



CONSORTIUM OF
EUROPEAN
RESEARCH
LIBRARIES

Bookbindings Working Group
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Newsletter

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Welcome to the first issue of the CERL Bookbindings WG Newsletter

Message from the Chair



Bookbindings on the Internet is a core issue for the CERL Bookbindings Working Group and, as time and technique evolve, more and more interesting initiatives are found that may be of value for the study of bookbindings online.

This newsletter is intended for dissemination of information and advocacy on this topic, and also any other information about bookbindings that may be of an interest for the study of this fascinating part of book history. Please re-distribute it to anyone with an interest in this topic.

Being able to find bookbindings online is in essence a form of discovery that prepares the scholar for accessing the real books. As a bookbinding historian once answered when I asked him about the benefits of online bookbindings: "The serious scholar will always try to find the real books". As much as this is true, it is also true that he or she has much better chances nowadays of actually finding the books that may be of interest, and in some cases, their questions will also be answered online.

The real problem today is that so few bookbindings are online and libraries seem to have problems on both the technical side and on the descriptive side. Knowledge on how to describe bindings is difficult to promote and library catalogues are seldom equipped with enough capacity to publish both metadata and images of the bindings.

The WG wants to showcase new methods and tools on these topics and has started a series of workshops/seminars with this purpose in mind. The first seminar took place in Uppsala in May 2019. See separate notice on p. 7. Another was planned for Brussels this May but had to be postponed due to the present Covid-19 situation. A new seminar will be planned as soon as travel is deemed safe. The first issue of this newsletter has taken a while to find its form and therefore we are focusing on information from 2018 onwards. If you are sitting on information for a future notice or short article, please send it to per.cullhed@ub.uu.se



Swedish 18th c. embroidered binding

In this issue

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The *Bamberg Psalter* in facsimile

High mediaeval art meets modern technology



A psalter in large quarto format on parchment, written with exceeding elegance in the 14th century, whose binding is painted and covered in horn: “In this manuscript, the golden letters have been preserved as

beautifully and freshly as if they had been created only a moment ago by the artist.”

In 1736, the keeper of the cathedral treasury in Bamberg, the episcopal custodian Johann Graff, described with these words a precious manuscript that he had discovered in the cathedral library. For how long the psalter had been lurking there, is lost in the depth of history. The excellent state of preservation of the painted decoration which Graff emphasizes indicates that the manuscript had been carefully preserved in the cathedral for some time. There, the codex was protected from too frequent handling, for it was not suitable to be used in the liturgy. Rather, its painted decoration and contents suggest that the book was originally intended for the use of a noble lady.

In the Middle Ages, women often appear as owners of illuminated psalters. Even though many of them did not know sufficient Latin to understand the text of the psalms word by word, they were familiar with its meaning from the liturgical hours. In monasteries and cathedrals, all 150 psalms from the Old Testament were sung each week in order to express archetypal human emotions like joy and sorrow, hope and penitence, praise of God and defence against enemies. Lay people were also encouraged to adhere to this practice.

Dazzling miniatures

The fifteen full-page miniatures accompanying the psalter depict the life of Christ from the Annunciation to the Last Judgment, thus drawing a visual connection between the Old

and the New Testament. In addition, numerous gold-painted initials, some of them covering an entire page, enhance the text. Modern art historians have revised Johann Graff's assumption that the decoration originated in the 14th century. Evidence for an earlier date is supplied by a manuscript note in the calendar for June referring to a spectacular case of murder: that of count Gerhard of Hirschperg, who was killed in his sleep in 1245. The victim may have been the son of the first owner of the manuscript. Therefore, it is likely that the psalter was commissioned by the counts of Hirschperg, who ruled over territories in the area of Eichstätt, and that the decoration was executed by two artists in Regensburg around the year 1230. If this supposed date and place of origin are correct, the *Bamberg Psalter* was a pioneering work for South-East Germany, for no other psalter of a similar level of conception and aesthetic quality is known from that region, as Professor Dr. David Ganz emphasizes in his art historical commentary to the facsimile.

