The Harvard Bindery: A Short History

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The history of bookbinding is the history of a craft that, like printing, began with handmade tools in a workshop and developed into a mechanized industry capable of a tremendous output of product. The field has become so specialized that there is a particular set of materials and practices designed to increase the durability (and thus the longevity) of books and serials for use in library collections: library binding. Although libraries have always bound and re-bound books, standardized library binding procedures are a product of the past 150 years.

Practically speaking, a book's binding makes it sturdier by reinforcing its spine and allowing it to open with minimal damage. It also offers the book's text block some degree of protection from pests and the elements. Rebinding a book may become necessary if the original binding is damaged or if the text block is falling out of its binding. In the case of serial literature and loose items, binding can keep volumes in order. As early as 1851, for example, Harvard's early manuscript records were bound together, "for their preservation and for preventing future loss."[1] Consistent colors, fonts, or styles of binding are also useful for arrangement and security of library materials.

Despite its many virtues, bookbinding has sometimes led to the destruction of important artifactual information, or to the creation of a tightly-bound book that is easily damaged by users. William Blades devoted an entire chapter of *The Enemies of Books* to the damage bookbinders have done to the "dignity, beauty, and value" of printed pages.[2] Too often in the past, libraries and private collectors have had historically important bindings stripped from books in order to replace them with more elegant or uniform bindings. A library binding is meant to extend the useful life of books in a library's circulating collection. When a book's binding is itself of value, it ought to be cared for by a professional conservator.

Today, libraries contract commercial binderies to collocate serials, to strengthen paperbacks by adding a binding, and to rebind hardcover books. Openability (for reading and photocopying), flexibility, and minimal alteration to the text block are among the library binding priorities emphasized by Jan Merrill-Oldham in the 1980s, and adopted with enthusiasm by most libraries and binderies.[3] Prior to the twentieth century, books

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[1] Jared Sparks, "Report," *Annual Report of the President of Harvard University to the Overseers on the state of the university for the academic year 1850–1851* (1852): 11–12; Jared Sparks, "Report," *Annual Report of the President of Harvard University to the Overseers on the state of the university for the academic year 1851–1852* (1853): 10–11.

[2] William Blades, *The Enemies of Books*. The Book-lover's library (London: Elliot Stock, 1888), 106.

[3] Sherelyn Ogden, "Guidelines for Library Binding," *Northeast Document Conservation Center Preservation Leaflets*; available from

often came from the publisher to the library either unbound or in a binding too flimsy for repeated use by multiple readers. These books required binding. At that time, binding was "the principal preservation technique in American libraries."[4] Thus, binding and rebinding have remained major library expenses, despite the changing nature of the practice.

By the early nineteenth century, binders and binderies were plentiful in Cambridge and Boston due to the area's preponderance of universities, publishers, and private collectors. For years, it was protocol at Harvard to send library materials out for binding. But as Harvard's library collection grew in size, it became sensible to create an in-house facility. In 1920, the Harvard Library Bindery (later the Harvard University Bindery) was established. The enterprise lasted for nearly forty years, eventually closing due to a combination of factors, including the reluctance of the University to continue operating what was essentially an independent business. Today, Harvard once again outsources its library binding. So, what can this now-defunct business teach us about library preservation?

The story of the Harvard Bindery is an interesting chapter in the history of collections care at that institution. Its origin in a workshop and its transformation into a commercial bindery mirrors the development of modern library binding practices. Finally, the story demonstrates the growing awareness, in the twentieth century, of the importance of binding techniques and materials for the long-term preservation of library collections.

Pre-History of Bookbinding at Harvard University

Bookbinding is a specialized trade that requires space and equipment. Before Harvard's rate of library acquisitions increased enormously in the second half of the nineteenth century, it made economic sense to outsource binding. In fact, Harvard maintained relationships with a number of binders in Boston and Cambridge.

One of the early extant records of a named binder is a 1775 invoice from "Barclay's"—likely Andrew Barclay, a Boston bookbinder—for binding and covering a number of books in calf and sheepskin.[5] Another master binder, John Roulstone, is known to have bound books for Harvard and its patrons in the early nineteenth century.[6] Among the binders commissioned by Harvard over the course of the nineteenth century were Charles A. Wells, Roberts & Thaxter, Harrington & Marshall, S. D. Learned, J. G.

