only on the “big” binding but also on his miniatures.

Tawn O'Connor

This binding is made from work clothing, honest materials stained and paint-spattered from honest work. The ear buds bring this classic work

uniform—T-shirt, work shirt, denim jeans, and leather boots—into the twenty-first century and are a visual reference to a “speaking book.” The long single-strand end doubles as a place marker.

*Tawn O'Connor is a bookbinder and bookstore clerk in Baltimore, Maryland. She is fond of repairing books of humble origin, not particularly rare or valuable, but with great meaning to their owners, such as study Bibles with decades of notes handwritten in the margins.*

Miller: Today, the first question a design binder asks before planning a binding is: What does the text say to me? And if binding for someone else: What does it say to him or her? Tawn O'Connor was free to answer the question for herself and her response to the text clearly resides with the workaday, often plain, often beautiful, historical bindings that form the subject of the text. O'Connor's choice of cover materials added a challenge to make materials with wildly uneven thicknesses to behave well and allow the mechanical action of the book to occur. O'Connor uses the original attachments of the clothing for nice touches and surprises: the shirt-front edges button down the fore edge, the pockets are employed to store the DVD that accompanies every copy of *Books Will Speak Plain*, ear buds (the “speaking book”), and a note I wrote to her awhile ago.

### Short Case, Right • Images

Mich. Ms 164

Decimus Junius Juvenalis (60?–140?)

*Satyrae*

late 11th c.

*Sobrecarta de Una Carta Executorial a Pedimento de Miguel de Ortega  
Vezino....*

Granada, 1564

Numerous beautifully decorated long- and link-stitch bindings survive, and the spine of the Krase book accurately hints at the decorative possibilities. Both are multi-quire examples. The Juvenalis illustrates

an attachment system that features twisted vellum strips laced through corresponding holes pierced in the spine of the vellum cover and the fold of the text gatherings. The *Sobrecarta* is a massive single-quire binding containing 38 sheets of vellum folded in half and pierced through the fold, and secured through the cover with a single strip of alum-tawed skin, the two ends braided as a finish at the tail of the spine. The *Sobrecarta* construction hovers between the attachment practice of the long stitch and the tacket and might be described as either. [*BWSP* Figs. 2.22x1, 2.22; 3.19, 3.19x2]

Mich. Ms 30

*Four Gospels*

1430

The overcover on the Nitzberg binding reminds us that cloth was used for covering books, as both a primary cover and in the case of the Nitzberg binding, a secondary cover. Mich. Ms 30 features pieced remnants of a red and gold damask binding. Textile bindings tended to sustain damage and were often replaced with new bindings, and so early examples of the use of cloth for binding are rare and valued. The chemise style of covering, such as that depicted in Pamela Spitzmueller's drawing, was often detachable; the chemise might be the only covering of the boards or might protect a primary cover. The girdle book lying on the shelf in the drawing is a variation of a chemise binding and is usually found on fairly small books; compare with the Woodrick binding. The girdle book might have bare wooden boards or covered boards with a chemise added with a long enough extension of wrapping material to be caught into a knot that was affixed under the belt or girdle. It was a simple way to carry a book and be able to read it anywhere without the risk of losing it. [*BWSP* Figs. 2.19, 5.4]

### **Short Case, Top Shelf, Right**

Jill Krase

Long-stitch/bradel binding with walnut-dyed Cave Paper spine and endsheets; boards covered in blue/brown bookcloth; title gold-stamped

on terracotta-color leather label.

*Jill Krase is a bookbinder in private practice in Winona, Minnesota, where she also teaches binding workshops. She studied binding with Larry Yerkes, Priscilla Spitler, Jana Pullman, and Anna Embree at the University of Iowa Center for the Book. She has an MA in English from Illinois State University.*

Miller: Jill Krase has chosen an old stationery style of book construction known as a long- and link-stitch binding. This style of attaching the cover to the book via primary sewing that passes through the folds of text and the spine of the cover is traditionally found on account books used for hundreds of years to keep the business records of monasteries and businesses. This sewing style allows each page opening to lie perfectly flat, making it easy for the user to write in accounts. Many historical examples have spine reinforcements of thick horn, wood, or laminated leather and vellum. Krase provides a look inside the spine of her binding by punching out a pattern of holes that reveal the back of the text sections, a typical decorative touch also found on historical examples.

