

# the Gold Leaf

THE JOURNAL OF THE  
HAND BOOKBINDERS OF CALIFORNIA



VOLUME THIRTY-ONE, NUMBER ONE  
SPRING 2014

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# Letter from the President

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I'd like to encourage everyone who can make it in to San Francisco to stop by the Center for the Book to see the 42nd Annual HBC Member's Exhibit. There is a wonderful range of work on display, and if you haven't seen the new gallery, it's much more conducive to relaxed viewing than the old space.

Over Memorial Day, I attended a steampunk convention and signed up to present a short talk on the history of the book and some of the changes brought about by mechanization in the 19th century. I ended up spending not as much time on the 1800s because the way that the codex came to be in its familiar shape happened so much earlier, and that seemed equally important and less known.

Certainly, machine-made paper, powered printing, and mechanical means of sewing and casing changed the volume of production and the longevity. (Does anyone know the source of that quote about the history of bookbinding being the sacrifice of structure in the name of economy?) That dramatic sense of change all across industry and society is part of what drives the ambiance of steampunk fiction.

What struck me putting together the presentation was how late to the party the codex really is in the overall timeline of the way humans stored information. In something over six thousand years of writing, we've only got 1500 years or so being able to pick up what we'd recognize as a book, barely 500 years of being able to make them faster than hand-copying pages one at a time, and just over two centuries of the book as a ubiquitous object that a regular person could possess--something that could be purchased off the rack instead of being custom made at tremendous expense.

It was one of those "whoa" moments, like when you realize Cleopatra (the last one with Caesar and Anthony) lived closer to our time than the building of the pyramids by more than half a millennium or that not only couldn't a T-Rex have fought a stegosaurus, the T-Rex is closer in time to us than a stegosaurus by about 15 million years.

So the next time someone makes a comment about books being old-fashioned, remind them that in comparison, the codex is still pretty cutting edge. And, as evidenced at the 42nd exhibition, there's still a lot of room to play with the form and what it can do.

Brian

N.B. Our exhibit has gone up and down since this letter was penned, but you can still find copies of the catalogue at the Center at a discounted price for HBC members. Most apologetically, the Editors

# Letter from the Editor

Consider the idea that creativity actually bears the most fruit when we have, or impose, limitations on what we can work with. To mangle a familiar phrase, you can't think out of the box until you're in one. ;-)

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Can you think of times when you've put all your favorite materials on the table in front of you, only to be hit with analysis paralysis? Don't know where to start? Too many options.

What if you limited yourself to only three items? Or traits? Or construction methods? Sit down one day, look at the otherwise mundane things around you, and list their characteristics on separate slips of paper ---- green, orange, textured, leafy, leather, wood, silver, mobile, triangles, cross-hatched, interactive, sandpaper, copper mesh, brick, burlap, geometric, paisley, etc. You get the gist. Fold them and put them all in a Mason jar. When you want to design something for the fun of it, pull three out at random. Use those, and only those, as the foundation of your design.

And if you've started a project, and something happens that you didn't expect, remember, "there are no mistakes, there are only design opportunities". Try not fixing what went wrong. Don't look back too much. Throw away those "shoulds". Try letting it evolve into something else and go along for the ride.

You could really surprise yourself.

Wishing you many happy and serendipitous accidents,

—Laine Tammer

Editor

# Minutes of the HBC Board Meeting, March 2014

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Present: Brian Lieske, presiding; Tom Conroy, Norman McKnight, Margaret Johnson, Judy Houghteling, Rhiannon Alpers, Lisa Heer, Juliayn Coleman. The meeting was held at the San Francisco Center for the Book.

Judy and Lisa reported on the progress of the 42nd members' exhibition. There has been a slight date change: the new dates will be June 13-August 24.

About 20 Intent forms have arrived. There are four large central cases in the SFCB gallery area, and additional space lining the walls. We will need some supplementary materials. Could be tools, could be bookbinding manuals. We could also solicit materials from former binders such as Jane Aaron and Jeannie Sack, or a retrospective of the work of Joanne Sonnichsen. The advantage of showing the work of former members is that the proportion of design bindings would increase. Tools on display have always been popular, though with the SFCB bindery next door it might not be as novel. Judy would very much like to do docent tours again. It would be nice to have demos as well throughout the course of the exhibit. It would be relatively easy to stage a demo at the Center since the bindery is next door to the gallery.