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http://www.nedcc.org/resources/leaflets/7Conservation_Procedures/01GuidelinesForBinding.php; Internet; accessed 3 February 2010.

[4] Barbra Buckner Higginbotham, *Our Past Preserved: A History of American Library Preservation, 1876–1910* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1990), 63

[5] Harvard University. Records of the Harvard University Library. Records relating to the activities of the Library. Binding papers 1775–1928. UA.III.50.15.17.3pf. Box 1. Harvard University Archives. Courtesy of the Harvard University Archives.

[6] Hannah D. French, "John Roulstone's Harvard Bindings," *Harvard Library Bulletin* 18, no. 2 (1970): 171–182.

Roberts, MacDonald & Sons, and J. H. H. McNamee.[7] In his detailed journal covering the period from 1846 to 1882, Librarian John Langdon Sibley mentions visits to the Riverside Press & Bindery, as well as binding work done by a certain "Jackson of Boston," "Wilson, the binder," and Dale & Co.[8] In the case of Sibley, these named binders were usually commissioned for special projects, such as the binding of his own publications. Workaday repairs were often done in the library.

Changes in commercial bookbinding, driven by publishers' desire for inexpensive books and quick production time, occurred during the nineteenth century. Binderies working for publishers aimed to create a large number of attractive books quickly, leading to the development of machines to facilitate every part of the bookbinding process. At this point, libraries still had most of their binding done by hand.[9] However, some time-saving devices introduced by the publishing world were either immediately useful to libraries or became useful in later decades.

For example, a combination of machines made it possible to create cases (book covers made of pulp boards affixed to a piece of cloth) separately from a book's text block. Machines that folded, gathered, sewed, trimmed, and backed the text block prepared it to be glued into the case by yet another machine.[10] Although case bindings were invented to facilitate the mass production of publishers' bindings, and although the shoddy products of the rush to automation were unsatisfactory for long-term use, case binding has in fact become integral to library binding today. Despite skepticism about automation, specific machines—Smyth sewing machines as a substitute for handwork on a sewing frame, for example—were adopted by binders working for libraries. Dudley A. Weiss, executive director of the Library Binding Institute from 1952 to 1982, considers the library binding industry to have originated with the development of oversewing at the beginning of the twentieth century, and the subsequent development of an oversewing machine in the 1920s.[11]

Douglas Cockerell, in 1904, described several ways that a library might save money without compromising the strength of its bookbindings. First, decoration should be eliminated. Leather should be conserved by executing half bindings instead of whole bindings. Time and labor could be saved by using a backing machine instead of backing by hand and by cutting the text block's edges with a guillotine instead of with a hand-

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[7] Harvard University. Records of the Harvard University Library. Records relating to the activities of the Library. Binding papers 1775–1928. UA.III.50.15.17.3pf. Box 1. Harvard University Archives. Courtesy of the Harvard University Archives.

[8] See entries for 2[4] September 1864, 1 April 1865, 8 April 1874, 9 June 1881, and 15 September 1881 in John Langdon Sibley, "Sibley's Private Journal"; available from http://hul.harvard.edu/huarc/refshelf/Sibley.htm; Internet; accessed 27 April 2010.

[9] Higginbotham, *Our Past Preserved*, 87.

[10] Higginbotham, *Our Past Preserved*, 119–120.

[11] Dudley A. Weiss, *My Years with LBI (a Personal History)* (Boston, Mass: Weiss, 1989), 90.

operated plough.[12] Indeed, "by substituting…system for thought," the cost of binding a book could be greatly reduced.[13]

Not all binders who worked for libraries were eager to accept these substitutions. The workshop of J. H. H. McNamee, job binders for Harvard, did hand work instead of using machines. As of 1896, McNamee considered hand work "the only correct method of making a book that will be at once strong and rich looking."[14] He also emphasized that some materials—specifically, the Irish linen he used for sewing—would cost more but last longer, ending up "cheapest in the long run."[15] McNamee was open to some of the changes afoot: instead of leather, the traditional protective material for books, he recommended cloth or canvas bindings for books that receive heavy use in a library context.[16] Cloth was superior to all but the highest-quality (most expensive) leathers; many libraries, such as the Boston Public Library, were using cloth for a majority of their binding by the end of the nineteenth century.[17]