A facsimile and an exhibition

After three years of preparation, the Quaternio Verlag Luzern published the facsimile in spring 2019. This event provided a reason for a special exhibition in the Staatsbibliothek Bamberg, in which the *Bamberg Psalter* was displayed together with another eleven mediaeval psalters from the 9th to the 15th centuries.



All come from the library's own splendid collections, and all transmit the same text, albeit in very different forms of presentation: The range extends from an early 10th-century “Psalterium quadrupartitum” containing

four different Latin versions of the text in synopsis to a pictorial cycle on the life of King David, the supposed author of the psalms, which opens a 12th-century manuscript;

liturgical psalters are shown next to theological commentaries for students of the Bible.

Exceedingly rare: A binding made from horn

In the selection of psalters shown, the *Bamberg Psalter* takes pride of place, not only due to the dramatic expressiveness and the striking colours of its miniatures on gold ground. Another outstanding feature of the codex is its binding. The wooden boards are covered in painted parchment leaves protected by thin and transparent sheets of horn, which have been fastened with narrow strips of silver. Only very few “horn-bindings” of this type have survived from the Middle Ages: up to now, only 18 are known. The imitation of the binding was the greatest challenge for the producers of the facsimile. They had to find materials comparable to the ones used in mediaeval times, but they also wanted to make the traces of age visible. This meant a considerable task of manual re-working for every individual copy of the facsimile. For practical reasons, certain compromises were inevitable: instead of the original spine covered in silk, the facsimile received a back made from leather. In the exhibition, visitors could gain an impression as to what extent a unique mediaeval work of art like the *Bamberg Psalter* can be reproduced exactly with the means of modern technology.

Original, digital, fac-similar

But why produce facsimiles today at all? Can we not fulfil all requirements for access to mediaeval treasures with the help of digital images? What are the particular qualities of a modern copy of a manuscript which digital photos do not possess? Well, it enables users to interact with the book physically: They can touch it, open the clasps, turn the pages, make the gold sparkle. This allows us to gain an idea of how a mediaeval owner may have experienced the book. Its painted covers and illustrations invited her to immerse herself into the life of Jesus and the Christian faith. When leafing through the book and uncovering the images, we can re-discover the slowness lost when consuming texts and images via the

internet. Admittedly, this is a rather exclusive pleasure, as facsimiles are a luxury item, but it is an experience which pupils, students and scholars can enjoy for free in libraries holding collections of facsimiles. Facsimiles are eminently tactile objects and are there to be handled, unlike the fragile manuscripts themselves, which one can only admire in glass cases with dim lighting, and which hardly ever leave their home library.

A joint enterprise

For a library with holdings of manuscripts, the preparation of a facsimile means an enormous challenge, but it also constitutes a great opportunity. Digital photos of high quality have to be produced in-house and have to be compared in time-consuming detail with the original manuscript. In close collaboration with conservators and scholars, every trace is pursued which promises new insights into the manuscript's origins and history. In the case of the *Bamberg Psalter*, this meant analysing tiny remains of cloth extracted from the original binding, checking inventories of cathedral treasures and mediaeval expense books for entries concerning binding work, deciphering and identifying scribbled notes and critically examining earlier research. The commentary accompanying the facsimile gathers all this evidence together and takes a clear position in current academic discourse. Thus, it forms a basis for future studies, which will hopefully add other aspects to our knowledge of mediaeval book culture.

The brilliance of beauty. Bamberg Psalter manuscripts from the Middle Ages

This exhibition took place 25 March until 15 June 2019 in the Staatsbibliothek Bamberg, Neue Residenz, Domplatz 8, D-96049 Bamberg, Germany.

Online presentation: <https://bit.ly/3cNHnsv>

The facsimile of the *Bamberger Psalter* is published by Quaternio Verlag Luzern. The commentary is edited by Professor Dr. David Ganz (Zürich); it contains contributions by

Karin Eckstein M.A. (Institut für Buch- und Handschriftenrestaurierung of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München), Sibylle Ruß (Textilrestauratorin, Bamberg) and Dr. Bettina Wagner (Direktorin der Staatsbibliothek Bamberg). The digital photos were produced by Gerald Raab (Staatsbibliothek Bamberg).