The Center will be printing postcards for the exhibit. We just need to tell them if we want 1000 or 1500. We will pay postage for any that are sent. They have also offered to print posters, but we do not use them too much.

The Center will also be doing photography, layout, and printing for a catalog. We would supply the descriptions from the binders' entry forms. However, the Center would then have retail rights for the catalog, and we would have to buy copies for each contributing member to have a copy. We are not sure whether we would then have the right to post those photos to the gallery section of our website. We could also produce our own catalog. Judy asked Brian if he would ask his associate who presented at the October meeting whether he would be available to take pictures of the books for us, and he said he would follow up.

We will need to make exhibitors aware that the Center has a policy of taking a 40% commission of any sales conducted during

the length of the exhibit.

The reception will be Friday, June 13; the budget for food is \$500. Norman reported the costs last year came in just under \$500.

The Center allows red wine at the reception, but no messy food, and finger food (no plates or forks required) is preferred. Judy recommended soliciting volunteer bartenders such as we've had in the past such as Ulli or John Demerritt.

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#### OTHER BUSINESS

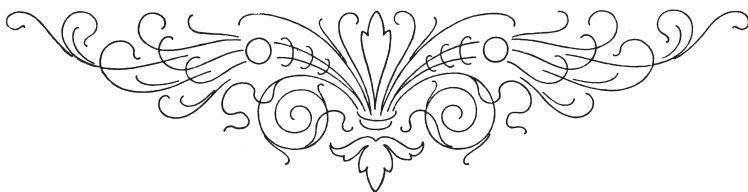
Margaret is still receiving journals from the Guild, the Society of Bookbinders, Designer Bookbinders and the like. We exchange our *Gold Leaf* with these organizations, so they are free to us. We have not ever had a place to store them, but we need to find a place. Brian agreed to keep this on future meeting agendas to resolve this issue.

The Book Club of California has contacted us to invite us to hold our meetings in their club rooms. We have had a longstanding relationship with them, and generally agreed that we should hold at least one to two meetings per year there, as long as we don't incur rental fees.

Laine Tammer sent a message to the group that she welcomes any feedback on the *Gold Leaf*, and would like ideas, suggestions, or written pieces for the next issue.

There were no reports from the Treasurer, who is traveling in Germany at this time, nor from Lang.

Margaret moved to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Brian.



# HBC 42<sup>nd</sup> Members' Exhibition Opening

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June 13 marked the opening of the 42nd HBC Members' Exhibition. Exhibit Co-chairs Judy Houghteling and Lisa Heer mounted the show at the San Francisco Center for the Book. Past HBC presidents were asked to contribute, and several did. Exhibition catalogs are available at the Center and are discounted to members.



*Top: Exhibition co-chairs  
Judy Houghteling  
and Lisa Heer*

*Center: Great food  
thanks to Hospitality  
chair Norman McKnight,  
wonderful gallery space  
thanks to SFCB*

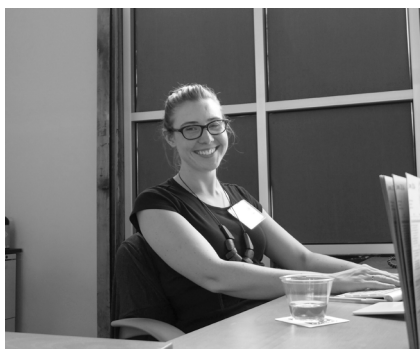
*Bottom: HBC members  
Sandy Good and  
Hisako Nakazawa*







*Top: Andrea Grimes  
and Eleanore  
Ramsey raise a  
glass to HBC  
Center: Monique  
Moore-Racine  
and Lisa Heer  
Bottom: Malgosia  
Kostecka,  
SFCB Program  
Coordinator*



*The  
Gold  
Leaf*



*President Brian  
Lieske with  
Thomas (Toby)  
Schwartzburg*



*We're not related: Board Advisor Margaret  
Johnson and former President Chad Johnson*

