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by Iris Nevins

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The Guild of Book Workers is a national organization representing the hand book crafts. There are regional chapters in New England, New York, the Delaware Valley, Washington DC, the Midwest, California, the Rocky Mountains, Texas, the Northwest and the Southeast.

Membership is open to all interested persons and includes a print copy of this Newsletter, among many other benefits. To become a member, please visit the Guild of Book Workers website:

[guildofbookworkers.org](http://guildofbookworkers.org)

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Front Cover: Miniature Psalter bound in white silk embroidered in a floral pattern. Image courtesy of the Grolier Club.

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## Letter from the President

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DEAR MEMBERS,

The Board of Directors has voted to raise the membership dues starting July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024 for the first time in over ten years. We want the Guild to be an affordable organization for everyone, but we also need to make sure we are keeping pace with our operating costs. The good news is that—no matter when your membership ends—you are welcome and encouraged to renew before July 1<sup>st</sup> to take advantage of the current rate before the increase.

This year, we are introducing some new member benefits that we hope will make your membership more valuable. As of March 1<sup>st</sup>, members have the option to be included in our public directory. We hope that by providing a directory listing, members will be able to more easily connect and share their interests with each other and with people who are seeking more knowledge about bookbinding and allied crafts.

The board of directors has also voted to make all our Standards videos free to members in good standing. We are working out the logistics, but they will likely remain on the Vimeo platform. Going forward, Standards videos will be

available to rent or buy for two years after they are presented; thereafter, they will be free to stream. All GBW videos will still be available to rent or buy by any non-members. We will share details of how to access the videos before the end of June.

Beginning July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024, the membership rates will be as follows: Regular membership will be \$100, Student memberships will be \$40, Family memberships will be \$130, and Institutional memberships will be \$150. For Regular international members, we will be increasing the shipping surcharge to \$30 for Canadian members and \$40 for international members. Chapter memberships will remain \$10 per chapter.

As always, please reach out to me with any questions or concerns you may have. For membership questions, you can also contact our Membership Chair, Eliza Gilligan ([membership@guildofbookworkers.org](mailto:membership@guildofbookworkers.org)).

Cheers,  
Kate Levy  
President, Guild of Book Workers  
[president@guildofbookworkers.org](mailto:president@guildofbookworkers.org)

## Letter from the Editors

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GREETINGS, DEAR READERS!

As we emerge from our winter burrows, we often find that we have more to do than we thought. There are plants to tend, cold-weather accoutrements to put away, and warm-weather accoutrements to bring out of storage for new—or rediscovered—outdoor pastimes. The lengthening days and warming weather allow the pursuit of more and more activities that were curtailed by the dark and the cold. For example, for me (Emily), it can be time to pick up yet another hobby, courtesy of a workshop at a local cidery: foraging local plant matter and learning how to process it for basketweaving. Interestingly, I learned that it's better to harvest some plants when they are dormant in cold weather, and some when it is warmer and their sap is running. So, dear readers, perhaps it's time for that sap to get running for you, also, and for the creative energies to flow!

For inspiration, feast your eyes and minds on the wide range of topics in store for you in this issue. Our Marbling Correspondent Iris Nevins focuses on the merits of using the right materials in your work, and how using less suitable ones can make your artistic pursuits more difficult than they need to be. Calligraphy Correspondent Nancy Levitt shares how harmoniously drawings and hand lettering can work together to create an artistic whole that is greater than the

sum of its parts. Barbara Adams Hebard reviews a delightful Grolier Club exhibit (closing very soon, so catch it if you can!) that features commissioned bindings by several of our very own Guild members. Fine Binding Correspondent Jodee Fenton shines a spotlight on the catalogue raisonné, a useful source for learning about binding design, and encourages Book Artists to keep detailed records of their work, with an eye to future scholarship.

Speaking of scholarships, Dark Arts Scholarship recipient Charley Kelley-Pegg enumerates many opportunities for learning the book arts in Minnesota—and shares some lovely images of the results! And our own Bridget McGraw engages in a lively conversation with Rhiannon Knol, a rare bookseller and seller of rare books, on provenance and other juicy tidbits about books and alchemy.

May you also find inspiration in spring's new growth!



Photo by Masaaki Komori on Unsplash



## Chapter Reports

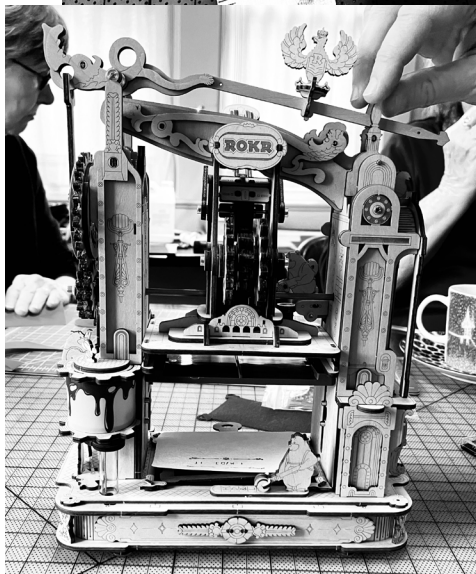
### POTOMAC

CHAIR: Charlotte Mauler Hayes

Potomac Chapter members gathered at Paige Billin-Frye's home on February 11 to make Valentines. We arrived with lovely papers, our creativity, and delicious snacks. We cut, folded, and glued paper while sharing stories and ideas. Charlotte Hayes, our chapter chairperson, brought the ROKR printing press she had assembled from a kit made of laser cut wooden pieces, and a stamp pad. With this we turned out many little cards that said "Happy Valentine's Day."

We are looking forward to our annual spring swap, for which participants make something like small books, paper cutouts, prints, or postcards, send them out to all other participants, and receive wonderful pieces in exchange. We then get together and discuss our pieces.

In our area, The Walters Art Museum in Baltimore is having an exhibition, *New on the Bookshelf: The Creative Power of Women*, which showcases recently acquired works that were printed, illuminated, designed, or written by women.