John Langdon Sibley, the librarian responsible for the exponential growth of the college's library collection in the nineteenth century, was also the first to consider creating a workshop in Gore Hall, the college library building, specifically to handle binding. His insistence that the library collect nontraditional formats, such as pamphlets, and his passion for filling Gore Hall practically to bursting caused binding expenses to mount.[18] In an 1870 journal entry, he mentions that John McCarty (or Maccarty), who had worked in the library as a boy before training as a bookbinder, might set up a room in Gore Hall to do binding for the college library.[19] McCarty died before this plan could be realized.[20]

Sibley's successor, Justin Winsor, requested an in-house bindery from the Harvard Corporation. He cited the "large mass of important pamphlets now tied in bundles, the long list of serials now received in paper, and the evidences of need of rebinding which are observable everywhere along the shelves."[21] The main advantages of creating a bindery within the library, according to Winsor, would be lower costs, a guarantee of high-quality work and materials, and the security afforded by keeping

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[12] The guillotine book-trimming machine was patented in 1840. Jane Greenfield, *ABC of Bookbinding: A Unique Glossary with Over 700 Illustrations for Collectors & Librarians* (New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, 1998), 34.
[13] Douglas Cockerell, *A Note on Bookbinding* (London: W. H. Smith, 1904), 7–9.
[14] John H. H. McNamee, *The Essentials of Good Binding; A Lecture Delivered Before the Massachusetts Library Club* (Cambridge: Lombard, 1896), 30.
[15] McNamee, *The Essentials of Good Binding*, 17–18.
[16] McNamee, McNamee, *The Essentials of Good Binding*, 20.
[17] Higginbotham, *Our Past Preserved*, 79.
[18] Clifford K. Shipton, "John Langdon Sibley, Librarian," *Harvard Library Bulletin* 9, no. 2 (1955): 247–248.
[19] See entry for 1 April 1870 in John Langdon Sibley, "Sibley's Private Journal."
[20] Shipton, "John Langdon Sibley, Librarian," 247–248.
[21] Justin Winsor, "The Library," *Annual Reports of the President and Treasurer of Harvard College 1877–1878* (1879): 114.

materials within a Harvard building.[22] Cutting transportation costs must also have been a factor. However, no bindery was created at Harvard on Winsor's watch.

Before coming to Harvard, Winsor had been superintendent of the Boston Public Library, which had an in-house bindery starting in 1876. Higginbotham notes that several other public libraries, such as the Seattle Public Library and the Newark Free Public Library, opened in-house binderies in the late nineteenth century. So did the Astor Library (New York City) and the Library of Congress. Equipment, space, and training were expensive. Melvil Dewey and Charles Cutter were proponents of contracting a commercial binder to work within the library while taking in work from other libraries as well; Cutter oversaw an arrangement along these lines at the Boston Athenaeum.[23] Librarians at Harvard had requested an in-house bindery, and other libraries had demonstrated that it could be done. But it was not until the next century that a bindery would be created at Harvard.

The Bindery in Widener and Boylston

The process of creating a bindery at Harvard began when Charles Holzwarth died in 1918. Holzwarth had repaired books on-site in Widener Library, operating out of a small workshop, and had been trusted with both rush jobs and the fine handiwork required for rare books. His death left Widener's collections to languish. In 1920, Librarian of Harvard College William Coolidge Lane brought in Charles W. Facey, a professional bookbinder who had previously worked on commission to the Harvard College Library, to operate a bindery and repair shop in the basement of Widener. Five men worked for Facey, with staff members added as business increased.[24]

The Bindery experienced great initial success. In addition to its work for the College Library, it took jobs from departmental and special libraries across campus. Materials ordered in the academic year 1927–1928 included buckram, board, thread, paper, glue, gold, oak tag.[25] Machinery requested the previous year included a "Motor Machine, for sewing thicker Pams," an electric-heating glue-pot, and a stamping press.[26]

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[22] Ibid., 115.
[23] Higginbotham, *Our Past Preserved*, 94–95.
[24] Daniel C. Weber, "Harvard University Bindery Sold," *Library Journal* 83, no. 11 (1 June 1958): 1659; William Coolidge Lane, "In April a bindery was opened in the Library," *Harvard Library Notes* 1 (June 1920): 7–8; Mabel F. Barnes, "With the employment of an additional forwarder," *Harvard Library Notes* 8 (June 1922): 182; "The Harvard College Library Staff," *Harvard Library Notes* 11 (May 1923): iv; Mabel F. Barnes, "The Library Bindery," *Harvard Library Notes* 25 (June 1935): 60–63.
[25] Harvard University. Records of the Harvard University Library. Records relating to the activities of the Library. Binding papers 1775–1928. UA.III.50.15.17.3pf. Box 1. Harvard University Archives. Courtesy of the Harvard University Archives.
[26] Harvard University. Records of the Harvard University Library. Records relating to the activities of the Library. Binding papers 1775–1928. UA.III.50.15.17.3pf. Box 1. Harvard University Archives. Courtesy of the Harvard University Archives.