*Elaine Wismer with  
her daughter Molly*



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*SFCB Co-Founder  
Kathleen Burch*

*Takashi  
and Hisako  
Nakazawa with  
Sandy Good*



## Measuring Leather

*David Lanning, proprietor of J Hewit & Sons Limited, leather manufacturers, expanded on a discussion on the Guild of Book Workers listserv on the topic of measuring the thickness of leather*

*David Lanning:* Sam Ellenport and I had some tongue-in-cheek exchanges about the way leather thickness was measured. I do, however, believe that leather thickness should be measured using linear dimensions, and not weight. Millimeters would be my first choice, but at a push, inches would suffice!

*Gold Leaf:* How have skiving machines changed over time to shave the leather to consistent thicknesses? Historically, has this been done by the operator's experience or by 'feel'? Are you aware of a time when specific measurements (of any type) came to be in wide use?

*DL:* Hewits do not have a splitting machine, as traditionally we have always shaved our leather. I have discussed this matter with colleagues, and we believe that we have been shaving and buffing our leather since at least the 1930's. Prior to that time, leather would have been taken down to substance, using specialized shaving knives. As far as we know, we have always had to supply leather shaved down to a specification. Without this process being done (either mechanically or by hand), the leather would be too thick for purpose.

*GL:* Are there different leathers that can be shaved to different thicknesses? Is this based on the type of animal or the type of tannage, or both?

*DL:* We supply our leather to standard thickness, normally 0.6 - 1.0mm. These thicknesses are those we feel to be ideal for bookbinding and/or restoration and take into consideration the animal and type of processing used. So for example, there would be little point using full-grown cowhide for bookbinding, as by the time it is thinned down to a usable substance, all the strength has been taken away and one would be left with a Cow Skiver.

*GL:* As a producer of bookbinding leather, have you seen the use of leather to various thicknesses change over time due to trends in binding styles?

*DL:* Yes. There was a time when leather was pared too thinly. In my opinion, this was due to the required aesthetic of producing

bindings with crisp, square boards. With hindsight, one can see that these bindings from the 19th century have, as rule, fared very badly. Some binders still like to use this very leather, and time will tell as to whether these are good decisions or not.

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*Buffing machine, courtesy of David Lanning*



*Shaving machine, courtesy of David Lanning*

## Binder's Profile

### SABINA NIES

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*For this issue of the Gold Leaf, we profile our Treasurer, Sabina Nies.*

*GL:* How did you become interested in bookbinding?

*SN:* For a friend, I had to organize a clamshell box, and that brought me to John DeMerritt's workshop in 1995. Right away, I was taken with what he does. He sent me to the San Francisco Center for the Book.

*GL:* Who was your first teacher?

*SN:* I do not remember my first teacher, but I always considered Dominic Riley my main teacher at the Center. He laid the foundation for my work and my attitude as a bookbinder. Gillian Boal, John DeMerritt, and Michael Burke left strong impressions on me as well.

Later I enthusiastically attended the graduate program of the American Academy for Bookbinding in Telluride, CO. Tini Miura was my teacher there and still is my ideal for design and fine leather work (as a matter of fact, Dominic made me go there). I graduated in 2005.

*GL:* How do you develop your book designs? Is there a particular inspiration for your ideas?

*SN:* That is the hardest part to do. Typically, color comes to me first, from there I develop the design. An inspiring course with Don Glaister and the approach I learned from a professional designer -- to draw at least 50 thumbnails -- helps a lot.



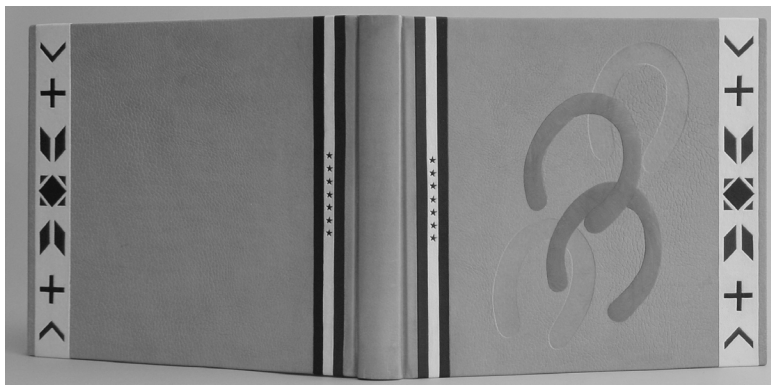
*Sabina at work at SUN Book Arts*



GL: What are your favorite tools or materials to work with?