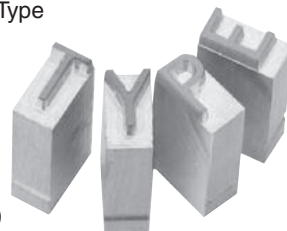


Photos courtesy of Shireen Holman

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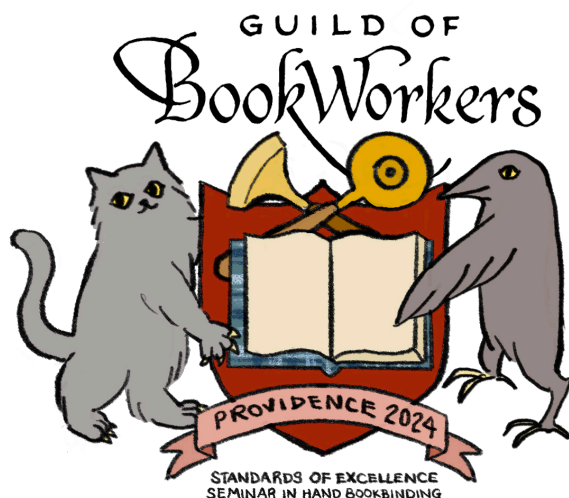
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## News and Notices

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### 2024 STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE

Please save the date for the 2024 Standards of Excellence Seminar in Hand Bookbinding, November 7–9 at the Graduate Providence hotel.

Featuring presentations by:

- SUE DOGGETT: “Context and Content, Materials and Methods—Making Artist’s Books and Bindings”
- SAMUEL FEINSTEIN: “Titling: Gold Tooling with Leaf”
- SARAH PIKE: “Laser-Cut Metamorphosis: Transforming a Single Image”
- CHRISTOPHER SOKOLOWSKI: “Mending Paper Using Pre-coated Asian Tissue: quick and subtle techniques”

### GUILD OF BOOK WORKERS ANNUAL ELECTIONS

The Guild of Book Workers cannot function without the executive board. Please consider volunteering for one of these essential board seats.

Board positions are elected annually and members serve a two-year term. Elections are held in June, with terms beginning at the end of the annual meeting at Standards. Each board member is responsible for running their standing committees and is required to attend board meetings, which are held on the third Thursday of every other month via Zoom. Specific duties and time commitments will vary, but these positions generally require 3–5 hours per week.

The following Board Positions are open to nominations:

PRESIDENT—Kate Levy is running for re-election

STANDARDS—Jennifer Pellecchia is running for re-election

EXHIBITIONS

COMMUNICATIONS

JOURNAL CO-CHAIR

NEWSLETTER CO-EDITOR—Seeking one person with graphic design experience

Read more about these positions on the Guild website: [guildofbookworkers.org/volunteer-opportunities](http://guildofbookworkers.org/volunteer-opportunities).

Please feel free to email any questions to the Election Committee Chair, Mary Uthupuru, at [mary@springleafpress.com](mailto:mary@springleafpress.com), with the subject line: GBW ELECTION.

### NOMINATIONS NOW OPEN FOR 2024

#### GBW AWARDS

The Awards Committee of the Guild of Book Workers is seeking written nominations for the 2024 Lifetime Achievement and Laura Young Awards.

**THE LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD**—This award recognizes significant contribution to the goals of the Guild and to the book arts field at large. Contributions may include areas such as education, professional practice, research, or mentorship as examples. We welcome nominations from the larger community of diverse voices and experiences. The award recipient is granted lifetime membership with no obligation to pay dues.

**THE LAURA YOUNG AWARD**—This award is given to an individual in recognition of sustained commitment to the Guild, that is, demonstrable service above and beyond to the Guild. Nominees must be current or former members of GBW.

All nominations must include a letter of support. Letters should be no more than 500 words (approximately one single-spaced page). Please include a brief biography of yourself and how you know the nominee. The most effective letters of nomination are specific about the contributions, attributes, and/or achievements that you think qualify the nominee for the award. You may submit nominations via email or use the nomination form at: [gbw.formstack.com/forms/nominations](http://gbw.formstack.com/forms/nominations).

To submit directly to the committee via email, please include the following in your correspondence: your name, the name of the nominee, the award for which you are nominating, and a letter of support to one of the following committee members:

- Coleen Curry, Awards Committee Chair

[coleen.curry@gmail.com](mailto:coleen.curry@gmail.com)

- Kim Norman [kim.norman@emory.edu](mailto:kim.norman@emory.edu)
- Mary Sullivan [crowinghenbindery@gmail.com](mailto:crowinghenbindery@gmail.com)

The deadline for receipt of nominations is April 15, 2024.

Please feel free to contact committee members with any questions. More information about past award recipients may be found online: [guildofbookworkers.org/awards](http://guildofbookworkers.org/awards).





Miniature Psalter bound in white silk embroidered in a floral pattern. Image courtesy of the Grolier Club.

## EXHIBIT REVIEW

# *Judging a Book by Its Cover*, exhibition at the Grolier Club, 47 East 60th Street, New York, NY.

Exhibition run: January 17–April 13, 2024. Free and open to the Public, Monday–Saturday: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Grolier Club

Reviewed by Barbara Adams Hebard

THE GROLIER CLUB HAS hosted many fine member-curated exhibitions during its 140-year history. The current exhibition, *Judging a Book by Its Cover*, is on display through April 13. It is curated by Grolier Club member H. George Fletcher, the former Astor Director for Special Collections at The New York Public Library and former curator at The Morgan Library & Museum. The excellent show looks at gorgeous bookbindings dating from the 1470s to 2020, all selected

from Grolier Club collections. Some of these outstanding examples were donated by members, others were executed in the Grolier Club bindery, and two exhibition cases are filled with those commissioned by the Grolier Club.

The exhibition includes a large number of very finely tooled and gilt bookbindings from 1600s to 2020, but also has other important cover styles, such as a pigskin binding tooled in blind with brass catches, clasps, central bosses and corner pieces, and a miniature Psalter bound



Pigskin binding tooled in blind with brass catches, clasps, central bosses and corner pieces. Image courtesy of the Grolier Club.

in white silk embroidered in a floral pattern (both seen in the accompanying images). This reviewer was especially taken by the way that the curator seamlessly integrated the work done by women in the book arts over the centuries into his exhibition. Instead of designating separate cases for “women’s work,” their work as embroiderers, sewers, designers, binders, metal-workers, and collectors is melded within the time-period layout of the exhibition.

GBW members will be thrilled to see a number of GBW colleagues and associates represented in the two cases of bookbindings commissioned by the Grolier Club. For instance, you will find work by Donald Etherington,

Timothy Ely, Claudia Cohen, Sün Evrard, Monique Lallier, and Erin Fletcher. Since the design bindings in this show focus on Grolier topics, they would not usually be included in a themed GBW-sponsored exhibition. As a result, GBW members may never have had the opportunity to see these stunning commissioned bindings.

Thanks to a grant from the Acriel Foundation, the Grolier Club has an on-line version of this and other past exhibitions. If you are unable to visit this worthwhile exhibition in person, you can see it at: [grolierclub.omeka.net](http://grolierclub.omeka.net).