A 1928 article in the *Harvard Crimson* points out that the bindery also operated as a repairs workshop:

"A very important function of the bindery is the repair work. Thousands of books, which need only minor repairs, from a page to be pasted in to resewing in its old cover, are repaired here. Many cases are made to contain old books, too worn to be rebound, in order to preserve them in the best possible condition. Thousands of boxes containing unbound material on the shelves are also made in the College bindery."[27]

In 1929, needing space for new machinery and having become a fire hazard in Widener, the Bindery moved to the Boylston Hall Annex, previously a Chemistry Department facility.[28] The new workshop was adjacent to Widener and therefore remained easily accessible to library staff.

The Harvard Library Bindery's Boylston Hall real estate was soon needed for the construction of Wigglesworth Hall, an undergraduate dormitory, and in 1930 the Bindery moved to the former site of the Hingham Knitting Mill at 888 Memorial Drive.[29] The move meant more autonomy, but prices increased and the distance of the Bindery from its on-campus clients was an inconvenience. In 1934, the Bindery officially became an independent department within Harvard University and ceased reporting directly to the College Library.[30] It took the title Harvard University Bindery. Charles W. Facey retired in 1935.[31]

The Bindery on Memorial Drive

Between 1935 and 1958, the Bindery on Memorial Drive was managed first by Robert F. Fiske, then by Fred C. Wiedeman, Samuel H. Donnell, and finally Adrian A. Totagrande.[32] Fiske, previously hired in the academic year 1932–1933 to reorganize the Bindery's operations, rearranged machinery and apparatus to streamline activity and used

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[27] "Library Bindery is Ready to Move," *Harvard Crimson*, 6 December 1928.
[28] A. Lawrence Lowell, "President's Report" and Robert P. Blake, "The Library," *Reports of the President and Treasurer of Harvard College 1927–1928* (1929): 18–19 and 232; Robert P. Blake, "The Library," *Reports of the President and Treasurer of Harvard College 1928–1929* (1930): 206; Mabel F. Barnes, "The Library Bindery," 61; "Boylston Laboratory to be Utilized as Supplementary Annex for Widener Library: Bindery Will go in Basement," *Harvard Crimson*, 3 October 1928; "Library Bindery is Ready to Move," *Harvard Crimson*, 6 December 1928; "Changes in Boylston Laboratory Started," *Harvard Crimson*, 8 March 1929.
[29] A. Lawrence Lowell, "President's Report," *Report of the President of Harvard College and Reports of the Departments 1929–1930* (1931): 23.
[30] Mabel F. Barnes, "The Library Bindery," 62; Robert P. Blake, "The Library," *Issue containing the report of the President of Harvard College and reports of departments for 1933–1934* (1935): 259–260.
[31] Weber, "Harvard University Bindery Sold," 1659.
[32] Weber, "Harvard University Bindery Sold,"1659–1660.

time studies to calculate standard rates of production.[33] Standards determined, he distributed bonuses to workers who exceeded their anticipated output.[34] *Chat*, the Bindery newsletter produced while Fiske was in charge, reveals a man with indefatigable enthusiasm for his workplace. With asides such as "Believe it or not, but there were only 6 people with a hundred percent attendance during the last seven months!" it is not clear just how popular he was as a supervisor.[35] He left in 1942.