### Nancy Nitzberg

German case binding covered with handmade paste paper; sewn on three cords with added flyleaves at the front and back; two-color linen endbands; edges trimmed at the head and tail; fore edge opened but not trimmed; and the overcover made with fabric designed with Pamela Spitzmueller's drawings from the text. The binding is intended to evoke a sense of history. The design and materials construct a story of the book: remnants of a blue-paper wrapper present on its outer leaves as if from an earlier binding, a later German case binding, and a nineteenth-century North American-style overcover.

*Nancy H. Nitzberg is a book conservator who established Book-Care in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania, following a career in academic research libraries and a regional conservation center. She attended the conservation program at Columbia University, which included a one-year internship at the Library of Congress, and received an MS in Library Service and a Certificate in Library and Archives Conservation.*

Miller: This charming printed-cloth overcover is the finishing touch on a German-style decorated paper-case binding. The cloth features Pamela Spitzmueller's drawings done for *Books Will Speak Plain*. Nitzberg's use of an overcover references two much older versions of the same idea, chemise and girdle bookbindings. Nitzberg's overcover was also inspired by the non-luxury types of overcover typically found on the bindings of heavily used books throughout the history of bookbinding, added by a binder (or by an owner) as a protective cover or support for a damaged binding; reminiscent of today's dust jacket. Think the brown paper-bag cover you once put on your school books.

### Roberta Woodrick

Modified girdle binding; sewn on ramie tapes with linen thread; linen endbands; and walnut-dyed Cave Paper covering material.

*Roberta Woodrick is Assistant Conservator for the University of Kansas Libraries in Lawrence, Kansas. She has a background in textile design and an MA in Museum Studies with a three-year internship in conservation.*

Miller: Roberta Woodrick has taken the girdle-book concept, historically found on small luxury bindings, and used it with impressive effect. She employs the same handmade flax paper for her cover used by Jill Krase for the spine piece and has literally tamed the tough paper into behaving well. The binding is complete with a long extension that ends in the traditional knot, used to hang the book from the girdle (belt). The folds of the extension catch and reflect light, enhancing the sculptural elements of the book as it stands closed, the paper clasp in place. Few historical girdle books survive today with their bindings intact; the ones that do tend to have wooden boards covered with tawed skin or leather and are often decorated/protected with metal bosses and closed with metal or laminate clasps.

### Short Case, Bottom Shelf

- all of these books are in the Special Collections Library •

Note: All of the books in this exhibit are required to have custom-made protective enclosures that are interesting in their own right and could form another exhibit.

#### I.

Mich. Ms 248

Psalter [Coptic]

Ethiopia, ca. 17th century

This two-part leather case (*mabdar* and *difat*) is a typical protective enclosure made by Ethiopian binders to enclose manuscripts. There are many variations of this case, including single pouches, but all of the enclosures appear to have had long hanging straps, fragments of which appear here. The case is exhibited because this Ethiopian enclosure also performs the same task of protecting the book as the overcover and the chemise/girdle structure do on the Nitzberg and Woodrick bindings.

#### 2.

Baldassarre Castiglione (1478–1529)

*Il Libro del Cortegiano del Conte Baldesar Castiglione*

Venice: Aldus Manutius, 1528

Although the decorative style of this Aldine binding would first be classified as a cameo binding, it is also a panel binding. It is included here as a complement to the panel bindings of Pullman, Pattison, and R. Hanmer, which feature variations of historical panel styles of decoration; a segment of Pullman's binding directly references Aldine Press binding. The covers of the *Castiglione* are rolled in blind and gold, creating frames or panels, and the inner panel is finished with an azured (parallel/hatched lines or shaded) corner tool. The smooth spine is divided by gold lines and tooled with a diagonal hatch between the lines with a small leaf in each panel and a leather title label. A note on the cameo: the figures on the cameos were often classical in nature, and the cameos found on Italian bindings, such as this one, were made off the book on leather or vellum

with designs in relief made from intaglio dies and then covered with gold or silver leaf (note the tarnished silver). The designs came from an interest in classical coinage and some of the designs were impressions from actual artifacts.

3.

