Panel Discussion on Bookbinding Problems

Jean Ashman
Indiana University School of Law

Follow this and additional works at: http://www.repository.law.indiana.edu/facpub

Part of the Scholarly Publishing Commons

Recommended Citation
Ashman, Jean, "Panel Discussion on Bookbinding Problems" (1941). Articles by Maurer Faculty. Paper 1677.
http://www.repository.law.indiana.edu/facpub/1677
Mr. Hill: That is true in all the different types of libraries.

Mr. Poldervaart: I find that the call for these appeal papers comes from practitioners who find cases which are pretty much in point. In other words, they find a case which exactly favors their side and they will want to examine that record in order to find the arguments which the counsel used to support that argument which they want to advance in their case. In the same way, if it is against them they like to get that particular case which is exactly in point to see if by reading those arguments they can find something to distinguish it. I think the use of these appeal papers would be somewhat less than it would be on the reports themselves for the reason that it is after finding the case in point in the reports that the person is interested in the appeal papers so as to get the arguments.

Mr. Herbert Jacob Allan (Brooklyn Public Library, Brooklyn, N.Y.): I would like to suggest one additional use which attorneys make of these which completely distinguishes the appeal papers from the use of court reports; that is in preparation of their pleadings. Only from the actual record can they find the exact plea. I think very frequently that is an almost indispensable use where it is a difficult or not usual case.

Mr. Pollack: That is one of the strongest arguments for the use of these records and briefs, especially for the young attorney who is just starting in practice. He will refer to the records for his guidance in the procedural aspects.

President Morse: Thank you very much for your paper, Mr. Pollack. I know we will look forward to the printed report of it in the JOURNAL.

This concludes the program for the afternoon. The meeting is adjourned.

[Adjournment at four-twenty o'clock.]

SATURDAY MORNING SESSION—June 28, 1941

The meeting was called to order at ten-thirty o'clock by Miss Jean Ashman, Law Librarian of Indiana University, who presided over the Panel Discussion on Bookbinding Problems.

Chairman Ashman: The meeting will please come to order.

Mr. Poldervaart has distributed cards for you to fill in your names and addresses if you want information about library binding. Mr. Barr has also arranged for one or perhaps two samples of leather preservatives to be sent to anyone who fills in the cards.

We are devoting the meeting to a panel discussion on bookbinding problems. Our first speaker, Mr. Pelham Barr, is a consulting economist by profession. He organized the Library Binding Institute in 1935 and has been its Executive Director since that time. Ten years ago he was economist in charge of research and wrote the report on "The Economic Survey of the Book Industry." This led a few years later to work as Assistant Director for the NRA Code Authority for the book manufacturers, and that in turn led to his present position. His latest activity is editing Book Life. This concerns binding and is of interest to librarians. Many of you are familiar with his page in each issue of the Library Journal. Some of us have received valuable advice from Mr. Barr, others have noticed the improved binding since the Library Binding Institute began to function, and still others have had the benefit of better binding without noticing it.
It gives me great pleasure to introduce Mr. Barr, who will speak on "The Conservation of Law Libraries."

THE CONSERVATION OF LAW LIBRARIES

Pelham Barr

Executive Director of the Library Binding Institute

In the confusion of the headlines today, there is one thing which seems to me to stand out very clearly. That is that in a good part of the world the need for law libraries and law librarians is decreasing—has almost vanished altogether. And it is significant that those lands which have least need for law libraries are the unhappiest lands. Where it is possible for one man to say, "I am the law," there isn't much place for law librarians—they would be rather superfluous.

I make this point not in the spirit of pessimism which is so fashionable today but because it really goes to the very heart of the whole subject of conservation in law libraries. After all, law libraries are different from all others in a very essential way—with respect to preservation and conservation of their resources. Of course, all libraries, if they are to remain libraries, must preserve their collections. They preserve the wisdom (or lack of it) of the past so that it may be used—or at least referred to—now and in the future. If the public libraries in this country were destroyed, or the college libraries or special libraries or the great private collections of old and rare books, the loss to humanity would be inconceivably great. And yet writers could go on writing and scientists could go on with much of their task if the works of literature and most of the works on science were lost. That is, these fields do not inherently depend on the past, but the law does. In its very nature, the law, as an institution of democracy, is based on precedent and is therefore dependent on the records of the past.

Therefore, in the case of law libraries, the need for preservation isn't merely a matter of degree—it isn't simply that conservation is more important in law libraries than in others. From its very nature, the law library must preserve its collection in an entirely different spirit from that in any other kind of library. The law library is, of course, a service agency, but in a democracy its functions as a repository and a preserver are just as essential. In the totalitarian states, where the law is the whim of the dictators and justice is dispensed by men in colored shirts who create their precedents on the spur of the moment, law libraries become museums. Such libraries preserve law books as quaint antiques, not as the record of the living spirit of the people.

I am sure that all law librarians recognize this more vividly than can any layman like myself. And once this fundamental truth about law libraries is recognized, wouldn't it be logical to expect that all law librarians would long ago have realized the fundamental importance of conservation—that they would have solved all the problems of conservation and that law libraries would now be models of perfection in conservation? But do you feel that I would be accurate in saying that all these things are so?