SN: One of the tools I use a lot are the brass sticks in 1/4, 1/2, 3/4" that one can buy at ACE hardware for cutting and repeated measuring. The small foam paint rollers for distributing PVA evenly and quickly (a trick I learned from John DeMerritt) are a wonderful tool, too.

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*recent work*

GL: What is on your bench right now  
(what is your current project)?

SN: Right now I am making an art portfolio for one of my favored customers. The other is a leather binding for my self, where I use Monique Lallier's adapted oriental binding.

GL: Are there any projects you want to do in the future?

SN: I have acquired several books in sheets in Great Britain and hope to get them all bound in interesting new ways.

GL: Finally, are there any questions I have left out, or is there anything additional you'd like to say?

SN: Living in Ashland, OR is wonderful but I miss the great bookbinder community in the Bay Area. To take workshops at the Center, and to go to all kinds of art and book exhibitions frequently, keeps the inspiration high. That is missing in my life now.

# Book of Stone: a Magical Class

by Lang Ingalls

The  
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“Books are a uniquely portable magic.”  
—Stephen King, *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*

In the quote above, Steven King is referring to the content of a book — and yet I couldn’t help but think of his words when it came to a class I recently attended at the American Academy of Bookbinding in Telluride: it was an altogether magical class. Coleen Curry, a graduate of the Fine Binding program, taught “Binding in Stone Veneer”. The techniques were learned from the French conservator and binder Sün Evrard.

The structure was developed by Sün, who comes from a conservation background and applies conservation principles to enable ease of opening, to protect the bookblock itself from touching anything but pH-balanced paper and thread, and to simplify removal of the bookblock (if necessary). Though Sün has developed various structures suited to differing needs, Coleen’s class focused on a single-section book bound in stone.

The stone veneer used for the covers was produced by advancements in laser cutting techniques: the stone is sliced and vaporized with an adhesive and then backed with a fiberglass and cotton substrate. The structure utilizes primary sewing to attach the bookblock to a special stub system, then a secondary sewing to attach the single-section stub system to the stone cover. The secondary sewing is actually hand-formed metal staples and wooden stays, not sewn thread. The stone readily accepts tooling, drawing, punching, cutting and all other manner of decoration. Decoration occurs prior to assembly, bringing an ease and experimental mood with it.

Coleen encouraged questions and discussion every step of the way, and when issues arose, shared expertise with all. An adept instructor, every student benefitted from her knowledge and good humor.



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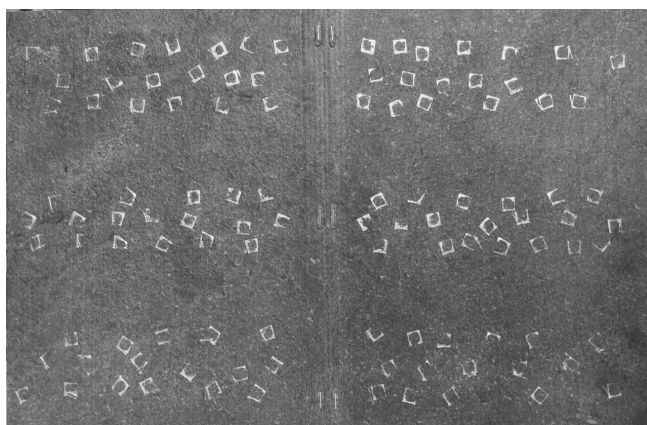


*Coleen at the teacher's desk*



*Rachel Seto-Templeton  
with her finished book*

*Stone book by Lang Ingalls*



# Japanese Paper Essentials

*Diane Nolting*

*The  
Gold  
Leaf*

In April, I attended Karen Zukor's Japanese Paper Essentials workshop at her conservation studio in Emeryville.