The accompanying *Judging a Book by Its Cover* catalogue, written and compiled by H. George Fletcher, is beautifully illustrated with images of the bookbindings on display. Additional bookbindings are presented within its pages which could not fit into the exhibition due to space constraints. The catalogue can be purchased through the University of Chicago Press: [press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/publisher/pu3432735\\_3432736.html](http://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/publisher/pu3432735_3432736.html).

BARBARA ADAMS HEBARD was trained in bookbinding by Mark Esser at the North Bennet Street School. She is the Conservator at Boston College for the Ricci Institute for Chinese-Western Cultural History. She is a Fellow of The International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, a Professional Associate of The American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works and a long-time member of GBW.



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# MATERIALS

# MATTER

## USE THE RIGHT ONES

BY IRIS NEVINS

**M**ANY NEWCOMERS TO marbling don't realize the importance of using the right materials. Marbling is finicky enough, even when the right materials are used, so it is important to stay away from the wrong ones. They will result in marbling failures, or at least, not a very good end product.

The size you use really matters. Many people start out (I did!!) using wallpaper paste, cornstarch or gelatin as a size. I won't say they won't work, but the papers are very sloppy and crude, compared to when the right materials are used.

Carrageenan for water color marbling, and either carrageenan or methyl cellulose for acrylic marbling. I won't be covering oil marbling, as I don't really do it. I have tried it, and you can marble on plain water. It is a quick way to marble, no alum required, and the results can be quite pretty. I won't cover Suminagashi for the same reason ... I don't really do it, though have tried it a few times. It is really fun too.

Carrageenan: there isn't just one type. There is food-grade, non-food-grade, other grades I don't even know about. There is a type that is instant, which can be made in a blender, and other types that need to be cooked. What most marblers consider to be the best type for marbling is Viscarin GP209 (A chemical name, not a store brand name), a food-grade, instant carrageenan. It is the LAMBDA type (see [bit.ly/gbw-artor15](https://bit.ly/gbw-artor15) for a description of the three main types). It is available through marbling suppliers, such as [talasonline.com](https://talasonline.com) or [colophonbookarts.com](https://colophonbookarts.com).

While I am not an acrylic marbler, unless marbling fabrics, you can use either carrageenan or methyl cellulose as your size. I actually prefer the carrageenan, though many use the methyl cellulose and prefer it. It is cheaper and doesn't spoil like carrageenan. I just mix up as much carrageenan as I will use in one marbling session, so spoilage is not a problem. I have never had much luck using methyl cellulose for water colors, so I stick to carrageenan for everything.

Do yourself a favor, and buy your size powders from a reputable book arts or marbling supplier. You will get the right materials, and the sellers are usually able to advise on how to use them, and troubleshoot for you if you have trouble. I often think marbling's middle name is TROUBLE! It can be tricky, even for the most experienced marblers at times!

The next problem you may encounter is with your dispersants. Ox gall is the preferred dispersant for water color, and a detergent-based one for acrylics. Ox gall, in my experience, has little effect on acrylics, so I use a diluted "Photo-Flow" which will act much like ox gall. I use about a TBSP to a cup of water, then use it like you would use ox gall, with an eyedropper. You may adjust it if you want a stronger or weaker solution. It can be used for water colors too, however, you may want a much weaker solution, so add more water, and experiment. All water colors or acrylics are not created equally, they vary from brand to brand, maker to maker. You have to play with your proportions and tailor

them to your paints. I do find there is a slower expansion of water color paint droplets if you use Photo-Flo, as compared to ox-gall. Most use Photo-Flo 2000. It is available many places online, including Amazon.

In a pinch ... when I spilled all my ox-gall one day (and one of my dogs decided to dab it behind her ears ... really ... rolled her head in it! ) I heard the phrase in my head “So pure it floats,” without even knowing about Photo-Flow yet. I thought, why not ... and went for some dish soap and diluted it. I was able to go on with my work! It behaved a little differently, but was pretty good. If you find yourself in a fix like this, try to use a pure castile soap. Unwanted effects are possible from perfumes and chemicals. If it is a colored liquid it does not change your colors.

A big mistake, if you run out of ox gall, is to run to the local art supply store and buy ox gall. It is so watered down, it is practically useless. You can even tell by the color, it is pale yellow. The real down and dirty ox gall concentrate is dark brown. I even find I need to dilute it a bit with 25% water if you buy the real thing. Again ... stick to a bookbinding or marbling supplier. You will get the right materials.

Alum, or mordant, is another material that should really be limited to either Aluminum sulphate, or Aluminum potassium sulphate. I find really no difference between them, in the end results ... but seem to have gravitated to the potassium type long ago. But I will use the other if I can't get it. The big mistake many make, is going to the pickling/canning aisle of the supermarket and buying the type used to keep pickles crisp. It is pretty low grade as far as making your paints adhere to the paper. Others have tried vinegar, which can make dyes absorb into fabrics. It works a little ... but after a few papers, I was afraid it would pollute the size, so stopped. For the right type of alum, again, stick to the proper suppliers.

Lastly ... paper. I could go on forever with paper woes, and the addition of too much calcium carbonate in too much paper. This material neutralizes your alum. There is not any amount of alum, I find, that will overcome this. I have written much about this in other articles, so will not delve too deeply. If you try a paper and the colors run off, many get discouraged and quit, thinking it's their fault. Often it is just a calcium-carbonate-buffered paper. Your best bet is to buy good unbuffered paper from a bookbinding or marbling supplier. TALAS has a good paper. I have been using unbuffered bond from Lightimpressionsdirect.com. It is called Renaissance Paper, however, it seems they are not carrying the larger size papers anymore. Maybe if enough of us keep calling, they will bring them back. I have a large stock of the old large sizes, because I have learned, if you

find a paper that works, buy as much as possible. Papers tend to go away or stop working, when they change the formula.

For practice, it seems most computer printer papers work, and often do not need alum. The largest size, though, is 11" X 17" as a rule, which is not great for binding books. They are also quite lightweight, and can tear off the lines when wet. You can try to drape them over rods instead.

Everything you need will be available from the suppliers I mentioned, or others. I have stopped selling supplies, but my website has not been updated to reflect that yet. My best advice is to stick with the right materials, and if possible find a good workshop. Chena River Marblers often travel and teach, or look at videos on youtube and find a few good solid instructional books.

IRIS NEVINS is a self-taught marbler, and began marbling in 1978 as a hobby. Much to her surprise, bookbinders started buying her papers, and it became her full time career. She has written four books, plus reprinted a facsimile edition of *Nicholson's Manual Of The Art Of Bookbinding*, with 18 marbled samples tipped into the marbling section.