I am afraid that we all know the answer. We needn't dwell on it or search for the reasons. We may spend our time more profitably in studying the nature of conservation in law libraries and the way in which the work of conservation may be carried on as effectively and as economically as possible. That is entirely different from
merely binding up volumes of law journals and digests and briefs. This difference is the same kind as that between, on the one hand, looking up a few citations for purposes of illustration and, on the other hand, thoroughly preparing a complex case and carrying it through the courts. The difference is in completeness and planning.

We have all seen libraries in which the conservation was never planned—not even routine binding was properly supervised: Old and dilapidated volumes; leather disintegration; labels peeled off; recently rebound volumes falling apart; issues of journals missing; pages on important cases torn to the point of incomprehensibility; current material scattered. In many law offices, the library is more a form of advertising to impress clients, and in such cases conservation is given no consideration. Unfortunately, in some cities, the standards of such law offices have tended to become the standards of some law libraries.

To get first to the fundamentals of conservation, against what must law collections be protected? Reading, the use of library material, is necessarily accompanied by wear and tear. And there is not only the wear and tear of handling, but also the deterioration of time and of the elements. Library resources may be used up even when they are not being utilized.

Another form of wastage of library resources is the total loss of material, especially issues of periodicals and pages of books. Obviously the value and usefulness of books, periodicals and pamphlets are impaired through such loss.

Another factor which is very important in the utilization of library resources is the form in which they are—that is, their usability. In considering the law library in its service agency aspect rather than as a repository, the emphasis must be on utilization—on the conservation for use rather than the preservation for record. Obviously utilization is handicapped by difficulty in using. Clearly a periodical which may be frequently used should not be stored in bundles which are all but inaccessible. Certainly a volume which is hard to open and to keep open is not in the proper form for utilization.

Utilization therefore depends on these fundamentals of conservation: Protection from wear and tear; preservation from deterioration; protection from loss, and maintenance in usable form. These fundamentals of conservation, when they require treatment of library material, are precisely the tasks of what is known as library binding. Library binding is more than the two most frequent tasks of binding periodicals and rebinding books. Any task involving the conservation processing of printed materials is included in the all-round services of competent library binders.

The range of conservation tasks performed by library binderies includes: The rebinding of worn books; the pre-binding or reinforcing of new books to minimize wear; the binding of magazines, newspapers and pamphlets; the mounting and preservation of maps, photographs, autographs and legal documents of all kinds; the construction of all sorts of folders, binders and containers for printed material; the making of bound volumes from loose papers of all sorts; the restoration and repair of old, rare and valuable material. That is, the competent library binder is an expert craftsman as well as a consultant in the conservation of library resources. He is a practical protector of library resources and aids the custodian and director of utilization who is called the librarian.

Perhaps at this point I should remind you that I am neither a binder nor a
librarian. And I emphatically deny that I even took one course in law. I am a 100 per cent layman, and therefore I can qualify as an expert. As a matter of fact, I am speaking from eight years of experience in listening to the problems of conservation, both from the library and from the bindery sides—listening and studying and trying to find solutions. These problems are not merely technical—they are also economic, as, of course, are all problems of buying and selling. From the observation and analysis of hundreds of actual cases, I should like to develop a few principles—principles which suggest what works and what does not work. What I say may sound like a lot of obvious generalizations—platitudes. Most of the principles I shall outline sound like the logical things to do. And yet, like most platitudes, they are ignored and taken for granted—to the point that they sometimes seem like startling and revolutionary innovations. There are many libraries of all kinds which do not yet follow these principles or any principles.

There are several reasons for this. One is that librarians, like all overworked people, are often so busy doing things that they have no time to stop and find out why they are doing them. Another reason is that, very frequently, the supervision of conservation is not considered an essential part of library administration, but rather a not very pleasant chore. Even where the supervision of binding has been made a workable routine, it is too often looked upon as a necessary evil—a succession of boring tasks—rather than as the conservation of resources. There has, of course, been a great deal of progress in the last few years, but there are still too many libraries in which the problems of conservation are handled in a very primitive way.

But if the librarian considers the repair and preservation of material as true conservation, the work becomes an essential of library administration—and a vital one. Not only are the library’s resources conserved, but it is done at the maximum of efficiency and the minimum of cost. That means that conservation work should be completely integrated into the whole administration of the library. To get the best results, there should be more than competent day-by-day supervision and efficient procedures—there must be a definite conservation policy and plan, just as there should be a definite plan of building the collection to serve the specific needs of the library’s users.

The following are some of the steps which a law library might take in developing such a policy and putting such a plan into action:

1. A general survey of the library’s resources—not a detailed inventory, but a special classification for conservation purposes. Individual consideration would be given to important material; the material of no particular significance would be grouped into broad categories. All the material would be classified with respect to the importance of its need for conservation and the factors by which preservation is affected: The physical nature of the material; the contents, and the manner and extent of use.

2. Classification and checking of the material with respect to the way it is being currently handled for conservation. Four general groups may usually be found in such a classification of material: First, that which needs no particular treatment; second, that which is receiving some treatment, adequate or inadequate; third, that which has been neglected and which demands immediate treatment if it is to be saved, and, fourth, that which calls for attention at some later date, but not too far in the future.
3. Working out revised methods for those cases in which current practice is not adequate or not adapted to the material. For example, it may be found that patent literature is being left unbound when it is really important that it be bound. Or a file of a certain periodical may be found in a so-called temporary binding when its importance to library users requires permanent binding. So-called "fugitive" material needs particular study; just because it is fugitive it may be easily lost and impossible to replace. Even material which falls into the no-treatment classification may be found to be mistreated—perhaps stored in such a way as to suffer rapid deterioration, piled in bundles, crowded or subjected to extremes of light, heat, humidity or other adverse atmospheric conditions. This may involve the rearranging of shelves and other space to give the material a chance.