<https://bit.ly/30tUsEH>



By Bettina Wagner

Third All-Poland Bookbinding Conference titled 'Polish Collections' in Toruń 13-14 December 2018

Despite the catastrophic desolations that have happened in the last centuries in Polish libraries, archives, museums and private collections, currently one can find in them an enormous – however extremely hard to define – amount of works of old bookbinding. Considering this status quo, the Institute of Science Information and Book Studies of the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń in cooperation with the Copernicus Library in Toruń (Książnica Kopernikańska w Toruniu) and a group of researchers from the Poznań University who are inventorying the Cathedral Library in Gniezno organized the Third All-Poland Bookbinding Conference titled 'Polish Collections' in Toruń in the 13th-14th December 2018. The aim of the organizers of the event was the popularization of knowledge of bookbindings in the institutions and private collections in Poland. Particularly it concerns the estimated amount of historic and modern craftsman's bindings in

respective collections and the separation of the cohesive groups of bookbinding works in the collections (e.g. of the same origin, style or authorship).



Approximately 70 people from Polish universities, libraries, museums and archives participated in the conference, as well as a modest-sized group of private bibliophiles. 33 papers and announcements were delivered, representing 3 thematic groups: "Polish Collections", "Miscellanea" and "Restorer's perspective". Exact specification of authors and titles of papers can be

found on the official website of the conference: <https://bit.ly/2XPYrcY>

It is worth mentioning that the conference was accompanied by the exhibition of bookbindings from the collection of the Copernicus Library in Toruń of the old Republic of Poland, Prussia and Lower Silesia from the 14th to the 18th century. Each of the presented objects was considered in the richly-illustrated catalogue titled *Bookbindings in the collections of the so-called Library of Copernicus in Toruń. Part One: the Republic of Poland, Prussia, Lower Silesia, the catalogue of the exhibition* (in Polish: *Oprawy książkowe XIV – XVIII wieku w zbiorach Książnicy Kopernikańskiej w Toruniu, Część I: Rzeczpospolita, Prusy, Dolny Śląsk, Katalog wystawy*) compiled by Arkadiusz Wagner, in cooperation with Beata Madajewska and Anna Mazerska, Toruń 2018.

We plan to publish the volume of post-conference studies for 2020, and at the end of 2020 or the first half of 2021 we will hold the First International Bookbinding Conference, to which I have already invited colleagues from around the globe.



From the conference

By Dr hab. Arkadiusz Wagner
Initiator, main organizer and science secretary of the conference.

Uncovering the Covers

Uppsala May 2019

This was the first of the CERL Bookbindings WG workshops, and its major theme was bookbindings online. It had a slightly varying number of participants for two days, between 10-15 people, mostly from Sweden but also from Hungary, Ireland and the Netherlands.

Stefan Andersson, Helena Backman, Per Cullhed, Magnus Hjalmarsson and Roger Magnusson from Uppsala University Library were responsible for various parts of the workshop. Athanasios Velios and Nicholas Pickwood from the Ligatus Research Center at the University of the Arts London also lectured. The purpose of the event was to show how to publish bookbindings, provenances and watermarks online and Alvin

<https://bit.ly/2AmAaIV> was used as an example of how to do it. In Alvin, bookbindings are published as *objects* with attached images. The *object* entry is linked to a *text* entry with the bibliographical data and the provenance information is published as an *image* entry. All these entries are internally linked with the text entry acting as a host for the other information. Please see <https://bit.ly/2zkrPyR>

and click on the specifically described parts to get an overview of all the information that is published on this book.

One result of the workshop was to devise a way to publish watermarks with not only images and a description of the watermark, but also images of the book or document from which the watermark comes, together with a full bibliographical and provenance record. A side-effect of the watermarks discussion was a simple way to convert digital images of watermarks to b/w line drawings of watermarks that is described separately below.



Lecture by Nicholas Pickwood

The ever-present problem on how to describe bookbindings is the theme of the Ligatus bookbinding glossary,

<https://bit.ly/2MK25iz>

On day three of “Uncovering the Covers”, the Ligatus editorial board met, discussed and worked on the glossary. This has been followed-up by an online meeting as a substitute for a cancelled meeting in Venice in March 2020.