Iris also is a Celtic Harper, and Guitarist. She plays professionally, teaches both instruments and builds harps. She also makes Ancient Style and Celtic Jewelry.

## WORKSHOPS FOR 2024

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[www.SchoolforBookbindingArts.com](http://www.SchoolforBookbindingArts.com)

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| • Intro to Book Restoration                  | Sewn Endbanding Intensive •    |
| • Leather Reback                             | Edge Marbling Intensive •      |
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# Catalogue Raisonné

## for Book Artists

By Jodee Fenton

**S**TUDYING FINE AND DESIGN binding and book arts involves learning techniques and processes and looking at the work of earlier artists. In the case of fine and design binding, finding examples of prior bindings can be challenging. One type of resource, the catalogue raisonné, provides information about an artist's entire body of work. Most attempt to be complete lists of an artist's life work, usually in chronological order, and consistently describe in detail each verified artwork. Additional relevant information is sometimes included, such as collaborations, provenance, and exhibition history. These reference books lay the groundwork for art criticism, historical analysis, and verifying actual works done by the artist, making it easier to identify original works from forgeries. They are used by museum curators, gallery owners and dealers, collectors, students, researchers, and others to study an artist's life work. Catalogue raisonnés for book artists, including fine binders, are rare. This article will explore what is currently available to researchers and suggest steps forward to building this type of resource for future research.

Three examples of existing references will demonstrate the current status of this type of resource: 1. The printed catalog for a retrospective exhibit, 2. The survey of an artist's work, and 3. A compilation of all the book artworks done by a single artist.

**THE PRINTED CATALOG FOR A RETROSPECTIVE EXHIBIT.** In 2018 the Guilford College Art Gallery hosted a retrospective exhibit of the works of Monique Lallier. The design

bindings included were from 1974–2018, spanning most of Lallier's career. The catalog includes full color images of the work, Lallier's comments about each book, and descriptive information about the binding. The foreword by Theresa N. Hammond and opening essay by Ara Serjoie, the Guilford College Art Gallery curator, along with appreciations by Peter Geraty and Karen Hanmer, provide context, evaluation of the work, and background perspective, all of which add significant value to the publication. Lallier's comments on each binding in the exhibit, explaining her inspiration, method and process, give the student and scholar insight to her creative perspective. For her binding of *Shakespeare: Les Sonnets* she writes "This is one of my favorite bindings, as I was very much carried away after reading the sonnets. This design is a reflection of the complex, simple, moving, inspiring, and touching aspects of the sonnets. I wanted to express how they leave a mark on the reader with holes in the covers allowing light to shine through."<sup>1</sup> Although the catalog is very useful and important to art historians, book dealers, design binding colleagues and students, it is not a complete list of Lallier's works.

Other partial lists of book artists' work can be found in auction sales catalogs, when a collector puts a significant number of artworks up for sale. Similarly, museum and gallery collections are generally representative of the artist's work rather than complete collections.

THE SURVEY OF AN ARTIST'S WORK. Trevor Jones, an English bookbinder, had a book published in 2015 about his work by Duvall and Hamilton. This volume gives the reader and student of binding a remarkable insight into Jones' creative work, as well as a bit of his wry sense of humor. Pauline Jones, the artist's wife, wrote a foreword in which she describes how friends and neighbors would bring Jones materials he might be able to use in his bindings, like "old handbags, shoes, gloves, fur collars from their grandmother's coat, even pieces of chicken wire and mesh..."<sup>2</sup> Mirjam M. Foot, noted scholar and professor at the British Library, provided an insightful essay for this book. The artist's life is outlined, from his early years at Harrow School of Art to receiving the National Diploma in Design for Illustration from Hornsey College of Art. Jones studied with Arthur Johnson and M.E. Sidders (a trade binder). It was Johnson's influence that led him into design binding and his first meeting of the Guild of Contemporary Bookbinders (the precursor to Design Binders UK), which Bernard Middleton and Edgar Mansfield were bringing to life. Foot describes the later influence of The German Bauhaus and Parisian livres d'artistes on Jones' career.

This book includes selected comments from Jones about the bindings that are included. And it is here that we are given a peek into his perspective on just what design binding meant to him.

"Bookbinding is for me a discipline necessary in the process of creating a design. If I could visualize the design complete and entire in advance then there would be no need to embark upon the binding."<sup>3</sup> Jones' design philosophy was to "make his bindings fun."<sup>4</sup> While many book artists and their critics were trying to figure out where this form was on the spectrum of art history, for Jones it was "the fact that we spend such time and effort producing useless objects—or rendering objects less useful through our efforts...leads me to believe we are indeed creating art objects."<sup>5</sup>

The entries in the catalogue include bindings from 1954 to 2003, and are arranged in chronological order with full color photographs for each. Information about the imprint and a detailed description of the binding itself are included. There are examples taken from Jones' sketchbooks and notebooks that help us understand the works. In many entries, Jones adds his own commentary, making it seem the artist is sitting with you as you read the book. All valuable, but still not a complete list of the artist's work.

A COMPILATION OF ALL THE BOOK ARTWORKS DONE BY A SINGLE ARTIST. Matisse created eight books from 1930 to 1947, which are well researched by Louise Rogers Lalaurie and presented in a sumptuous volume from the University of Chicago Press. It certainly is a catalogue raisonné of his book artworks, but goes beyond a mere list to provide an in-depth essay for each of the books and many reproductions of pages from the books. Since Matisse's book arts output

was so small, this book had a well-defined amount of material to cover.

Pablo Picasso, one of the most prolific artists of all time, created thousands of works in a wide variety of media. There are multi-volume catalogue raisonnés of his paintings, prints, ceramics, and the works he did for books. Jean-Leon Steinhauslin assembled the complete collection of artworks for books created by Picasso. Patrick Cramer then used this assemblage to compile *Pablo Picasso. The Illustrated books: catalogue raisonné*, published in 1983. This particular catalogue raisonné contains a description of Picasso's work as well as the book into which these works were placed. The very active publishing of livres d'artistes during the 20<sup>th</sup> century was fertile ground for emerging visual artists to get their work into public view. The inclusion of artists' works in contemporary literary publications also built a thriving market for their publishers. The catalogue raisonné lists *verified* art works and helps the marketability of the artist. Such a list also helps to control forgeries and spurious copies from masquerading as authentic Picasso art works.