Απαντα τα της καινης διαθηκης  
*Nouuum Iesu Christi D.N. Testamentum*  
 [Geneva]: Robert Estienne, 1551

There are many delightful features to this little binding, considered an Ève-style binding because the spine and cover decoration are an integrated unit, a practice believed to have begun with French binders Nicholas and Clovis Ève in the late-sixteenth century. The leafy sprays that form a centerpiece or cartouche on each cover is typical of Ève design. Yet another Ève-style design element seen on this binding is the use of gold-tooled fleur-de-lis motif as a semé: the repeated use of one small ornamental tool to fill space. Whether this binding was done by either of the Èves is not known. Innovative and successful design elements were often copied by other binders, a very old tradition in hand bookbinding. Compare the semé areas on this binding with the much later delicate semé spine on the Condillac binding [9.]. Pullman has included the use of a semé of fleurs-de-lis in her panel-binding sampler.

4.

François Baudouin (1520–1573)  
*Notae ad Lib. I & II. Digest. seu Pandectarum. Accessit Rerum &  
 Verborum Memorabilium Index.*

Basel: Per Ioannem Oporinum, 1557?

This is an example of a panel-stamped binding as compared to a Cambridge-style-panel binding. Panel stamps were the sixteenth-century binder's answer—with the help of engravers—for quickly decorating a book cover. Panel stamps succeeded, though they did not entirely replace the earlier method of laboriously decorating bindings using small



ornamental tools over and over to fill a cover. This is a particularly famous panel, known as a *Spes* (Hope) panel; famous for its beauty, famous for the number that have survived (around 200), and famous because the panel was signed by the binder Jacob Bathen (I.B.). The Pattison binding miniatures include two variations of panel-stamp bindings as well as a Cambridge-panel and a stenciled-panel binding.

## 5.

Marcus Aurelius Severinus (1580–1656)

*Zootomia Democritea*

Nuremberg: Endter, 1645

This is a quarter binding of vellum with paper sides, sprinkled with greenish paint or ink. A fragment of a paper label remains on the spine, and the edges of the text block are sprinkled blue. The endbands are worked on vellum cores, probably off the book, and the core ends are laced into the cover. Compare this book to the Nishizu quarter-vellum binding and the Howe half-vellum binding. Also compare the surface qualities of this paper with some of the collage fragments on the Nilan, and the papers used on the Nishizu, Krase, Korbel, and Woodrick bindings.

## 6.

Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius (ca. 480–ca. 524)

*Consolationis Philosophiæ Libri V*

Leyden: apud Franciscum Hackium, 1656

The panel binding, so common, still manages to take many forms at different periods in the history of bookbinding. The Cambridge style has been discussed in other places in this exhibit, and this copy of Boethius illustrates another version of mitered panel design. The rich red leather of this binding is decorated with triple gold fillet lines on both covers creating a central panel and a frame. The miters between the frame and the central panel are formed by the tooling of small ornaments, while the corners of the central panel are decorated with delicate filigree volutes. The spine is full gilt and titled in gold. Compare this binding

to the panel-binding examples of Pullman, Pattison, R. Hanmer, and to the historical bindings, Castiglione [2.] and Dalyell [10.].

7.

Isl. Ms 154

Miscellany of works

Transcribed in Kars, Eastern Anatolia, 1155 AH/1742 CE

(Traditional *rahl al-muṣḥaf* courtesy of Aisha Wahab)

This leather-flap binding has a cloth overcover, which is frayed at the corners and edges to such an extent that it is possible to see the original leather cover underneath. The book is opened at the front to show the typical zigzag threads used to tension the cloth turn-ins. Overcovers are seldom adhered to the underlying cover, but their turn-ins may be adhered and/or tensioned with thread, as shown here. This system of tensioning the turn-ins is ubiquitous for leather and cloth overcovers in Eastern and Western binding traditions. Flap bindings themselves are a protective style of binding. The flap extension of this binding wraps around the fore edge of the text block, approximating a protective box. Isl. Ms. 154 is included in the exhibit to complement the overcover of the Nitzberg binding.

8.