In 1941, the *Harvard Crimson* reported that the Bindery would continue its work during World War II, having imported necessary supplies, including leathers and glycerin-based adhesives, in advance.[36] Nevertheless, the Bindery suffered financially both during and after the war. Prices for services increased under Wiedeman's management. Starting in 1947, Donnell simplified operations and brought prices down; this was also the year that the Director of the University Library resumed "general supervision of [the Bindery's] operations."[37] Donnell continued to advise the Bindery while working as Assistant Dean of the Harvard Business School between 1951 and 1955. The Bindery itself did not change much from 1955 to 1957, but outside circumstances made it less important to Harvard—ultimately resulting in its closure. [38]

The Bindery offered a variety of services to Harvard's many libraries and departments, including "repairing, mounting photostats, making cases, folios, labels, etc."[39] It bound doctoral theses.[40] Some libraries did minor repairs in-house and sent major repair projects to the Bindery.[41] The Bindery could collocate journals or undertake more ambitious projects. For example, the Widener Treasure Room (a predecessor to Houghton Library) commissioned item-level restoration work; instructions sometimes indicate that the Bindery should "save the old label" or "save old back."[42] In 1934, the Bindery purchased 14 tons of binders board and 1.5 tons of adhesive; that year, it bound, rebound, or repaired over 40,000 items.[43]

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[33] Robert P. Blake, "The Library," *Issue containing the report of the President of Harvard College and reports of departments for 1932–1933* (1934): 232.
[34] Robert P. Fiske, "The University Bindery," *Harvard Library Notes* 28 (May 1938): 198–199.
[35] Harvard University Bindery. *Chat* no. 2 (August 1939): 2. HUF 212.813. Harvard University Archives. Courtesy of the Harvard University Archives.
[36] Dana Reed, "Bindery Repairs 13 Miles of Books," *Harvard Crimson*, 23 May 1941.
[37] Paul H. Buck, "University Library," *Report of the President of Harvard College and reports of departments 1957–1958* (1959): 438.
[38] Weber, "Harvard University Bindery Sold," 1660.
[39] Harvard University. Records of the Bindery, 1933–1955. UAV 213.229 hd. Harvard University Archives. Courtesy of the Harvard University Archives.
[40] Harvard University. Records of the Bindery, 1933–1955. UAV 213.2. Harvard University Archives. Courtesy of the Harvard University Archives.
[41] Karl Sax, "Arnold Arboretum," *Issue containing the report of the President of Harvard College and reports of departments for 1948–1949* (1952): 265–266.
[42] Harvard University. Records of the Bindery, 1933–1955. UAV 213.279 hd. Harvard University Archives. Courtesy of the Harvard University Archives.
[43] Fiske, "The University Bindery," 199.

Some materials ordered in 1939—board, boxes, several types of buckram, calf leather, imported goatskin, naphtha, benzene, blades, art vellum, rolls of gummed cloth, papers, and nails—will give a snapshot of the variety of services offered by the Bindery.[44] In the 1930s, the Bindery was using National Paper Cutters, and it collected information on sewing machines, punching machines, and gluing machines.[45] In the 1940s, Bindery workers began using a Kensol stamping machine to create Linotype-set slugs; this change made the task of lettering covers go much faster than it had with hand-set type.[46] In the early 1950s, the Bindery purchased its first oversewing machine.[47] Binding could be done "lace style" or "case style."[48] (Laced bindings involve hand-sewing the binding onto the text block. Cased-in bindings are book covers made separately and then attached to the text block.)

Despite the range of machinery and binding options available, the 1941 *Harvard Crimson* article suggested an extensive amount of hand work undertaken at the Bindery:

"On arriving at the building for repairs, a book is stripped of its cover and prepared for sewing. The loose 'signatures,' or sets of pages, are assembled in their proper order, and five or six grooves are sawed across the back of the collected pages. The book is then transferred to a seamstress, who places cords in the grooves and sews the book and cords together. Although this process has been mechanized in many binding factories the Harvard Bindery uses sewing-frames which are very similar to those used in Gutenberg's time…After a thin coating of glue on the back of the book has dried, the book is 'rounded' by beating with a hammer. It is then placed in a machine which presses the pages together in such a manner that the covers of the finished book will lie flush with the binding of the 'spine,' or back of the volume."[49]

This newspaper article seems to be part of Fiske's ongoing campaign to raise awareness of, and promote goodwill towards, the Bindery. Similarly, a 1937 exhibit of fine bindings from the Widener Treasure Room featured a display of tools and designs from the Harvard Bindery.[50] Fiske made sample cards available to potential customers and frequently had the phrase "The Bindery welcomes all suggestions and criticisms" printed