How would a "complete" list of a design binder's works be compiled? Where would a scholar find the information needed to create such a list? How would a scholar work with private collectors, public institutions, archives, and family and friends? And, importantly, how would such a reference work be published, when the market for such a study would likely be small? Original materials can be found in artists' private archives, in museums and archives, and in the records of dealers and private collectors. For example, the studio archive of Paul Bonet, a particularly prolific designer of fine bindings in Paris in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, is housed in the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris. This archive of 45 volumes includes lists, maquettes, receipts, drawings, correspondence, and boxes of binding materials. The handwritten entries include information about the client, the date of the commission and its completion. From this treasure trove a researcher could reconstruct an almost complete trajectory of Bonet's career, and, if it were published as a catalogue raisonné, scholars, students and dealers would have unprecedented access to one of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's most prolific and influential design binders. It is critical to recognize that Bonet himself collected all the primary documentation.

Catalogue raisonnés have long been published in book format, however, there has been a significant growth in digital catalogs. At first glance, the benefits of a digital catalog raisonné may seem compelling, but there are many considerations. Advantages include accessibility (cheaper for the user and often free), enhanced and speedy searchability, timely updating with new information such as provenance and exhibition, and the option of print-on-demand. Disadvantages generally are on the technical side, such as finding a stable platform for the data, keeping it accessible



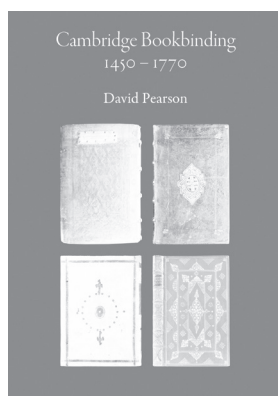
through various upgrades, maintaining image quality across user's devices, and having a permanent home for the data. In both print and digital editions, the data about each artwork needs the same high-quality research and verification.

Giving a little thought to the types of information one keeps and organizes about one's own artistic work can help to preserve these sometimes elusive and personal details for the future. Dates penciled on sketches, folders of plaquettes, business records, and sales/locations of artworks can all be small details that would be extremely helpful for the compilation of a catalogue raisonné.

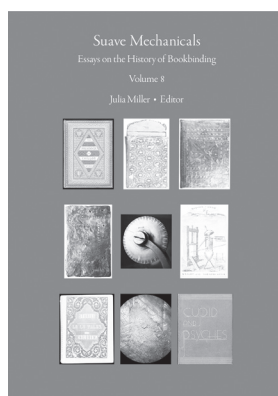
JODEE FENTON received her Diploma in Fine Binding in 2023 from the American Academy of Bookbinding in Telluride, Colorado, where she studied with Don Glaister. She works in her home studio, Aubergine Atelier, in Seattle, Washington.

1. *Monique Lallier: A Retrospective*. pg. 94.
2. *The Bindings of Trevor Jones*. pg. 7.
3. *Ibid* pg. 11.
4. *Ibid* pg. 13.
5. *Ibid* pg. 17.

#### Recently Published Bookbinding Titles



**Cambridge Bookbinding**  
1450-1770  
David Pearson



**Suave Mechanicals**  
vol. 8  
Julia Miller, Editor

#### Forthcoming:

- *Fine Bookbinding: A technical guide* by Jen Lindsay •
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# Words and Images in the Book Form

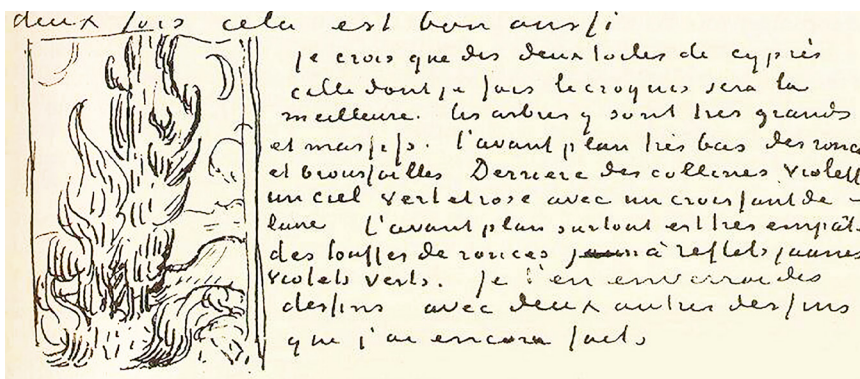
By Nancy Leavitt

**N**EARLY  
40 YEARS  
AGO,

at a printmaking class in college, our final assignment was to create a suite of woodblock prints with an accompanying story about the images.

There were no letterpress options available to add the

text. As a calligrapher, I added my text with an edged pen. Other students envied my ability to create 'fancy' lettering to accompany my prints. One student asked if I would teach her calligraphy. Instead I encouraged her to write her text in her own handwriting, reassuring her that it would match her illustrations. She created a series of mountain prints inspired by a 9-day solo-hiking trip in the wilderness. Brilliant washes depicting sunrises and sunsets enlivened the stark black-and-white mountain scenes. The handwritten text, taken from her travel journal, tells a terrifying story of traveling alone in grizzly bear country, hanging her food fifteen feet high and away from where she slept, and being alone and injured, a three day walk from civilization. I still tremble every time I read it. Today it holds up as a



Cypresses, Saint-Rémy: 25 June 1889, (Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum), No F number, JH 1750.  
[vggallery.com/letters/sketches/p\\_1750.htm](http://vggallery.com/letters/sketches/p_1750.htm)

powerful modern piece of work.

Take a look at one of Van Gogh's letters, which contains a pen and ink drawing explaining one of his recent paintings. This passage reveals unconnected and connected letterforms running horizontally across

the page, with generous interlinear spacing and narrow margins. The drawing marks match the lines found in the letters and share the same animated movement and verve as the spirit of the handwritten text.

Combining hand drawing with handwriting creates a beautiful harmony of word and image. The marks in your writing will naturally echo the marks in your drawing. Even when using different mark making tools, the hand will move instinctively to create a total expression. Try it!

NANCY LEAVITT holds degrees in both biology and art, and has studied lettering and bookbinding in the United States and Great Britain. Her work is represented in public and private collections around the world.



# A Dark Arts Scholarship Recipient Shines a Light on Book Arts in Minnesota

By Charlie Kelley-Pegg

**H**ELLO, FELLOW BOOK WORKERS!  
What a joyful, book-arts-filled year it's been! I thought I would share with *Newsletter* readers how I have been using my Dark Archives Award funding.

- I took a full series of letterpress classes at the Minnesota Center for Book Arts.
- I collaborated with local singer/songwriter Jeremy Messersmith to produce a series of prints based on his lyrics. The prints were sold at his annual All Hallows Eve show.

- I registered as a DBA/Assumed Name with the State of Minnesota. I am officially Charliehorse Press!



Minnesota nICE print on display for sale at the Shop at MCBA. Image courtesy of Charlie Kelley-Pegg.