4. Deriving the basic plan from these studies. This would include definite provision for the best treatment of every type of material and decisions as to the proper time for treatment (whether one-time or recurring). It would provide not only for binding currently used material but also for reconditioning and preserving rarely used material.

5. Devising the time program or schedule of conservation work for the year and for each part of the year. This would also serve as the basis for budgeting time and funds. It might be found necessary to provide definitely for a number of years ahead in gradually catching up with the backlog of material neglected or improperly treated in the past.

6. Outlining sequences of work and detailing all required procedures. This would include assignment of the duties of the conservation staff, and recording the necessary instructions. Provision would be made for watching and automatically checking important material and for tightening up the system by which assistants discover and withdraw material needing attention. In the case of every important item, an individual program would be determined upon as soon as it arrives at the library, as part of the accessioning processes. This would mean, for example, that an old leather-bound book would go to the conservation librarian at once for preservative treatment or restoration; and with the aid of some reminder file it would be periodically examined. It would mean, also, that a valuable and much-used reference work would be examined and proper reinforcing work done on it before it is shelved.

In such planning, most law librarians have important advantages over other librarians. After all, the law librarian does not have to worry about the latest book with a title which begins with the word "death" nor about whether all the books in the Bobbsey Twins series have become too dirty and sticky from lollipops. The law librarian is in a position to have a stable collection, not subject to the waves of popular taste. The law librarian knows what the library has and, to a large extent, what it will have—what its readers will need and want. This is true in spite of the new types of material which have been coming out with the latest phase of that strange thing flatteringly called "administrative law." If the symbolic figure of Justice is properly represented as being blindfolded, it seems to this layman that administrative law is what happens when the bandage slips a little from one eye—and covers the nose. But perhaps I'd better stick to the subject of conservation planning.

In any case, the law librarian should be better able to plan conservation, just as the law library collection can
be more easily planned. There need not be anything haphazard in the policies or procedures of conservation in a law library. It should, for instance, be easier to budget binding. Of course, if conservation is properly planned, it is essential to budget, and if the planning is to be effective the budget must be big enough. An adequate conservation budget must provide not only for the binding which comes along regularly, but also for backlog binding and restoration, for periodic examination, and for protective treatment when necessary.

Such planning of conservation need not be abstruse—the whole process is really simple horse sense. Of course there will be problems and difficulties. Some very important and very practical questions will arise. How shall the binding and other work be done? How can we get good work? Who is to do it?

At this point it is necessary for me to say a few words about the work being done to help librarians answer these questions—work being done cooperatively by the library profession and the library binding industry. The library binderies have what I believe to be a different kind of trade association. I have spent—well, a lot of years, as a consultant to businesses, to financial institutions and to trade associations. During those years, I came to see more and more clearly that business would have to revise its concepts of itself relationships with its customers, and that the consumers would have to develop a different understanding of business. Perhaps some day we shall discover that the basic principle of a sound economy is that all transactions within it shall benefit both sides. If this is true, then what is good for the consumers is, in the long run, good for the producers; and the reverse is equally true. Therefore, it seems to me, producers and consumers should be able to work together to achieve their common aims, by developing principles to protect themselves and to guide them in their daily relations. In 1935, the opportunity came to put these ideas into practice in the library binding industry.

Before L.B.I. was formed, there was for many years a Bookbinding Committee of A.L.A. It began to develop quality standards, but it could not get very far in promoting them, improving them through research or enforcing them. In 1934 a Joint Committee was formed of representatives of the American Library Association Bookbinding Committee and representative binders. Shortly thereafter the Library Binding Institute was organized, and then it actually became possible for a real cooperative program to be carried out. The Joint Committee consists of three representatives appointed by A.L.A. and three elected by L.B.I. This Joint Committee studies and decides on all questions concerning the relations of libraries and binderies. In actual practice, no decision is made unless it is approved by a majority of A.L.A. representatives on the committee. These A.L.A. representatives have the veto power. No action involving relations of binderies to libraries is taken by L.B.I. without the approval of the Joint Committee. In effect, therefore, the library binding industry has put itself into the hands of representatives of its customers.

This cooperative program has had far-reaching effects on binding service within a few years. First, Minimum Specifications for Class “A” Library Binding were developed, and these are being increasingly used. The Joint Committee helps libraries on all kinds of questions relating to conservation. It has a free examination service through which any librarian may re-
receive an expert report on whether a binding is or is not up to Class “A” standards. Through the research associate of L.B.I., materials are tested and technical problems investigated. And in answer to the question, How can a librarian be sure a bindery can do Class “A” work?, the Joint Committee has developed its Certification Plan.

Under this Plan, a bindery signs a Pledge of Fair Dealing, as a member of L.B.I., submits samples of work and information on questions relating to its responsibility. If investigation proves that everything is satisfactory, the bindery is certified. The certification is entirely in the power of the A.L.A. representatives on the Joint Committee. A certified bindery pledges itself to maintain certain wage and hour conditions, not to employ child labor, to maintain quality standards, and not to engage in misrepresentation or other unfair practices. The customers’ property must be adequately covered by insurance. The bindery must live up to its promises to its customers.