Her studio is an open and inviting space, located in a beautifully restored brick building. The two open, loft-like stories house a lab and kitchen upstairs, with an office and teaching area downstairs. Light reaches everywhere, drawing attention to wonderful art and artifacts throughout the building.

As a novice binder and library staff member responsible for all manner of book repair, I'm always seeking out opportunities to learn about repair/conservation materials and techniques, and the chance to visit studios and labs to see how they are set up. Karen began with a discussion of why we use Japanese paper (washi) in conservation work: it has archival properties (assuming high quality water); it's thin, yet strong (allowing for adding as little as possible to the artifact); and, it's easily removed (assuming adhesive is reversible).

We then watched a fascinating video chronicling the entire papermaking process. Here's a very brief overview of the stages:

**PLANTING.** Three shrubs provide most of the fibers used: Kozo (used for 90% of the washi made today), Mitsumata (fibers are shorter than Kozo and have insect repellent qualities), and Gampi (the finished paper has a sheen, and is not easily cultivated, therefore rare and somewhat expensive).

**HARVESTING.** Up to 3 layers of the bark can be used.

**STEAMING.** Bark is bundled and steamed in wooden vats, enabling the bark to slip off easily.

**STRIPPING.** Stepping on water-submerged bark loosens and removes the black outer layer, and then the green layer is scraped away. What remains is white fiber, although the color can vary.

**BLEACHING.** Done in a shallow river or basin in sunlight.

**COOKING.** Until the white bark fibers are consistently soft. It requires about 2 hours in an alkaline solution for the non-cellulose materials in the fibers to break down, ultimately resulting in a soft paper.

**CLEANING.** Any uneven, colored parts are removed by hand.

**BEATING.** Done on stone with a wooden mallet. Very loud!

**FORMING THE SHEETS.** First, Kozo pulp and Neri are mixed in water. Neri (from plant or synthetic) is a crucial ingredient used to suspend the fibers in the vat. Then the screen is dipped and

rocked back and forth and side to side, then raised and drained.  
PRESSING. For about 6 hours or until approximately 30% of the moisture is removed.

DRYING. Relies on sun and wind. Sheets are separated by hand and placed on drying racks outside.

INSPECTING/FINISHING. Sheets are held up to light and classified by thickness, color, etc.

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There are currently about 300 households in Japan making handmade paper. Although both use plant fiber, these are some of the differences between Japanese and Western paper:

Japanese paper is made from long fibers of Kozo (Mulberry), Mitsumata, and Gampi, which are light but strong. Western paper is usually made from shorter fibers, such as cotton, linen, or wood pulp.

Usually, no material is added to Japanese fibers.

Japanese fibers are bleached by the sun;

Western, by chemical methods.

Japanese fibers are beaten to separate them, so length is not affected. Western fibers are chopped into short lengths.

Sheets of Japanese paper are pressed gradually. Western paper sheets are pressed with constant high pressure.

The rest of the day was devoted to observing uses of Japanese paper for backing, hinging, paper tear repair, etc. We observed various applications of paste, adhesive, and water color, and saw how various papers reacted. When watercolor was applied, Gampi, which has a natural sheen, was quite transparent compared to the other papers. I think that may be my favorite paper, although it's somewhat rare and therefore a bit expensive. Later in the day, Karen mentioned the use of "Konnyaku", a starchy root vegetable (Devil's Tongue Root) to strengthen paper. A treatment of Konnyaku imparts wet strength in particular, so that when paper is immersed in a bath, the sheet stays strong and intact. I'm familiar with Konnyaku, but not from a paper perspective! While living on a farm in Japan, my husband was in charge of feeding and milking the family cow daily. Her name was Hanako (flower child) and, somehow, one day she ate some Konnyaku by accident. With eyes bulging, she started foaming at the mouth. He thought she was going to die! We learned that the Japanese call it "inohouki" (broom of the stomach) because it does such a great job of cleaning out your small intestines. Thankfully, Hanako recovered! By the way, Konnyaku is great as food for