Girl Dinner print on display for sale at the Shop at MCBA. Image courtesy of Charlie Kelley-Pegg.





First draft of the business card! Found this silly little horse ornament in the type library at the Minnesota Center for Book Arts and couldn't resist! Image courtesy of Charlie Kelley-Pegg.

- I letterpress printed my own business cards.
- I participated in my first artists' market.
- I started consigning my prints in two different local stores: Simply Creative MN and The Shop at the Minnesota Center for Book Arts. I received my first couple of pay checks from these. It is so cool that people are interested in my work!
- I have completed half of the Book Arts Core Certificate program at the Minnesota Center for Book Arts. I hope to complete this program by the end of this year or mid-2025!
- I've been invited to *Flores y Cacao*, an event hosted by CLUES MN (Comunidades Latines Unidades en Servicio), which highlights Latine artists and cultural



Me at the Open Book Writer and Artist Mart this November with all of my homemade goodies! Image courtesy of Charlie Kelley-Pegg.



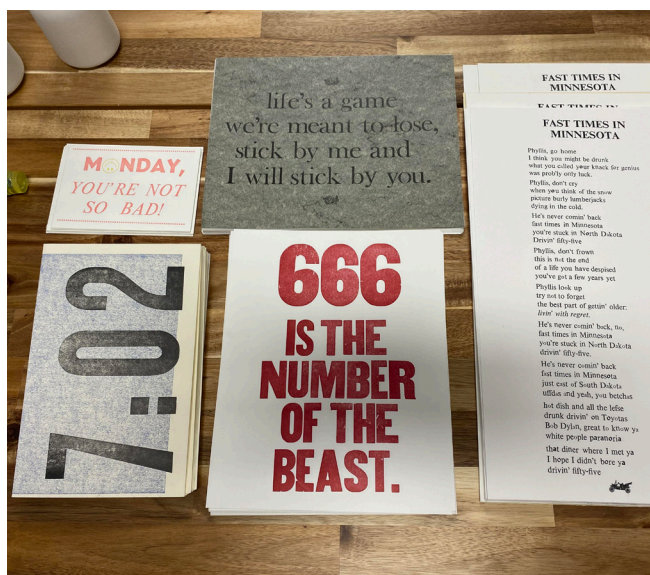
Layout of a Spanish print I did to honor my birth mother during the holidays (translates to "do not worry, you are not forgotten"). Image courtesy of Charlie Kelley-Pegg.

- joy. With support from the Minnesota Center for Book Arts, I will be typesetting some phrases in Spanish, to be printed by attendees on a portable Provisional Press.
- I have taught a handful of beginning bookbinding workshops at locations throughout the Twin Cities, including Macalester College, Creators Space, Simply Creative, and Becketwood Cooperative.
- I have mastered basic Coptic stitch binding!
- I made a book press out of a large cutting board I cut in half.
- I have attended classes in paper marbling, letterpress, bookbinding, collage, and visual poetry.
- I have engaged with a flourishing book arts community at the Minnesota Center for Book Arts and had the



One of my recent Coptic bound journals available for sale at Simply Creative. Image courtesy of Charlie Kelley-Pegg.





Letterpress prints and projects I made for Jeremy Messersmith's All Hallows Eve shows. Image courtesy of Charlie Kelley-Pegg.

opportunity to talk shop with a number of artists I truly admire, including Parry Cadwallar, Bridget O'Malley, Julie Baugnet, India Johnson, Sarah Evenson, Savannah Bustillo, and more.

This year, I hope to finish up my Book Arts Core Certificate at the Minnesota Center For Book Arts, engage in meaningful collaborations with fellow book artists, continue letterpress printing, teach more classes, and further envelop myself in book arts!

I am so grateful for the opportunity to be a part of such an expansive art form and its community. Thank you, Guild of Book Workers and its constituents, for empowering my journey!

For more photos and to follow along with my creative shenanigans, please follow me on Instagram: @charliehorsepress

With utmost gratitude,  
Charlie Kelley-Pegg of Charliehorse Press  
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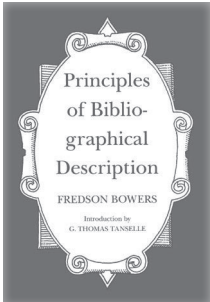
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*A Conversation with*

# Rhiannon Knol

*by Bridget McGraw*

**T**HIS INTERVIEW HAS BEEN edited for brevity and clarity.

BRIDGET MCGRAW: Hello and welcome, Rhiannon. I am going to start with some straightforward questions and then move on to a few about your work as a cataloger of early printed books. Your internet Instagram handle is “*liber.librum.aperit*.” Please tell the fine readers of the *Guild of Book Workers Newsletter* what that means.

RHIANNON KNOL: It’s a Latin alchemical aphorism that literally means “the book opens the book,” but can be more artfully translated as “one book opens another.” It is a reference to the obscurity of the science of alchemy. For every book you read, you need another book to help you interpret it. It’s true of many books, in fact, and maybe people’s relationship to books in general. Buying (or reading) one book always invites buying another.

BM: Yes! Fortunately, I’m not a collector, or I wouldn’t have a roof over my head right now.

[The interview veered off course in an attempt to share a screen and ask the patient interviewee to compare a pair of title pages from *A catalog of the Most Vendible Books in England* (1658).]

BM: If you had two copies of the same book, and you wanted to learn about the provenance of one of them, how do you start?

RK: When books come in for consignment, the first stop of course is asking the current owner what they

know. An auction house does not own the books; they are consigned and we sell them, representing both the buyer and the seller. There are facts that don’t often get recorded in the book itself; people will tell me, “I inherited this,” or “it has been in the attic for decades,” or “this has been on the bookshelf since I was a kid.” People just end up with things like furniture in their homes. But if someone is a more serious book collector, they can tell you where they bought it and they may know some things about its trajectory even before that which is only oral history.

When I’m cataloging, I start by collating the book. I look at the binding, endleaves, and go through the whole volume to make sure it is complete. I record in my notebook as I go, taking down the evidence that is throughout the whole text. Sometimes there’s a bookplate, sometimes there are inscriptions on the title page, but sometimes there are inscriptions on the inner pages too. Either because the past owner just decided to repeatedly doodle their name, or sometimes it is even viewed as an anti-theft measure. If someone only writes their name on the title page, a thief can easily just rip the title page out, but if it is somewhere secret inside, the evidence remains.

BM: That’s an exciting form of copyright! In about 1991, I was a student at NYU, and John Perry Barlow, who had recently co-founded the Electronic Frontier Foundation (and had been a lyricist for the Grateful Dead), delivered a lecture about digital content regulations, and he read

examples of curses in old books like “a pox on your family, if you steal this.”