Certification is not eternal. Every certified bindery is under constant study by L.B.I. headquarters—the industry undertakes to police itself in the cooperative program. But the final power to revoke certification lies in the hands of the A.L.A. representatives on the Joint Committee.

As a result of the Certification Plan, standards of binding quality and business methods have substantially risen. It is now possible for a library anywhere in the country to get good binding and good service at a reasonable price, from a responsible bindery working under decent labor conditions.

This means that any law library which selects a properly qualified certified bindery can be sure of Class “A” binding and good conservation service.

It is not necessary to enlarge on the obvious advantages of standard quality binding. The Minimum Specifications for Class “A” binding represent good quality of materials, good workmanship and good construction for the general run of books, magazines and newspapers. The objectives of the Specifications are conservation—durability and usability, as well as neat appearance. If a law collection is worth building up and maintaining, it is obviously worth conserving according to the highest standards.

But I should like to say a few words about handicaps to quality and good conservation service. One is improper treatment of material before it is sent to the bindery. If there is a definite conservation plan, the librarian knows in advance whether or not certain material is ultimately to go to the bindery. If it is not to go, it should be handled in some predetermined way; but if it is destined for the bindery, nothing should be done to it which would prevent good binding when the time comes. Excessive mending in the library is one of the ways in which trouble, loss and expense are frequently caused. All authorities agree that, if material to be bound is first mended, the treatment in the library should be minimum—and by an experienced, careful person. Mending of material to be bound later should not go beyond work on a few torn pages.

In the same category is so-called “temporary binding.” There is a tendency to feel that the words “temporary,” “cheap,” “shoddy” and “inexpensive” are synonymous. This confusion tends to arise where there is no definite conservation program. To the best of my knowledge, there is no such thing as a temporary binding—in the sense that the issues of a periodical are actually fastened to each other in such a way that they can later be properly sewed and bound. Of course,
there are temporary covers, such as spring binders and similar devices, but these do not fasten the issues to each other by any process which changes the physical condition of the paper. But any method which actually does change the condition of the paper—by punching holes or otherwise piercing it—makes it very difficult, if not impossible, to do good binding later.

The question of inexpensive binding often arises when the librarian feels that some particular kind of material needs preserving, but it is not important enough to justify class “A” binding. There are various methods which can be used, but they should not be adopted without consultation with an experienced binder. This kind of material, any kind of material, should not be given “cheap” binding—entrusted to any binder who comes along and offers to do it cheaply. There is a fundamental and very important difference between a cheap binding which is an attempt by an incompetent binder to imitate good binding and a special inexpensive binding designed and executed for that particular purpose by an expert and reliable binder. If any material needs special treatment, whether it be more complex and expensive or less than the standard, it needs a binder who can understand the material and can give it the treatment best adapted to its nature and use. For any unusual problem, it is safest to tell the binder what results are wanted and to leave to his experienced judgment and skill the responsibility for getting those results.

Whether the problem is relatively a minor one like color or a broad one like planning the re-binding of a collection of old books, consultation between librarian and binder is the best assurance of the best results: Many librarians have found the first step and the greatest aid in conserving the resources of their libraries to be the selection of a competent bindery. That is an essential of a complete conservation program because the binder can help in preparing the program, in studying the needs of the particular library, in drawing on his experience with similar problems. And when the right binder is found, it is good policy, good management and ultimate economy to stick to him—to let him become more valuable to the library by learning intimately about its conservation needs, and to maintain cooperative relations with the binder year after year. [Applause.]

CHAIRMAN ASHMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Barr. You have given us a very valuable and stimulating paper.

Our next speaker is Mr. Carroll C. Moreland, Law Librarian of the Michigan State Library. He will talk to us on “The Importance of Binding in the Law Library.”

THE IMPORTANCE OF BINDING IN THE LAW LIBRARY

CARROLL C. MORELAND
Law Librarian, Michigan State Library

The stock in trade of law libraries is books and their contents. Although the layman may doubt the value of old court decisions, we do not. Since court decisions are contained within the covers of books, it behooves us to see to the preservation of the containers. The most obvious method is good and adequate binding.

Although I have been a law librarian only two years, I have dealt with law books off and on for seventeen years. In that time I have seen no change for the better in the greatest hazard to our books—the reader. A table piled high with open book thrown upon open book is a familiar sight which bodes ill for the life of the books. In no other type
of library have I ever seen books similarly treated. It must be a *sine qua non* to the use of law books. Everyone does it: I confess I do. But this unusual strain on the book calls for unusually good binding.

The reader who piles up the opened books may shorten the life of a book, but what of the peripatetic reader, the ambulant tower of Pisa, who leans against stacks or walls as he thumbs through a volume, then casually drops it on a table already overcrowded? The ensuing Niagara of legal erudition would delight an unthinking child into cries of "More, daddy, more!" but it can only bring shudders to the librarian. I do not know how we can improve the reader, but we can at least see that our books are given adequate protection against the vicissitudes of life.

Excessive size and weight of many law books contribute to accidents. The reader misjudges the force necessary to grasp the book with one hand—and another book falls to the floor. There are many reasons why we have to have volumes five or six inches thick, but no reason why the binding cannot be strong enough to withstand the shocks. If we must have thick books, let us have strong ones.