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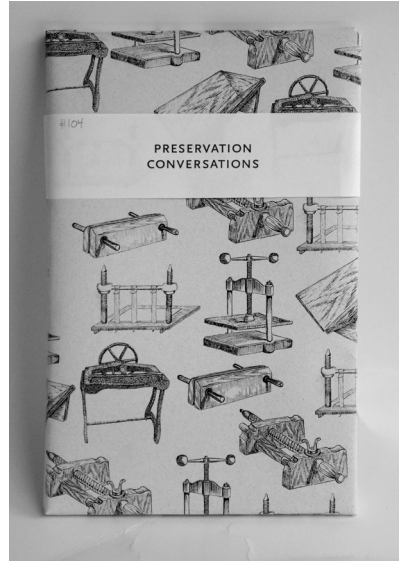
# Book Review

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## PRESERVATION CONVERSATIONS BY THOMASINA TAYLOR

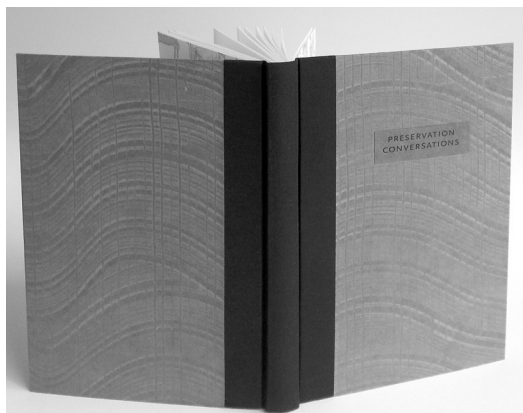
*Juliayn Coleman*

Recently I picked up on a message on the Guild listserv announcing the availability of some books in sheets. Called *Preservation Conversations*, the message stated that “Within these pages are excerpts from conversations with book conservators who have upwards of 20 to 65 years of experience in the field. They have expressed their thoughts on a number of different topics, including...” I didn’t need to read any further, and immediately contacted the author for a copy. Being a lifelong fan of Studs Terkel, I’ve always enjoyed interviews and oral histories; being a hand bookbinder, I am always on the lookout for books in sheets; and being a book conservator, I knew the content would be interesting. I was pleasantly surprised to receive the book in sheets wrapped in a heavy text-weight paper decorated with printed original illustrations of binding tools and equipment. The wrapping was attached with a low-tack pressure sensitive adhesive (making it okay, I guess), and had an attractive letterpress-printed band. It was nice to see that care was taken even with the books sold in sheets, and I’m sure the wrapping paper will come in handy! Perhaps as tipped-on endsheets? Hmmmm... Okay, enough about the packaging. This book was created by Thomasina Taylor, an MFA student in The University of Alabama’s Book Arts Program. As she puts it in the Introduction, *Preservation Conversations* developed out of “some excellent advice from my committee chair Anna Embree. She suggested that my thesis project should assist me as I faced my future beyond graduation. I knew I had this interest in conservation, but I lacked the knowledge of how to proceed. I knew the best way to gain



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that knowledge was to ask others.” Following that statement are the bios of the eleven book conservators she interviewed, some of the most accomplished professionals in the field: Pam Barrios, Betsy Palmer Eldridge, Don Etherington, Ann Frelsen, Gary Frost, Chris McAfee, Chela Metzger, Bill Minter, Jeff Peachey, James Reid-Cunningham, and Larry Yerkes provide a well-rounded range of opinions, experience, and perspectives. The content is arranged into seven chapters of juicy, conservation-related topics such as changes in book conservation, training and education, conservation advocacy, the d-word (digitization), and others. In the discussions of certain topics, the responses were remarkably similar. In discussing changes to book conservation, every single respondent commented in some way on the rarity of single-item repair and the corresponding rise of considering the treatment of collections as a whole. This theme carried through other chapters as well, such as Education and Training. However there are other areas in which the interviewees showed a wide range of perspectives, sharing candid, detailed observations about their work. The decades of experience each of them possesses showed through in the thoughtful responses. As I read, I felt engaged in the discussion, reflecting on my own background and experiences in repairing books. And as much as I am a junior practitioner at best in this vast field, much of what the interviewees said rang true with me in many ways. It was a fun experience to read through this slim volume and get so much out of it. My original interest in buying the book was to have a book in raw sheet form to bind, but in somewhat unbookbinderly fashion, reading it alone may be all I need to do with it. For those of you like me, or for those who wish to give this book as a gift, Mrs. Taylor has produced a hardcover edition as well. Both the sheets and the bound editions are available on her blog, [ilenebooks.com/thesis/](http://ilenebooks.com/thesis/).