RK: Yes, it's funny. Sometimes they're clearly jokes or very formulaic; they even come in the form of poems, like a nursery rhyme. I had an Armenian manuscript for sale a couple of years ago that had a book curse in it. It was something like, “If you take this book, you will burn in the fires of Hell.” It is not so uncommon. The degree to which they are seriously meant varies widely I think.

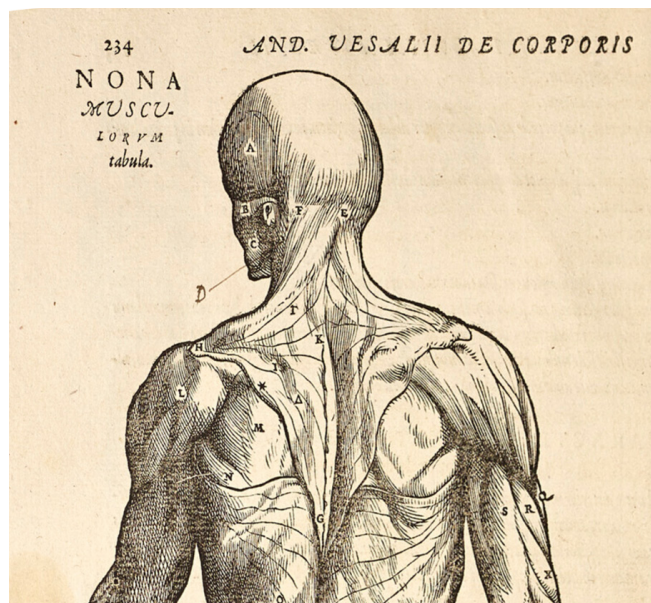
BM: Warning: this is a long-winded question! I was just at CODEX [the 9<sup>th</sup> Biennial Book Art Fair & Symposium], and I realized that there were a couple of contemporary binders that struck me as living on the peak of Maslow's hierarchy. There are a few book artists who seem to hit the pinnacle of concept and form. Today, I'd choose someone like Luigi Castiglioni, who has recently started to work with music and musicians. His layers of dense detail—skillfully wrought—in his 2023 *The Sinking of the Titanic*, a collaboration with composer Gavin Bryars, are astounding.

In the realm of early printed books, what is at the tip of your pyramid that feeds the soul, body, and brain?

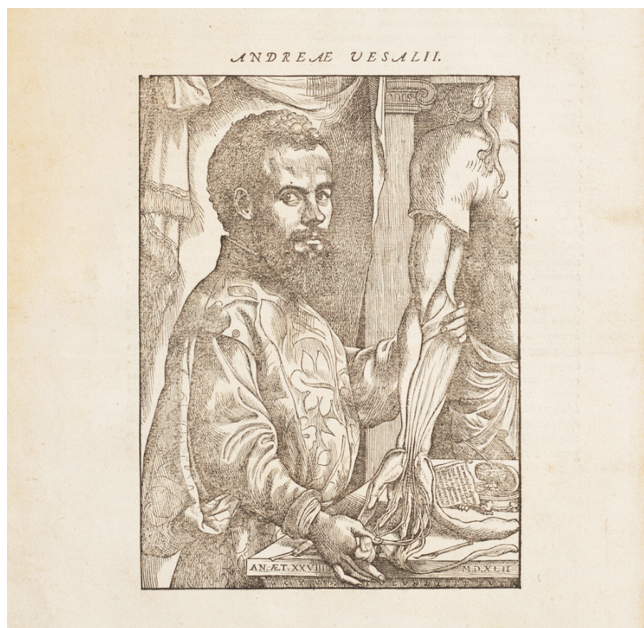
RK: That's a very interesting question. You mean in terms of specific printers or makers of books or specific books?

BM: How about the book that you just wrote the catalog for Christie's? That seems to me like a peak experience. Maybe this was a leading question. Is there a particular book?

RK: It is hard to say, but Vesalius' copy of Vesalius that we just sold definitely checks a lot of boxes. It is already one of the most important books in the history of science. Renaissance history of science is something that I've been interested in for a long time now. I used to work on the



Andreas Vesalius, *De humani corporis fabrica*, 1555. “Fine Printed Books & Manuscripts Including Americana,” Christie's, March 11, 2024, onlineonly.christies.com/s/fine-printed-books-manuscripts-including-americana/de-humani-corporis-fabrica-75/208859. © 2024 Christie's Images Limited.



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history of alchemy. And as a book, it's not just important and intellectually influential, but as you might know, it has these incredibly beautiful, virtuosic woodcut illustrations. And the copy that we recently sold was annotated by Vesalius himself! It brought a lot of things together for me. I'm not a doctor, so I'm willing to take the medical experts' word for it about what is inside the body and how it all works. Vesalius's book and his annotations, however, really emphasize the degree to which he was also a humanist as well as an anatomist. He was so engaged with his own Latin prose style, and I'm a Latinist, so I was really able to connect with his text. He was also working hard to show off his wide learning, even beyond the world of medicine. He wrote about things he had witnessed and seen, like different cultural practices that bear upon medicine and anatomy around the known world. It's not just a book that's on some super specific topic that happens to be valuable. It hits a lot of different points regarding the history of knowledge, and just what makes a book really special. I only hesitated to name it as something that would be at the top of my pyramid because it doesn't have a very nice binding!

The reason it doesn't have a very nice binding is that it is actually the loose sheets that the printer Oporinus had sent to Vesalius during the printing of the second edition. He was supposed to go through and make notes on what would become the errata list. But instead, he kept correcting things for a long period of time, and rewriting and rearranging the text. It seems very likely that he had kept it unbound. There is some damage on the ends that has been repaired; it may never even have had a contemporary binding. For me, a book that would really be at the top would have some sort



of really special contemporary binding, but it's very hard to find something that has everything.

BM: Yeah, you're right. Thank you for that answer.

This is definitely not within your area of expertise, but leads into it. Elbert Hubbard, of The Roycroft Press, wrote and published a small book called *Success and Salesmanship* in 1915. The essay provides examples of "individuals who became successful through selling and buying books. Examples Ulysses S. Grant and Napoleon." Were you aware that Napoleon bought and sold books?

RK: I know that he funded the publication of books. When you were asking me about what we call the giant format (the double elephant folio), it immediately made me think there's another large size term; I actually don't know if it's simply a French translation of double elephant, or if it is technically different in some way. There is a French term, *mammut* or mammoth folio. The most famous example of that format is the great description of Egypt, which is Napoleon's expedition report. He brought along a lot of artists and scientists to study and record while on the campaign, and this publication is the result of their work. The volumes are just huge. It takes two people and a spotter to open it. It is still a very valuable book, if it's complete, and such a tour de force of science and art with giant colored engravings of Egypt and detailed measurements of the monuments. You could almost walk right into it.

