

Queen's University Library

Leather and Vellum Bookbindings, 1500 - 1920

Library Exhibit, 29 January to 12 March 2003

An exhibition curated by Margaret Lock of Locks' Press Kingston, illustrating the history of bookbinding with examples from the Jordan Library collections.



Economy and Beauty : Foreign Ideals? An investigation into 19th century publishers' bindings

Public Lecture by Lee Oldford, M.A. Student, Department of Art

Wednesday, February 5, 2003, 1:15p.m.
W.D. Jordan Library, Douglas Library

The exhibition is arranged chronologically, covering the history of leather bookbinding from about 1500 to 1925. The quality of bindings ranges from fine, expensive leather with spectacular hand-tooling to the more mundane and less costly typical of each period. Two sections of the exhibit present examples of less expensive binding, 1795-1920, and rebinding and repair work of the early 20th century.

Fine and Utilitarian Binding, 1500-1740

In this early period, books were sold unbound and each customer would decide on the binding style he could afford.

18th Century

Small bindery businesses operated separately from booksellers who acted also as publishers.



1491: A Latin Vulgate Bible, bound in pigskin



1570: Palladio's work on architecture rebound in England, ca. 1730-1750, in gold-tooled, diced russia leather



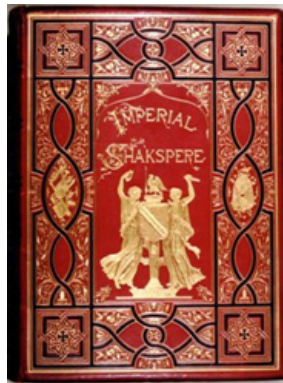
1717: A Book of Common Prayer in gold-tooled morocco

19th Century

Publishers gradually assumed responsibility for binding. Since leather was costly, cloth and paper-covered case bindings became popular. Publishers also had books that were suitable for New Year's gifts, such as literary annuals and prayer books, bound in gold-blocked and blind-blocked leather.



The Maple Leaf, or Canadian Annual, 1846, is bound in gold-blocked leather



The Imperial Shakespeare, 1876, is a fine example of a deluxe publisher's binding



This German hymnal (1857) was published in Kitchener but probably bound in Pennsylvania. Bibles, prayer-books and devotional literature were often in utilitarian bindings as organizations like the British & Foreign Bible Society were intent on cutting costs in order to make their publications widely available.

Arts and Crafts Movement and Aesthetic Movement, 1890-1910

The Arts and Crafts Movement and the Aesthetic Movement fostered an even more artistic approach to bookbinding.



The 1910 edition of Bliss Carman's *Sappho* lyrics is shown here in a gold-blocked skiver binding, attractive but not durable. The design shows the influence of Scottish art nouveau. Part of this British edition was imported by Musson, a Toronto Publisher.



Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* (a 1912 London edition) is bound in gold-blocked leather with an exuberant design of roses and leaves forming a frame around the title.

The Kelmscott Chaucer

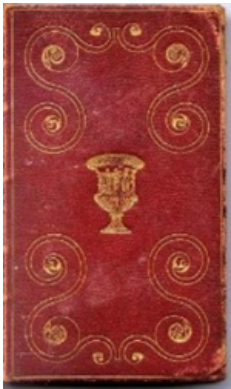


This famous edition of *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* was designed by William Morris, printed on the Kelmscott Press and bound in 1896-1897 at the Doves Bindery, Hammersmith. This Bindery was operated by T.J. Cobden-Sanderson. Both of these men were active in the Arts and Crafts Movement in Britain. The hand-stamped design is based on medieval and early Renaissance pigskin bindings. The tooling was done by impressing hand tools which form the background, leaving the motifs in relief. The edition sold at the time for a mere 33 pounds.

Queen's has one of the 48 copies with this particular binding, a treasure acquired through the generosity of C.L. Burton in 1958. This copy has a distinguished provenance as well, having once belonged to Lawrence of Arabia.

The Glasgow University Album for 1836

This book has an interesting Scottish arabesque design on the cover but the inside is even more attractive, with silk doublures and flyleaves and gold-tooled turn-ins.



The exhibit was curated by Margaret Locke

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