*La Vita del Beato Girolamo Miani*

Venice: S. Occhi, 1747

This beautiful painted vellum binding is known as an *arte-povera* binding (a modern term applied to Italian art that binding scholars have also applied to historical bindings) or a *Bauern Einbände* (German), meaning a binding decorated in a rustic or peasant style. Vellum is a wonderful substrate for decoration and is receptive to many different mediums, and this binding is no exception. The decoration of *La Vita* involves multicolor acid staining, a red wash of stain or some other medium, and gold tooling. Both covers are decorated with a large lobed cruciform with an eight-point star at the center, surrounded by red-washed areas diapered (tooled in a diamond-shape) in gold with a dotted-line roll, each

diamond decorated with a gold dot (*pointille*) for a semé effect. Compare this binding to the eye-catching decorative effects of the design bindings in the exhibit.

## 9.

M. l'Abbé de Condillac

*Le Commerce et le Gouvernement....*

Amsterdam: Jombert and Cellot, 1776

The Dutch binders of the eighteenth century made sturdy, handsome books, and this one is a beautiful example. It has a quarter spine of sheepskin combined with brilliant Prussian blue, pulled-paste-paper sides and vellum corner tips. The gold decoration of the spine is delightful. The spine is divided with gold lines, and the resulting panels are decorated with a semé, using what is called a “turkey’s-foot” tool in repetition, alternating with a deer-shaped tool. Compare this book to the Pullman binding with its use of semé and other types of gold tooling, the Howe binding with its vellum corners, and the miniature leather and paste-paper binding in the lower right hand corner of the Pattison binding.

## 10.

John G. Dalzell

*The Darker Superstitions of Scotland*

Glasgow: Richard Griffin & Co., 1835

Fashions in book decoration, like fashions in clothes, often reappear in a slightly altered way, long after the original style was created. Such is the case with panel-style book decoration. The Dalzell book is a true example of the retrospective use of an earlier decoration (Cambridge panel) that was originally fairly fast to make and thus inexpensive, and used on thousands, if not millions, of trade bindings in the eighteenth century. The Dalzell binding moves beyond the trade-binding level to what used to be called “extra” binding, now called deluxe binding. Here the binder employed beautiful calfskin, careful blind and gold tooling on the spine, covers, board edges, and turn-ins, and included a decorative thistle tool to make the connection to Scotland. The top edge of the text was trimmed

smooth and then gilded; the fore and bottom edges were “rough trimmed,” a fancy of the period. A glorious shiny binding for a book titled *The Darker Superstitions of Scotland*. Just imagine a modern-day design binding on this text that really responds to that title! Compare this panel binding to those of Pullman, Pattison, and R. Hanmer.

## II.

A. Macdonald, ed.

*The Rainbow of 1847*

Albany, New York: A.L. Harrison

This book carries a style of decoration known as “composite plaque,” meaning the design is a mirror image of itself, top and bottom, and is made by pressing an engraved heated plaque (die) into leather. This is a signed binding by A.L. Harrison. His name and claim to this “patent stereographic binding” is included on the spine at the head and tail. This is a charming and whimsical binding; the light-brown calfskin fairly drips with ornamentation and glows with gold leaf. Color contrast is provided by painted—probably stencilled—portions of the cover leather in green, red, and purple. *The Rainbow* is an annual gift binding. Numerous ornate gift-book series were produced in the middle of the nineteenth century, but this design is far more delicate and carefully designed and executed than many of them. The whimsy of this binding complements that of McLain’s equally delicate “free” design.

## I2.

John W. Cole (d. 1870)

*The Life and Theatrical Times of Charles Kean*, vol. 1

London: Richard Bentley, 1859

Luxury and non-luxury bindings have coexisted throughout the history of hand bookbinding. Even when the mid-nineteenth-century binders began experimenting with wonderfully crazy decorated cloth bindings, the relatively sober and sturdy quarter or half bindings of leather with plain or decorated paper or cloth sides continued to be a mainstay. Binders could not resist playing with the leather, however, embossing it in the

same ways used to impart a grain pattern into cloth, as the pebble grain on the leather of this binding illustrates. The worst that can be said of the style is that the materials became increasingly shoddy and destructive as the century progressed, resulting in the decaying, “red rotted,” and brittle examples that crowd library book shelves today. The Cole book, however, is well-made with good materials. Embree’s sturdy and attractive binding has a lot in common with the Cole book, historically and structurally.

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