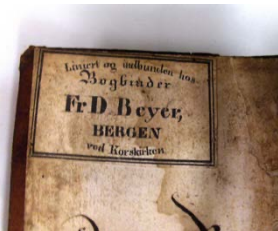


Norwegian bookbinding terms

Anne Eidsfeldt and Nina Hesselberg-Wang from the National Library of Norway have published three instructive documents to aid Norwegian cataloguers in describing bookbindings. Although written in Norwegian and therefore not being immediately available for international access, the set of instructions serves as a good example for how to support cataloguers of bookbindings.

The first document is an alphabetical list of 700 bookbinding terms derived from the *Ligatus* glossary, with Norwegian translations and links to the *Ligatus* glossary.

The second document is a systematic list written as an aid for cataloguers who need to describe bookbindings. The list is intended to be used hierarchically where the top-term is described first and secondary related terms later, which allows the cataloguer to catalogue bindings on different levels.



Finally, the third list gives the reader practical examples of catalogue entries of bookbindings. To download the pdf, click on the link.

1. Alphabetical glossary, with references:

<https://bit.ly/2YdGCUC>

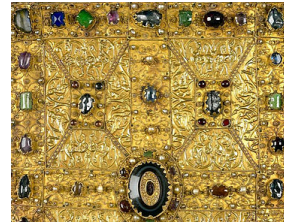
2. Systematic glossary:

<https://bit.ly/37juzJl>

3. Exemples of cataloguing:

<https://bit.ly/2UuJiMc>

Treasure Bindings at the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek



Book covers as material objects occupy a special position between the text-centred collections held by libraries and those of museums,

which are mainly oriented towards material objects. Based on a corpus of around 60 medieval and early-modern metal bookbindings and a collection of about one hundred Tibetan wooden book covers preserved in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, this project aimed at the development of a modular standard of description for these independent works of art, and of testing and defining their integration into the standardized context of description and documentation in internet databases. <https://bit.ly/2XLWSgh>

The results of art-technological and scientific analysis are published online together with art historical descriptions and the digitized images of the objects themselves. The digitization of the book covers and bindings included in this project were carried out in a camera-based workflow, drawing on the results of scholarly analysis. Depending on the digitization techniques employed, models for the presentation of these artefacts were developed and recommendations formulated.

More detailed information about the project is available here: <https://bit.ly/3foWV8r> (in German only).

By Carolin Schreiber

A simple way to draw watermarks

Watermarks have always been a speciality on their own and have not always attracted the binding historian wanting to concentrate more on material traces and decorative styles to place the binding in space and time.

However, as the pastedowns form an integral part of the binding and it is sometimes possible to find a watermark on the flyleaf, watermarks can give important information on the binding. Historically there have been many different ways to trace watermarks to produce an image useable for identification, from simple rubbing techniques or tracing on semi-transparent paper, to more advanced techniques, such as beta-radiography or advanced imaging techniques. Today, for the historian working in special reading rooms, photographs taken by a smartphone or digital camera are probably used a lot, in combination with quick drawings or tracings. These photographs can seldom be successfully used in publication, as the watermark may be obscured or hidden by text or illustrations.

To overcome this problem, there are many simple tools and applications that may be combined to extract a line drawing of the watermark.

In this example two photographs were taken of watermarks from papers used for printing dissertations from Uppsala University in the 1760s. At that time, the printer to the Academy, Evald Ziervogel, also owned a local papermill in Lingonbacka outside of Uppsala. To find a papermark from his mill, searching for it in one of the dissertations from the 1760s would probably be a good idea, as it can be expected that he used his own paper for printing the University's dissertations.



Indeed, in a dissertation from 1763, on a blank page one half of his watermark was found and

photographed on the spot with an Iphone and light coming from a window.



The other half was found further into the same volume, on the other part of the folded and blank paper and this was

also photographed.