In each library there are certain items which are given unusually hard usage. In our library the current volumes of the General Digest are used about as much as any others. By reason of size and weight, it became necessary to rebind a 1937 volume. In view of the prospective lifetime of the set, it occurred to me that it might be well to prebind the new volumes as they came out. Beginning with Vol. 9, we have received the folded and gathered sheets from West, divided them into two parts, and have had them bound by our binder. So far the experiment has proved successful. Taking into consideration the differences in age, Vol. 9 is in much better condition than Vol. 8 and appears to be good for the life expectancy of the set. We will be saved the embarrassment of telling a reader in the future that these volumes are in the bindery—a statement which exasperates even the most reasonable of patrons.

One of the reasons for the poor printing and binding of state reports, session laws and other material is the contract system under which most states operate. The contracts usually go to "the lowest responsible bidder" under existing laws. Someone must exercise judgment in selecting the company to do the work. I leave it to your own experience to decide whether the choices are the best possible, even granting that the method is good.

Most librarians are not binding experts and should be grateful that the A.L.A. has, in conjunction with the Library Binding Institute, set out specifications for library binding. These specifications are the work of experts in the field. Members of the Library Binding Institute are pledged to the fulfillment of them. Although we can send samples to the A.L.A. for checking, it is reassuring to know that our binder is under a moral obligation to live up to a professional standard. This is particularly true since imperfections in binding, not obvious at a glance, might not be discovered in a law book for years.

As an example of the contract system and A.L.A. "Class A" specifications, I can point to our own experience in the binding of records and briefs. For years they were bound under contract by a printing establishment. During the last biennium "Class A" specifications have been incorporated in the contract. As a result the former binder no longer has the contract and
Tradition has played a large part in the binding of law books. Long after other types of material had ceased to be bound in leather, law books were so bound. Even today we are receiving four sets of reports bound in leather. There is one tradition which still clings, and that is the matter of leather labels. So far as I can tell, leather labels serve no good purpose and only add to the expense of the binding. We have a few experimental volumes on which the black and red leather has been replaced by paint. The substitution seems to be satisfactory, and I know that the corners will not come loose. The worst offender among leather labels has been the little patch which carries the volume number of a set of reports; it is easily dislodged, making the selection and shelving more difficult. A satisfactory stamping of all the information upon the back of the book itself, upon varying colors if necessary, seems to me to be a more sensible method of identification than leather labels.

Law books are not ephemeral usually; although new books come out, we cannot discard the old. If we must keep the material always available on our shelves, it should be adequately bound. But for the most part the publishers of legal material have not given us bindings which meet the requirements of our libraries. The trade edition may be adequate for the practitioner's library, but it is unsatisfactory for the law library where it is used constantly and hard.

Two alternatives present themselves. One is re-binding when necessary. This is objectionable, because re-binding does not improve the book; when a book needs re-binding it has already deteriorated. Moreover, while being re-bound the book is unavailable, thus cutting down our service. The other alternative is some method of strengthening the binding before it goes on our shelves. Our experiment in pre-binding the General Digest is not the only solution perhaps, but it is one which deserves consideration. General libraries have been pre-binding certain types of material for some time. I think that the possibilities of pre-binding for law libraries should be explored and might prove fruitful. I do not mean to suggest that all of the materials that go on the shelves should be pre-bound, but there are certainly some items which would profit by being pre-bound before being put on the shelf.

CHAIRMAN ASHMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Moreland.

Mr. Forrest S. Drummond, Law Librarian of the University of Chicago, has been asked to investigate the possibilities of pre-binding. He will make his report now.

THE POSSIBILITIES OF PRE-BINDING

FORREST S. DRUMMOND

Law Librarian, University of Chicago

At the Chicago meeting last December we discussed the problem of obtaining reinforced bindings for books which receive heavy use in our libraries. It was felt that it would be desirable to have a reinforced binding on these volumes even though it entailed a slight additional cost and that if the publishers could not furnish such bindings then the books might be obtained in an unbound form and prebound with the desired reinforcing.

The General Digest was selected as a good example since it is a heavy vol-
ume which receives much use and since one library now obtains it in unbound form and has it bound for its own use. I contacted the West Publishing Company, Mr. Barr of the Library Binding Institute, and two experienced binders with a view to finding out whether the General Digest could be obtained in unbound form and, if so, whether it could be prebound in a reinforced binding without too much additional cost. The binders with whom I spoke agreed that the General Digest could be bound in such a way that it would stand up under the use which it receives.

However, when I asked the West Publishing Company whether they would furnish the General Digest unbound in folded and gathered sheets at a reduced price, Mr. Reid, the Editor-in-Chief, visited me and explained that the General Digest, starting with Volume twelve, is being placed in a stronger binding. Mr. Reid and I discussed possible further improvements in the binding, and he assured me that the West Company can and will furnish to libraries a satisfactory binding on its books. With no definite statement as to a reduced price on unbound volumes from publishers I was unable to proceed in getting figures on the cost to libraries of having the volumes prebound in reinforced bindings.

Mr. Barr, the Executive Director of the Library Binding Institute, was kind enough to discuss with me the prebinding problem and has suggested that the following points be considered in any prebinding program:

1. Prebinding would be of benefit to libraries particularly under the following conditions:
   a. Where the library’s appropriation does not provide for any rebinding, or not enough.
   b. Where the library does not have duplicates of continuously used volumes and where absence from the shelves for rebinding would handicap the library’s service.
   c. In the case of volumes receiving heavy use, or because of size or other conditions do not usually stand up.
   d. In the case of those volumes issued every five years (or some similar period) which usually are in bad condition before the next volume appears. Such might not be worth rebinding, but prebinding would carry the volume through safely in good condition.