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[44] Harvard University. Records of the Bindery, 1933–1955. UAV 213.2. Harvard University Archives. Courtesy of the Harvard University Archives.
[45] Harvard University. Records of the Bindery, 1933–1955. UAV 213.2. Harvard University Archives. Courtesy of the Harvard University Archives.
[46] Acme Bookbinding, "175 Years of Preserving the Printed Word, 1821–1996," available from http://www.acmebook.com/stories/story_195; Internet; accessed 5 February 2010.
[47] Paul Parisi. Personal email to Jan Merrill-Oldham (20 Oct 2008).
[48] Harvard University. Records of the Bindery, 1933–1955. UAV 213.229 hd. Harvard University Archives. Courtesy of the Harvard University Archives.
[49] Reed, "Bindery Repairs 13 Miles of Books."
[50] "Collections and Critiques: Widener Book Binding Display Features Valuable Volumes From Treasure Room," *Harvard Crimson*, 13 November 1937.

on receipts and job forms.[51] The Bindery took in orders from libraries as far afield as Dumbarton Oaks, the Harvard research institute in Washington, D.C.[52] Nevertheless, good customer relations were difficult to maintain at about a mile's distance from the main Harvard campus.

Throughout its existence, the Bindery had to fight to remain relevant while rival businesses emerged to offer similar services for competitive prices. In the 1920s, a chart was produced comparing prices at the Harvard Library Bindery with those offered by other area binderies: McNamee, U. Holzer, and Rose. Someone penciled the name "Lane" on this sheet, presumably hoping to draw Librarian William Coolidge Lane's attention to the favorable rates offered by Harvard.[53] In a 1941 note to Keyes Metcalf, Librarian of Harvard College and Director of the Harvard University Library, Fiske challenges him to try other binderies to see if they do better work than the Harvard University Bindery.[54]

The Bindery as Preservation Center

Long before any consideration of founding a preservation program at Harvard, Robert F. Fiske fielded questions about issues such as environment and storage conditions. An industrial engineer by background, he demonstrated enthusiasm and curiosity about the materials and practices of caring for library collections. In response to one letter inquiring into ideal storage and environmental conditions he identified himself as "the person who looks out for the physical condition of our books."[55] Another correspondent asked him how to treat mildew.[56]

Choosing quality materials was a priority. Since acidic paper is subject to rapid deterioration, the Bindery sought out durable, low-acid papers for use as end sheets. In 1938, Fiske announced that the Bindery had made "an accelerated aging machine" in

[51] Harvard University. Records of the Bindery, 1933–1955. UAV 213.229 hd. Harvard University Archives. Courtesy of the Harvard University Archives.
[52] Paul J. Sachs, "Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection," *Report of the President of Harvard College and reports of departments 1949–1950* (1954): 409; Paul J. Sachs, "Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection," *Report of the President of Harvard College and reports of departments 1950–1951* (1954): 303; Paul H. Buck, "Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection," *Report of the President of Harvard College and reports of departments 1951–1952* (1954): 437.
[53] Harvard University. Records of the Harvard University Library. Records relating to the activities of the Library. Binding papers 1775–1928. UA.III.50.15.17.3pf. Box 1. Harvard University Archives. Courtesy of the Harvard University Archives.
[54] Harvard University. Records of the Bindery, 1933–1955. UAV 213.2. Harvard University Archives. Courtesy of the Harvard University Archives.
[55] Harvard University. Records of the Bindery, 1933–1955. UAV 213.2. Harvard University Archives. Courtesy of the Harvard University Archives.
[56] Harvard University. Records of the Bindery, 1933–1955. UAV 213.2. Harvard University Archives. Courtesy of the Harvard University Archives.

which to test the reaction of different types of leathers to concentrated amounts of sulfur and other gases.[57] In a 1940 follow-up article, Fiske reported on the tests:

"Pending further findings on it, our experience and tests show that the best leather for bookbinding is combination tanned leather, combining as it does the high rot resisting qualities of chrome and the workable features of vegetable. Our results make us believe that for all-around utility, cowhide, which stands extraordinary abuse well, could be made an inexpensive, easily worked leather with high resistance to rot by a combination tanning, but as yet we have not found any on the market."[58]

The Harvard Bindery was by no means the first entity to test leathers for durability and rate of decay, and by this point in time many libraries had thrown their support to book cloth as a protective covering.[59] But the practical goal of these tests was to determine which commercial leather manufacturers the Bindery should patronize and which types of leather (with regards to animal and tanning process) it ought to buy. The results were neither overwhelmingly conclusive nor immediately useful, but they nevertheless indicate an institution attempting to improve the quality of its services, with an eye towards the future.[60]

In addition to the preservation value of creating a durable binding, the Bindery offered a wide variety of treatment options for different types of materials. Some of these treatments fall under today's headings of *collections care* or *conservation*: for example, repairing or rebinding rare books, repairing wet books, mounting flat materials such as Photostat prints, and manufacturing housings for library materials. In some cases, Fiske discouraged Bindery clients from having books rebound, since the bindings added historical value to the book; these books instead ought to be put in a box.[61] The craftsmanship of the Bindery may not meet today's professional standards, but it was more than was offered elsewhere at Harvard at that time.