The images were imported into an Ipad and opened with an application allowing the addition of layers to the image, which means that you can “deconstruct” the image by adding layers that can be

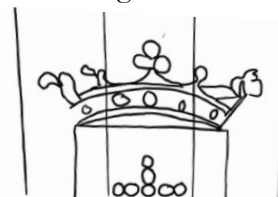


treated separately and merged together, if needed. There are many photo editing software packages to choose from and the one used here is called Procreate. By adding a new

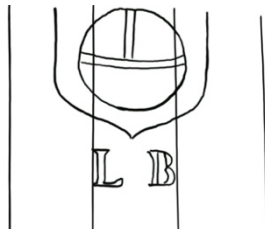


layer, selecting this layer and by drawing directly with an Apple pencil on the smooth Ipad screen to trace the watermark, a digital tracing is produced which is definitely more gentle to the original if you compare it to the practise of tracing the watermark onto a piece of paper on top of the original paper.

The line of the pencil can be adjusted to fit the thickness of the watermark lines on the image. The chain lines can be drawn with the help of a ruler. When finished, the layer with the drawing is chosen and exported as an image which will then look like the image to the left.

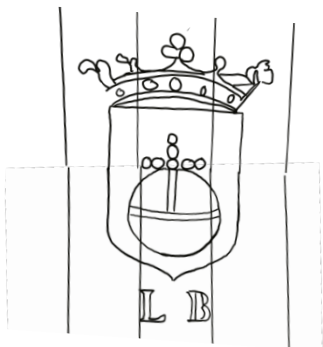


This image is the upper part of the watermark and the one below is the lower part. If needed, further image adjustment can rectify lines and sharpen the image, etc. The two separate



Lingonbacka images, can quite easily be joined together into one image with a reasonable similarity to an original that cannot

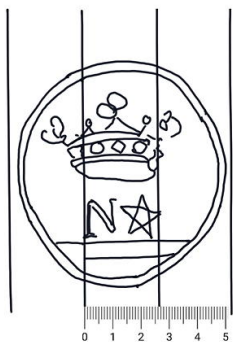
otherwise be captured from the book.
See below.



In this case the images were first inserted as images into a PowerPoint presentation, where they were cropped, aligned and then exported as a new image. The general availability of this software and its

ability to handle the size of many images quite freely on the same “canvas” (or slide) facilitates the production of a compound image like this.

To ensure that a scale is retained it is advised that the distance between the chainlines is



noted and that the chainlines on the image later are aligned to a scale, as in this example. The scale can be produced separately and used as a master scale to be added to the watermark images.

Again, PowerPoint turned out to be the perfect tool to align the scale to the chainlines and to produce one image of the compound picture. A detail of the scale can be seen here.



In this example, the chainlines were slightly more than 26 mm apart.

LB in the watermark stands for the name of the papermill; Lingonbacka. The papermill continued to produce paper until 1879, when it burned down. It was never built up again.

This is merely a combination of techniques that are all very accessible and can be used with very little training. It is much preferred to the rubbing or tracing with pencils on a piece of translucent paper on the original.

By Per Cullhed

Newsletter

Any information, events, techniques, etc. with information relevant to bookbindings connected to heritage collections can be sent for review and eventual publication in this newsletter to (per.cullhed@ub.uu.se).



Italian 18th c. painted vellum binding

Links in full

(Short links were needed to be able to insert active links directly into the text. Below is a list of the original (non-active) links, in the same order as in the text).

<https://www.staatsbibliothek-bamberg.de/kulturvermittlung/virtuelle-ausstellungen/der-bamberger-psalter/>

<https://quaternio.ch/faksimile-editionen/bamberger-psalter/>

<http://www.zbiorypolskie.umk.pl/>

www.alvin-portal.org

<http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:alvin:portal:record-155995>

<https://www.ligatus.org.uk/node/720>

<https://kunnskapsbase.bibliotekutvikling.no/content/uploads/2019/01/Alfabetisk-til-publ.pdf>

<https://kunnskapsbase.bibliotekutvikling.no/content/uploads/2018/05/Hierarkisk-til-publ.pdf>

<https://kunnskapsbase.bibliotekutvikling.no/content/uploads/2017/12/2017-12-11-Enkel-bindbeskrivelse-i-kataloger.pdf>

<https://einbaende.digitale-sammlungen.de/Prachteinbaende/Hauptseite>.