2. The most practical plan (if the libraries can get the cooperation of the publishers) is to prebind from folded and gathered sheets. Prebinding could be done on the new bound volumes as they come regularly from the publishers, but this would not, of course, be as economical.

3. It might be possible to save a little on prebinding by centralizing it in one bindery, but it does not seem feasible to work out the arrangements. The saving would come only if a sufficient number of libraries pledged themselves in advance and were willing to accept a uniform binding (which is not certain). Such a plan would, however, have the disadvantage of tending to disrupt the established relationships between each library and its bindery.

4. It is believed that the cooperation of at least some of the publishers in delivering sheets could be obtained if a substantial number of leading law libraries asked for them. Perhaps the best plan would be the appointment of a committee of your organization to investigate further and if the general idea is found to be feasible, to send out to law librarians a report, questionnaires and request for approval. Then the committee would be in a position of having strong support in taking the matter up with the publishers.

5. Particular attention might be paid to bulky volumes (such as those over 3½ inches thick). It would probably
be found economical to bind them in two volumes, the break being made at some suitable point.

If the Association feels that the binding problem is acute enough, it would seem desirable to have a committee appointed to investigate the need for prebinding by use of questionnaires sent out to representative libraries. The committee would then have facts and figures to present to publishers in discussing this matter with them. I believe that in a year we will have more knowledge about the new West bindings and their durability and that at that time we will be more able to discuss the question of prebinding intelligently.

CHAIRMAN ASHMAN: Thank you, Mr. Drummond. We will all be interested in seeing the new West bindings and testing them out.

The meeting is open for discussion from the floor. First, Mr. Lester Arkin, of the Book Shop Bindery of Chicago, has some technical problems to discuss.

MR. LESTER W. ARKIN (The Book Shop Bindery, Chicago): Ladies and Gentlemen, after the good build-up that Mr. Barr gave us about bookbinders, I know we are generally called “high binders.” I had an occasion just a few weeks ago to call on one of my very good customers (he is general counsel for one of the biggest utilities in Chicago), and his secretary announced me as his “book maker”! [Laughter.]

There are three points that I think are quite important. I am just going to give you outlines of them.

The first point, and most important, is that we believe that no law book should be trimmed when it is rebound. Some libraries have the policy of not trimming their law books, but I think, from my experience, more have them trimmed than not trimmed. Of course, I do not have to go into what happens if you trim a law book. If a book is used quite a bit, it may be rebound two or three times, and at the third trimming you are down to your type. I have seen sets of various law reports where some books were pretty close to an inch higher than the others and they ran in various heights. We believe that they can be done properly by any bookbinder, in the same size and uniformly.

Most books get a little soiled on top; after a book is on the shelf for a month, it will have the same appearance even if you had trimmed it. But you retain the size if you do not trim it. So I would suggest that you insist that your bookbinder do no trim your law books when they are rebound. Of course on magazines and law reviews that are bound they must be trimmed because you have to bind different issues together and you cannot get them uniform without trimming. In the original printing they generally allow an extra margin which takes care of that.

The second point I would recommend—it isn’t as important as the first—is the following of the original set; in other words, duplicating the original set as to color of buckram, as to ruling, and as to the blank stamping. It is traditional (and you law librarians know more about the tradition of law books than I do), but it can be done by every bookbinder at a very nominal cost; the cost is so low that I think you all could afford having it done, thus keeping the books in their original color and shape, and following through the set.

The third point is pyroxylin buckram. Pyroxylin buckram is water-resistant; a starch-filled buckram, if water is placed on it, will swell, whereas pyroxylin buckram will not. Pyroxylin buckrams are also vermin proof.
With those two advantages and with the manufacturers having improved it to a very great extent, there are a great number of librarians and bookbinders that are increasingly using pyroxylin buckram.

Because of those two great advantages, we recommend pyroxylin buckram to be used. We have difficulty (and this is the reason that I am anxious to speak to you) when we want to duplicate a pyroxylin buckram; in order for us to duplicate it we have to order 500 yards from the manufacturer. That is quite a bit of buckram and in a lot of cases we cannot afford to buy that much and it is very difficult for us to match the various sets. But if you people suggest to your bookbinders that they match it, then with that demand for it all over the country the manufacturers will stock it and be able to supply it to everybody. In that way I think that most libraries will have more uniform sets, and if there is any exchange or sale of those sets it will match other bindings and I believe will be better for every library.

I must mention something about a new process in development which you should keep in mind; I imagine that something will be definite in about a year or two. That is laminating. On important manuscripts, old documents, the process today is to preserve them by putting on either Japanese rice tissue or some sort of organdy or silk. In laminating, they take two leaves of cellophane or acetate and put the manuscript between, with a cement inside, and roll it through under very heavy pressure, about 10,000 pounds per square inch; thus the page is absolutely preserved.

I have been informed by a laminating company in Chicago that the U. S. Government is beginning to use that process. If you have any important documents I suggest that you hold them; this process will be developed within the next year or two. It will be much cheaper, and it is much more transparent than either rice paper or organdy.

Mrs. Margarett James (Railroad Retirement Board Library, Washington, D. C.): Do they know how permanent this cellophane will be?