## WORKSHOPS AND STUDY OPPORTUNITIES

*for full and current listings, visit or call at the web and/or physical addresses listed below:*

*The  
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### ***San Francisco Center for the Book***

375 Rhode Island Street, San Francisco  
415-565-0545  
[www.sfcbook.org/workshops/binding](http://www.sfcbook.org/workshops/binding)

### ***Ah Haa School for the Arts/American Academy of Bookbinding***

Telluride, Colorado  
[www.bookbindingacademy.org](http://www.bookbindingacademy.org) or call 970-728-3886.

### ***GBW California Chapter Sponsored Workshops***

For the current workshop schedule, visit <http://gbwcaliforniachapter.wordpress.com>. You do not need to be a Guild member to attend.

## EXHIBITIONS, CALLS FOR ENTRY

### ***7th International Artist's Book Triennial Vilnius 2015***

The 7th International Artist's Book Triennial Vilnius 2015 organized in order to promote artist's books all over the world and to make an exchanges between artists. With the great support of the Artists we hope to keep the highest artistic level of the 7th Artist's Book Triennial as it was in previous Triennials. With your participation we hope to make a remarkable Exhibition of artist's books, and to open a window for people to discover a wonderful world of artist's books. There is no entry fee, and the deadline is November 7. The entry form online: <http://submit.bookart.lt/entry-form/>

More info: <http://artistsbook.lt/blog/2013/09/24/7th-artists-book-triennial-vilnius-2015/>

*continued from p. 19*

humans.

As many of us know, the “wa” in washi means harmony. The best take-away from the video: “If there’s lack of harmony within the family, it will show up in the paper”. I’ve never made paper, and with my crazy family, I’m not sure I should try!

## Join us!

*Membership in the Hand Bookbinders of California is annual, beginning on May 1 of each year. The Membership Fee is \$30, and a second member in the same household is \$5.*

*Benefits of membership include regular presentations & workshops, the opportunity to exhibit in the annual members exhibition, copies of the bi-annual Gold Leaf and the annual membership roster, invitations to special events, and dialogue through our monthly meetings and the HBC mail group at Yahoo! Groups.*

*There are three ways to join:*

*visit the HBC website: [www.handbookbinders.org](http://www.handbookbinders.org). You may now join or renew with our convenient Paypal option. If you are a new member or a renewing member with any changes in contact information, please also download and print the membership form. Fill in the necessary information and mail it back to us at the address below.*

*write us:      The Hand Bookbinders of California  
                    P.O. Box 193216  
                    San Francisco, CA 94119*

*or, contact our Membership Coordinator, Lang Ingalls:*

*[membership@handbookbinders.org](mailto:membership@handbookbinders.org)*

*Appearing on [www.handbookbinders.org](http://www.handbookbinders.org), the biannual Gold Leaf is being offered in pdf format. Once the newest issue goes to print, the previous issue shall be posted on our website, plain for all to see. Please let Lang Ingalls ([membership@hbc.org](mailto:membership@hbc.org)) know if you would prefer to save paper and receive it solely in this manner. If she does not hear from you, you will continue to receive the printed copy.*

*Members are encouraged to submit material to the Gold Leaf in the form of articles, reviews, announcements and news. For more info, fill out the contact form on our website, [www.handbookbinders.org](http://www.handbookbinders.org)*

## COLOPHON

The *Gold Leaf* is produced bi-annually by the Hand Bookbinders of California. This issue was set in Sabon, a font designed by Jan Tschichold. The *Gold Leaf* is printed at Community Printers in Santa Cruz, California, a cooperatively owned, certified Monterey Bay Green Business. For every ton of paper Community Printers uses, an equivalent number of trees are planted through the organization Trees for the Future.



[www.handbookbinders.org](http://www.handbookbinders.org)