In the Records of the Bindery in the Harvard University Archives, there are notes from what appears to be a paper given to the Joint Committee of the American Library Association (ALA) and the Library Binding Institute (LBI) in the late 1930s. (LBI was established in 1935.)[62] The paper, perhaps written by Fiske, encourages cooperation between libraries and binderies to develop best practices for binding. It also calls for the collaborative development of specific binding procedures. The author suggests that binderies would consistently create high-quality work if cutting corners were discouraged

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[57] Fiske, "The University Bindery," 199–200.
[58] Robert P. Fiske, "Bookbinding Leather," *Harvard Library Notes* 30 (March 1940): 339.
[59] Higginbotham, *Our Past Preserved*, 69–85.
[60] Fiske, "Bookbinding Leather," 338–339.
[61] Harvard University. Records of the Bindery, 1933–1955. UAV 213.229 hd. Harvard University Archives. Courtesy of the Harvard University Archives; Harvard University. Records of the Bindery, 1933–1955. UAV 213.2. Harvard University Archives. Courtesy of the Harvard University Archives.
[62] Jan Merrill-Oldham and Paul A. Parisi, *Guide to the Library Binding Institute Standard for Library Binding* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1990), 1.

by means of a certification process.[63] This particular artifact suggests the transition of a traditional workshop to the standards-driven, collaborative bindery of today. It also indicates that the Harvard Bindery was part of the conversation that led to a vastly improved quality of library binding in the twentieth century.

End of the Bindery

In the 1950s, it became apparent that the Harvard University Bindery would not be able to flourish while it remained a Harvard department. A shortage of commissions meant that it suffered financially.[64] Meanwhile, independent firms offered competitive pricing, quick turnaround, and new advances in binding methods.[65] In 1955, the Harvard Dramatic Club began to use a large portion of the Bindery building for theatrical productions and storage; the encroachment of students indicated that Harvard had other ideas for how to use 888 Memorial Drive.[66]

In general, Harvard was reluctant to keep investing in a department that provided services available elsewhere.[67] Paul H. Buck wrote of the Harvard policy that "non-academic service operations should be restricted as much as possible whenever adequate service can be provided by private enterprise."[68] In 1957, perhaps recognizing that their jobs were in danger, Bindery employees chose to join the A.F.L. Bookbinders Union.[69]

In September 1957 the decision was made to sell the Harvard University Bindery.[70] The buyer was Samuel H. Donnell, previously Bindery manager, and the sale, in spring 1958, included "all machinery and supplies."[71] Donnell re-hired the Bindery's employees and moved the operation to a nearby site on Blackstone Street in Cambridge. He named his business New England Bookbinding.[72] The small world of bookbinding should be illustrated by the fact that New England Bookbinding was sold in 1978 to an ex-employee, Angelo "Bud" Parisi, formerly a finisher at the Harvard Bindery, who had

[63] Harvard University. Records of the Bindery, 1933–1955. UAV 213.254. Harvard University Archives. Courtesy of the Harvard University Archives.
[64] "University Plans to Shut Bindery," *Harvard Crimson*, 12 December 1957.
[65] Weber, "Harvard University Bindery Sold," 1661.
[66] "H.D.C. Obtains Bindery to Centralize Activities," *Harvard Crimson*, 29 January 1955.
[67] Weber, "Harvard University Bindery Sold," 1661; "University Plans to Shut Bindery."
[68] Paul H. Buck, "University Library," *Report of the President of Harvard College and reports of departments 1957–1958* (1959): 438–439.
[69] "Bindery Employees Vote to Join AFL," *Harvard Crimson*, 3 May 1957; "HUERA Head Says AFL Misleads Personnel Here," *Harvard Crimson*, 4 June 1957.
[70] Weber, "Harvard University Bindery Sold," 1661.
[71] "Library Bindery Sold to Former Manager," *Harvard Crimson*, 15 April 1958.
[72] Acme Bookbinding, "175 Years of Preserving the Printed Word."

left New England Bookbinding to found his own business, Acme Bookbinding.[73] Acme Bookbinding does much of Harvard's library binding work today.

