

HELPFUL IDEAS FOR CONSERVATION

by

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The field of conservation, with its many interesting challenges, offers numerous opportunities to create innovative ideas and "Tricks of the Trade." These tricks make our work easier and less time consuming. Exchanging these ideas helps stimulate other new tricks. Following are some ideas or tips that are useful around the lab, especially in book conservation.

One of the most useful materials that is commercially available is "Velcro". This material can be used for 1001 things. In book conservation, it can be used in place of an "Ace Bandage" for tying up books while attaching an original spine during rebacking. The "hook" portion of the Velcro is adhered to two pieces of binder board. The board will have to be of sufficient size to allow the Velcro to extend above the jaws of a lying press; one board is placed on each side of the book while in the press. The soft, fuzzy part of the Velcro is used as a strap across the spine of the book. It is soft; it is adjustable; it offers sufficient pressure for the task; and it is easily cleaned of excess adhesive. The true beauty of this material is that any area of the spine can be examined without having to unwrap the book. Another option is to attach a piece of the fuzzy Velcro to the ends of a length of cord; this can now be used for tying-up raised bands.

Another useful material is the so-called "self-healing cutting mat". For the past two years, we have been using one on the bed of our guillotine cutter. It is used in addition to the cutting stick (wood or plastic inset into bed of cutter) because the mat offers a fresh, uniform surface on which to cut. The use of the mat is also less damaging to the blade than a piece of binder board.

An idea that is useful when guarding signatures or mending tears: attach a piece of non-woven polyester, e.g. Reemay or Hollytex, to a piece of binder board with spots of PVA. The polyester will not stick to the repair, yet will permit the moisture to be absorbed by the board

and the guards will dry flat. We have two sizes of these boards with about 20 boards in each set.

For the gold stamping press, sometimes a 2- or 4-sided type chase is used. The insertion or removal of type can be difficult, especially when it is hot. We use a pair of vernier calipers to handle the type. This way lengths of type of approximately one inch can be carried with ease and positioned in the chase.

Also for the book conservator: there are numerous thicknesses of binder board to be used and offcuts are always a problem. We identify each board with lines made with colored pencil. These lines identify the grain direction, while the color designates the thickness. Considering that a number of people use these boards and don't always return the offcuts to the proper shelf, this method helps to simplify identification.

The next idea is actually a safety tip: the counterbalance on the board shear is supposed to have an additional safety pin in case the locking bolt loosens. If the weight slides off a major injury could result. So be sure to have a pin (or bolt) inserted at the very end of the bar that holds the counterbalance.

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