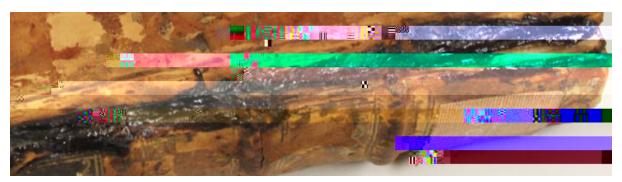
Cover to Cover: Exposing the Bookbinder's Ancient Cra



There are many reasons why bindings begin to fail. A small percentage of these can be at ributed to poor workmanship and inappropriate choice or quality of materials used during the ini al binding process; the vast majority, however, can simply be chalked up to the ravages of me.

Though robust if constructed well, books are not interminable. Their longevity is dependent upon a variety of factors, environmental condions in parcular. Air polluon and extremes and fluctuaons in both temperature and humidity can rapidly accelerate the deterioraon of glues, paper, cloth and leather. Cloth and paper are also highly susceptible to photoly clamage caused by exemptive ir covers

beyond 180 degrees, we crush their spines under copiers and we dog-ear and mark their pages with indelible inks, foodstus and beverages. It's not easy being a book. Many years ago, I worked in a Library to which a patron returned, somewhat sheepishly, a borrowed book. Having accidentally driven over it (whilst open) with their 4x4, its front and back covers found a new "bitumen grain" and its pages, the latest design in rubber tread. Fortunately most damage susered at the hands of humans is inadvertent. Readers can't help but frequently handle a popular book, and they really do mean well when they at empt a 'repair' which conservators knowwill only compound the problem; perhaps even create another one. Even binders have embraced new materials and techniques which have later proven catastrophic.

shelves of Rare Books & Special Collec ons, d...

d always double-check the correct spelling of stamping and gilding them onto a book's cover his case an en re run of journals was mistakenly an extra 'h' in the word 'phamphlets'.



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Whilst paste is used to at ach leather to covering boards, it's never a good idea to use it in the repair of old or rong leather. Paste is very moist, and it has a tendency to turn the outer side of the leather black on contact. A bet er alternave is PVA or a PVA/paste combina on. Only a small amount on the underside is required; excess glue may seep out along the edge of the leather creaing an unsightly dark line, as pictured.

It's not only paper that has a grain direc on; boards have one too. If the grain direc on does not run parallel with the spine, warping and buckling of the boards will inevitably occur pu ng undue strain on the hinges and the textblock.

Not the finest example of gold tooling! Keeping the pallet straight whilst tooling the spine is a lot harder than it might seem, and whilst gold can be removed from the leather cover, using a lit le isopropyl alcohol, to minimise the appearance of errors, it is much harder to remove the bli

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