Mr. Arkin: They have made tests with acids and put it through aging tests and have found that it will last a very long time.

Mrs. James: Scotch tape, of course, changes color very promptly.

Mr. Arkin: Scotch tape is not a cellophane product.

Chairman Ashman: Thank you very much, Mr. Arkin. I am sure that any one of the speakers will be glad to answer questions or continue the discussion.

Mr. Wm. Johnston: Mention was made of prebinding. Did I understand that after books have been bound by the publisher and delivered to the library and paid for, there is a way to reinforce them and strengthen them by prebinding? If so, what is that way?

Mr. Drummond: Prebinding, I believe, involves the obtaining of the pages of the book in unbound form and then binding it yourself into a reinforced binding.

Mr. Barr: That is sometimes done in the case of trade books—ordinary books for public libraries. The publisher furnishes sheets only when the binder undertakes to bind, let us say, 50 copies of a title; but if he does not expect that demand he will not order so many; so he gets the books already bound and then tears the covers off and re-sews the books. That would not be impossible in the case of law books. It seems like a waste of time and effort to do that, though. The result is certainly not as satisfactory as it is when
you get the original sheets with the original margins.

Mr. Johnston: I do not quite understand why a publisher who really claims to demand our attention and support should not give us good bindings. We do get a good many bindings that are not serviceable, but the West Publishing Company is getting out right this minute a stronger binding and a stronger cover and they are going to keep it up. It is stated that the new binding is 50 per cent stronger than the old one.

That is what we need in our library because of the very hard usage to which the books are subjected. Four hundred fifty thousand volumes are taken off the shelves every year; 97,000 are circulated, fastened up in bundles, taken to the offices of the members of the Chicago Law Institute, and used and returned in from three to six days, ordinarily. That is hard usage over and above the usage the books receive in the hands of the lawyer who has sent for them.

The stronger the binding, the finer it is for us all, and I am so glad that the West Publishing Company has announced to us that it is going to give us stronger, better binding both as to binding and as to covers.

Mr. Lindquist: I agree 100 per cent with what Mr. Johnston has just said. It seems to me that it should not be necessary for the law libraries to have either the bother or the expense of pre-binding. I think that our remedy ought to be working directly with the publishers in demanding binding that meets the minimum requirements or the minimum specifications set up by the Library Binding Institute.

At the New York Law Institute we had an interesting situation about binding a few years ago. We had a great accumulation of binding to be taken care of and we raised a special fund of $18,600 for the purpose. Because we are in a city where there are a great many binders, we wanted to make sure that we got the best possible binding for the money. Consequently we went to the Library Binding Institute and with their cooperation we got samples submitted by all of the leading bindery companies of New York City. The samples were all sent without any identification on them so that they could be judged impartially by the committee. They found that all of the samples submitted met the minimum specifications. Because all of the binders were doing “Class A” work, we were able to let our contracts on the basis of price, which is something that we would have been very hesitant to do if it had not been that we had the assurance that it was all “Class A” work.

I think that in a place where there are a good many binders and some of them are inferior it certainly is a great advantage to a library to be able to find out which ones are up to standard and which ones are not.

I think we might have a committee such as has been proposed; but, instead of advocating pre-binding, I think we would do better possibly to cooperate with the Library Binding Institute and directly with the law book publishers. There are relatively few publishers of law books, and I think we could work through them and accomplish more that way.

Chairman Ashman: Thank you very much, Mr. Lindquist. We will all be interested in knowing if the new West bindings do meet the specifications.

Mr. Druker: I was interested in visiting the Department of Justice Law Library a few days ago to see how they met the problem of the American Digest volumes. They apparently do not worry about the binding. They have what is known as a Ready Reference
File. They have the American Digest volumes suspended, leaves down, from a banked table, and when you come to your proper volume you merely tip one end and the other end comes up, the book flops open, and you have to read the book in place. The only disadvantage of the system is that when the book opens up it covers about two books on either side, so if someone wants to refer to the volume next to it he has to wait. They do not have a rebinding problem as I see it. They have a rather expensive table and I imagine that the holder is rather expensive, but I think the system works as far as rebinding is concerned.

CHAIRMAN ASHMAN: I believe that is the same system that they use at Yale.

MR. PRICE: I would like to have some more information about this pyroxylin binding. We have a problem at Columbia which is increasingly difficult in recent years because we have a system of tunnels underneath the buildings on the campus on account of central heating and lighting. We have bugs up there that look like roaches only they are as big as mice and they go around from one place to another and eat our bindings. Is it true that this pyroxylin binding is going to withstand bugs and roaches?

MR. ARKIN: I believe so, but I believe Mr. Barr can give you more information on that point.

MR. BARR: In general that is true. Our Research Associate has been making experiments, but we have found some difficulty in making really scientific tests because some bugs, whether small or large, have different diet habits. It almost seems as if some of them have been sold on the idea of vitamins and some on something else; but I think you will find that in given localities the bugs tend to eat what is available and they may not eat any-thing else for a while if you transport them somewhere else. The Columbia bugs apparently are very fond of bindings, and they would not want apples or anything like that. Therefore, it is very difficult to say whether a particular bug in a particular street, like 116th Street, will eat pyroxylin or not. But in general it is true that bugs do not like pyroxylin fabric.