Postscript

The building at 888 Memorial Drive had its own peculiar denouement. Starting in 1957, it was used by the Italian sculptor Mirko to establish a visual arts program at Harvard (later relocated to the Carpenter Center).[74] In March 1971, by which time the building was largely unused, a women's liberation group occupied 888 Memorial Drive, declaring it the Cambridge Women's Center and demanding the creation of low-income housing in the surrounding Riverside neighborhood.[75] Photographs taken after the occupation show graffiti declaring "Women this building is OURS" and "VIET CONG Women Carry GUNS."[76] The many iterations of this building—from knitting mill to bindery to occupied site—serve as reminder of the long life of Harvard as an institution.

In a similar vein, the longevity of Harvard's library collections is ensured by an ongoing commitment to stewardship on the part of individuals and departments within the community. The Harvard Bindery was an early provider of collections care services and preservation consultation. Its services might meet today's standards, but the work it did and the questions it asked, especially about materials, were important steps on the path to the excellent library binding program in place at Harvard today.

Of course, the story of the Harvard Bindery is only one part of the history of library binding initiatives at Harvard. In the 1970s, Doris Freitag, conservation consultant to the University Library, oversaw the evaluation of sample bindings from a number of the commercial binderies doing work for Harvard. These bindings were tested at the Library Binding Institute at the Rochester Institute of Technology and the results allowed Harvard to make more informed decisions about which binderies it contracted.[77] Freitag also worked closely with Bud Parisi and his son, Paul, of Acme Bookbinding, in order to determine best practices for re-casing books.[78] Paul Parisi recalls discussions with Freitag in the 1970s:

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[73] Acme Bookbinding, "Bud Parisi, 1926–2010"; available from http://www.acmebook.com/828; Internet; accessed 27 April 2010. This article includes a 1946 photograph of Bud Parisi at work in the Harvard Bindery.

[74] Nathan M. Pusey, "President's Report," *Report of the President of Harvard College and reports of departments 1968–1969* (1970): 33–34.

[75] Reginald H. Phelps, "Faculty of Arts and Sciences," *Report of the President of Harvard College and reports of departments 1970–1971* (1972): 61; 888 Women's History Project, "Left on Pearl"; available from http://www.888womenshistory.org/; Internet; accessed 27 April 2010.

[76] Harvard University. Photographs of 888 Memorial Drive. HUV 653. Harvard University Archives. Courtesy of the Harvard University Archives.

[77] Douglas W. Bryant and Louis E. Martin, "University Library" *Report of the President of Harvard College and reports of departments 1976–1977* (1978): 440.

[78] Doris Freitag. Interview by Sarah Burke, 18 August 2009, Cambridge, Mass. Digital recording.

"The Harvard Bindery 'way' (still in practice at that time at Acme) was to whip stitch endpapers onto the text block to make the binding strong. Doris explained that sewing through the fold would make a more flexible book and would retain all the best characteristics of a Smyth sewn book. This required the creation of a new endpaper that would suit this style of sewing. I am pleased to say that this style of recasing is now the preferred method in the LBI Standard and that 'special' endpaper is now routinely available."[79]

In this case, the collaboration of a librarian and a binder meant a product that better responded to the needs of library collections. Jan Merrill-Oldham, currently the Malloy-Rabinowitz Preservation Librarian in the Harvard University Library, participated in several landmark publications on library binding, including 1986's *Library Binding Institute Standard for Library Binding* and a 1990 guide to that standard; both of these publications have been updated since 2000, with the development of the LBI standard into an ANSI/NISO standard. By means of the 1990 guide to the LBI Standard, the 2008 guide to the ANSI/NISO/LBI Standard, and frequent presentations about best practices, Merrill-Oldham has educated countless librarians about the necessary components of a library binding program.

The story of library binding at Harvard neither begins nor ends with the Harvard Bindery. However, this partial history of just one Harvard unit should serve as a reminder of the many people and departments who have cared for Harvard's collections over the years. It may also provide context for understanding the many improvements in library binding that have taken place over the last 50 years—not only at Harvard but also in libraries and binderies worldwide.

[79] Paul Parisi. Personal email to Jan Merrill-Oldham (20 Oct 2008).