BM: They were encyclopedically obsessed at that time. There is a meter stick in a museum in Paris. It's getting smaller over time, by the way.

RK: Made of wood and it shrinks over time?

BM: Actually, it's a metal. I think it's silver.

[The conversation meandered from the meter stick to Forrest Gander's keynote at CODEX IX, in which he considered "the technical, ethical, cultural, and aesthetic dimensions of translating exceptional literary works that have long been called untranslatable."]

Before I go down another rabbit hole, I'd like to ask you about your new Substack called *Half Sheets to the Wind* that you publish with Jason W. Dean. I really enjoyed your first issue. How did it come about?

RK: During the COVID lockdown, like everyone else, I didn't leave my apartment or the five-block radius of my apartment in upper Manhattan for several months. We started doing a program where we would each make a cocktail at 6 pm and go on Instagram Live to talk about a set of our favorite rare books on a theme. Then we both had to go back to the office and didn't have time to do that anymore. This is a kind of revival of those more casual conversations, but something that we can put a little more thought into that isn't just riffing. It's somewhere between writing a paper and having a conversation.

BM: In the first issue, you mentioned your affection for bibliographic marginalia. Do you have an example to

share with our readers some of your favorite bibliographic marginalia?

RK: Sure. I was doing some cataloging for the William Reese sale at Christie's a few years ago. He was a very venerable bookseller based in New Haven, and also a great philanthropist. We sold his private collection in 2022. I found one book that just had a little slip of paper in his handwriting that said, "Someone will want this." I think about this a lot! A lot of bookselling is finding just the right person to appreciate something. It was lovely to get that posthumous reminder from Bill. Quite a few of the books that come through my hands have a lot of pencil notes from past booksellers, some more useful than others. I recently cataloged a book in which someone had written in pencil "not known to bibliographies." Someone else, on the opposite flyleaf, had made a list of all the bibliographies it was present in.

There are a lot of clues you can get where provenance comes in, right? Sometimes a note might say, this book was in the Clumber sale, which allows me to look up that sale catalog in the library, and I can confirm that it's the same copy. But I might not otherwise have a way of knowing that information if there's no bookplate or library stamp. I appreciate it when people keep that important information with a book. When I'm cataloging, I feel like I have a little Greek chorus of the past booksellers who've handled the book, and they are weighing in on the flyleaf.

BM: I'm really curious about the tools of bibliography. Not to break the catalogers' code of trade secrets, but are there a few tools that you could tell us about?

RK: For early printed books, specifically, I feel that I live in a golden age of research because some of the tools that are available online are so incredible, and they allow me to have access to information that would have been almost impossible for anyone to quickly figure out before. You would only know it if you happened to ask the right person the right question.

A database I use quite a bit that's linked to the ISTC (Incunabula Short Title Catalog) is a catalog called Material Evidence in Incunabula. It is a searchable database of individual records of specific books in libraries that share much more information than is frequently available in an ordinary library catalog. It will list things like bookplates and the exact language of the ownership inscriptions. When you find a bookplate, even if it doesn't have the person's name on it, it means that it came from a big collection of books and there must be others out there, and you can find them and someone will know about it. Nobody only has a single bookplate.

These databases are super helpful in identifying what those things are. And there's another one that's similar and I think also hosted by CERL (Consortium of European Research Libraries) which is called IPI (Index Possessorum

Incunabulorum). It's a great database of the kind of information about individual owners of books that show up here. It can help you figure things out if, for example, you can only read part of an inscription such as "The Convent of the Franciscans ...". You will find that other people have collected some of the same inscriptions, or that sometimes bindings will be stamped, so you can really access the world "brain trust" to get information about the early owners of these books, which is incredible. Of course, old auction and bookseller descriptions are also a really key source of knowledge on these matters. Many are now accessible online via databases like Rare Book Hub, and they are also available at the Grolier Club library. I personally collect early Lathrop Harper catalogs, which can be really informative.

BM: Ooh. Thanks for the trade secrets.

This question is related to your first Substack, where you write about flyleaves and pastedowns being removed before publication. Who would normally do that surgery? I realize that I'm taking your words out of context.

RK: Yeah, well, I can't remember exactly in what context it was. But I will say that, for instance, when a lot of early printed books were bound, the binder would use random printed waste or manuscript leaves because nobody cared about them at the time. Then later someone comes around and removes them because now it's a precious piece of manuscript text or early printing.

BM: Ah, yes! I love that.

RK: I think this is a 19<sup>th</sup>-century and later phenomenon, when collectors came to be interested in this stuff, and some of it is really interesting. Basically the only copies of Gutenberg's printing of the Donatus' Primer come from pastedowns in later books. I somewhat frequently come across books in contemporary bindings where it's clear someone has raided the binding for pastedowns and flyleaves (and sometimes even the sewing guards or spine liners). You can tell there used to be something there. That's one reason why someone might remove those pieces of the book. Other times, I think some past person has just thought: this is a blank piece of paper. I'm just gonna take it for my little personal notes or a letter. Why let it go to waste?

BM: One last question. Are you familiar with hornbooks?

RK: Yes.

BM: I'm obsessed with hornbooks at the moment, and my next book is going to be a hornbook for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

RK: Oh, what will you use instead of horn, or will you use horn?

BM: Well, it's likely to be what I call a ditty, just a one-liner. It will likely have icons of computer apps engraved on an acrylic paddle. Who needs to learn the alphabet now? So, what would your hornbook have on it?

RK: Hmmm. When I was in college, I went through this phase where I was fainting a lot, and one time when I

fainted, I hit my head. I was fine, but when I woke up, the first thing I thought was, "Oh, no! Do I still remember my Latin paradigms?" I often joke with people, but it is, in a way, true: I feel that Latin is my most marketable skill. Cataloging is often asking the book questions about itself, and if you can actually speak its language, it really helps. With provenance, you need to dive into it. With inscriptions, I've had arguments with people who have thought a book belonged to someone because their name was written in it, but the Latin case ending made no sense for it to be an ownership inscription. So, that's my most important skill. I would want the same Latin hornbook as Erasmus, basically. My Latin case endings and verb tenses!

BM: Now, that's provenance!

RHIANNON KNOL is a rare bookseller specializing in continental books, early science, and the classical tradition. Until recently, she was a specialist in the Christie's Books department in New York. She is a council member of the Grolier Club and active in the Bibliographical Society of America.

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