MR. BARR: Our chemist has been working along those lines and I do not know that he has the answer yet. I have the feeling that the only thing to do in such cases is to try to get the bugs where they live and not to feed them. It certainly would be impossible for you to lacquer, let us say, the whole of the Columbia collection at this time and if, for instance, you bind the latest books in pyroxylin and the bugs cannot get a meal there, they are going to the old books where they can get a meal.

MR. PRICE: The trouble with that is that I was informed by the Director of Libraries last week that, in spite of the fact that they have spent a good many hundreds of dollars in trying to get rid of these bugs in the last two or three years since they have become a serious problem, the problem is getting worse instead of better. The bugs are getting the upper hand, or upper bite, and some method other than mere con-
trol of the bug population will have to be evolved.

Mr. Druker: I would like to ask Mr. Barr what action he recommends in the case of the old leather bound books which have an historical interest but no ready reference interest. Should those books be rebound? Should they be repaired at all? A person likes to look at them, but he is afraid to handle them. If you rebound them, they lose their historical value.

Mr. Barr: I think the librarian first has to decide whether it is important that that book look as much as possible like it did when it was new or, that it should stay exactly as it is, for the historical value. I think in many cases the librarian is inclined to think that it should, but it really isn’t necessary. If the librarian looks around, he may find many copies of the same book at a much lower price.

Let us assume that that book is valuable. I think you should give it to an expert in restoration to be restored. I do not believe you can restore such a binding as an old sheepskin very well, or a book in old parchment or vellum, because they are difficult to handle. It would be better to put them in slip cases and forget about them. In general, leather books should not be restored but should be rebound in a good fabric.

Mr. Due: I would like to ask about painted labels.

Mr. Barr: My impression is that Mr. Moreland is quite correct in his view that ordinary leather labels are a nuisance; I have seen them peel off, and the value of the label is entirely gone. I think the painted label if it is properly put on (it can be done by a number of processes) is much better than a leather label could possibly be.

Mr. Wm. Johnston: Is that for rebound books or for new books?

Mr. Barr: It should be done on rebound books as well as new books. I think a good many are now made that way. Those books which are not really law books but are pseudo-law books are often done that way.

Mr. Lindquist: On the subject of labels I might say that we had that same difficulty, but we have completely abandoned the idea of using labels on our rebound books and we have all of our books bound in buckram and then lettered directly on the buckram. It has been highly satisfactory. I think if painted labels were used the books would have to be bound in buckram anyhow because they could not be painted on canvas in which so many law books are bound.

There is another thing I want to say: that matching sets of books seems unimportant in some libraries. I can see that it is important in law office libraries perhaps for the appearance, and perhaps in certain other libraries, but as a general thing I think that law librarians have been far too conservative in this whole matter of changing precedents in the binding and it seems to me that a dark color, such as a blue buckram with gold lettering directly on the book, is a very satisfactory and less expensive binding than having even painted labels put on before the lettering is added. That is the type of binding that public libraries use and there is no special reason why law libraries should not do it, too.

I think in making sets of books it is very useful to use different colors for different sets. For instance, the reports of the states in which the library is situated might be in a color such as green so that if they are used a great
deal in the library it would facilitate putting them away.

One other thing that we do that might be of interest is that all new books are shellacked. We find that this protects the back of the book and preserves the lettering for a much longer time than if the book had just been put on the shelf without shellac. I think that helps in retarding the time when the books will have to be rebound.

Mr. Druker: At the meeting last year I suggested a formula for compounding a preservative to be used on leather covers.¹ I did not specify at the time but when we mixed our preparations—composed mainly of Neatsfoot oil and lanolin, with a little beeswax added—it was poured back into the quart containers, in which the lanolin had come, and sealed.

During the year one librarian wrote to me for more specific information. I sent it to her and she mixed the preparation in the same way, but the chemist poured the entire mixture into some large containers and there was the problem of remixing the compound when they got ready to use it. I would like to suggest now, if you are to use that mixture, that you pour it into smaller containers and you will not have that difficulty of the separation of the mixture.

Mr. Harrison M. MacDonald (Law Librarian, Boston University): I was merely going to suggest that lacquering could possibly be extended to rebound books as well as to new books to advantage. In other words, when they come from the bindery they have the appearance of new books and the lacquering, it seems to me, would help to preserve them and keep them clean. It’s not necessary probably to lacquer the whole book, but if the back alone were lacquered I think it would help a great deal.

Mr. Barr: The “Class A” specifications call for the lacquering of the backs of all “Class A” bindings, made of starch-filled fabrics by the bindery.

Chairman Ashman: Did all of you get copies of these cards to send for information about the Library Binding Institute? If not, you can get them at the table. We also have reprints of several articles from the Library Journal about the work of the Institute and about leather preservation. They will be available for you to pick up as you leave the room.

[The meeting recessed at twelve o’clock.]

SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION—June 28, 1941

The meeting was called to order at two-fifty o’clock by President-Elect Hill.

Chairman Hill: This afternoon we will start our proceedings with a paper that we know is going to be very interesting. Miss Farmer, I am told, is one of the favorite students of one of our famous instructors in law librarianship at one of our famous universities. Why he had to come around and tell me that she was one of his favorite pupils I was not quite certain. It concerned me a little bit because he has too many of those favorite pupils to make me other than a little bit suspicious. However, I know that Miss Farmer will be a favorite with all of us and I will call upon her to present her paper on the subject “Bibliographical Data about Virginia Codes.” Miss Farmer.

¹ 33 L. Lm. J. 372 (September, 1940). Editor’s note.