
Similar Problems, Different Solutions: Treatments of Two Mexican Incunabula Part 2: Treatment of the *Graduale Dominicale* of Pedro Ocharte, 1576

ABSTRACT

The condition, treatment decisions, and conservation treatment are described for the Library of Congress copy of Pedro Ocharte's *Graduale Dominicale*, printed in Mexico in 1576. A review of evidence for the historical authenticity of the binding suggested that the binding was not original to the text. This observation informed the decision to disbind the book, treat the damaged paper, and rebind it in a new, period-appropriate binding. The binding that was removed was retained off the book. Previous repairs that were damaging the paper were removed. Manuscript facsimiles of missing text that appeared on the old repairs were photocopied onto Japanese paper, which was then used for new infills.

The *Graduale Dominicale*, printed by Pedro Ocharte in Mexico City in 1576, was chosen for conservation treatment by the Library of Congress's Music Division because of its distinction as the earliest American imprint held in that Division. It is a rare volume. Only three copies of this edition of the *Graduale* are known to exist. But it is especially admired as a supreme example of the beautiful printing that was being practiced in the New World long before the printing press had arrived in colonial North America. The sophistication of these early New World printers in handling the complexity of printing music notation is magnificently displayed in the pages of this volume. And, as April Smith described in her paper, these early volumes played significant parts in a fascinating period of history.

Much of April Smith's description of the condition of the Benson Library's 1584 *Psalterium* could also apply to

the Library of Congress' *Graduale*. The volume was in a wooden-board binding and the text block had received many repairs, paper hinges, and insertions to fill losses (figs. 1–2). Many insertions contained manuscript that completed missing areas of text (figs. 3–4). The text paper appeared to be extremely heavily sized, as it was stiff and inflexible (fig. 5). The numerous repairs had been done with a variety of handmade papers, which were all much heavier in weight than the original text paper. There were areas where the differences in the weights of these papers was creating breaking edges and damaging the original text

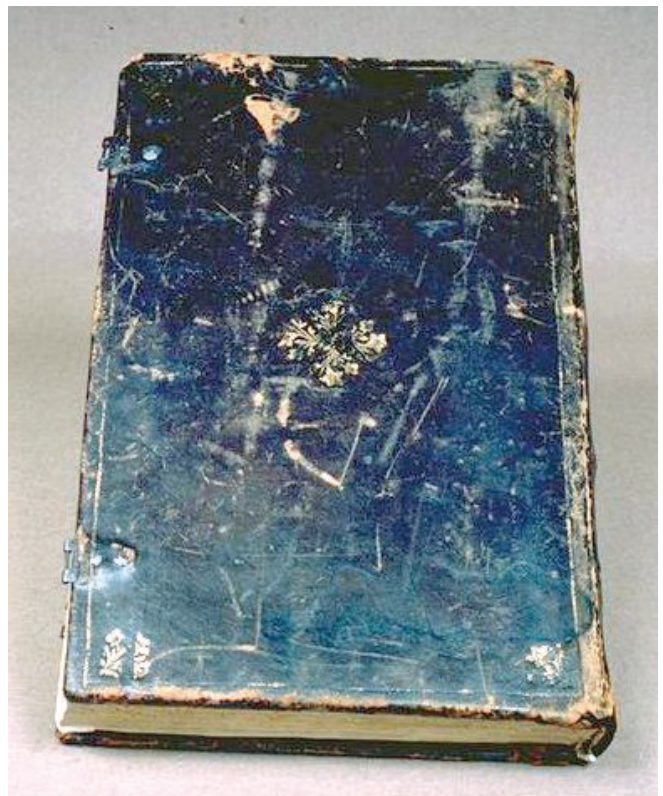


Fig. 1. Pedro Ocharte, *Graduale Dominicale* (1576), Music Division, Library of Congress: before treatment, binding

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Fig. 2. *Graduale Dominicale* pp. 24(v)–25(r): before treatment, previous repairs with heavy paper



Fig. 3. *Graduale Dominicale* pp. 181(v)–182(r): before treatment, manuscript infills on previous repairs

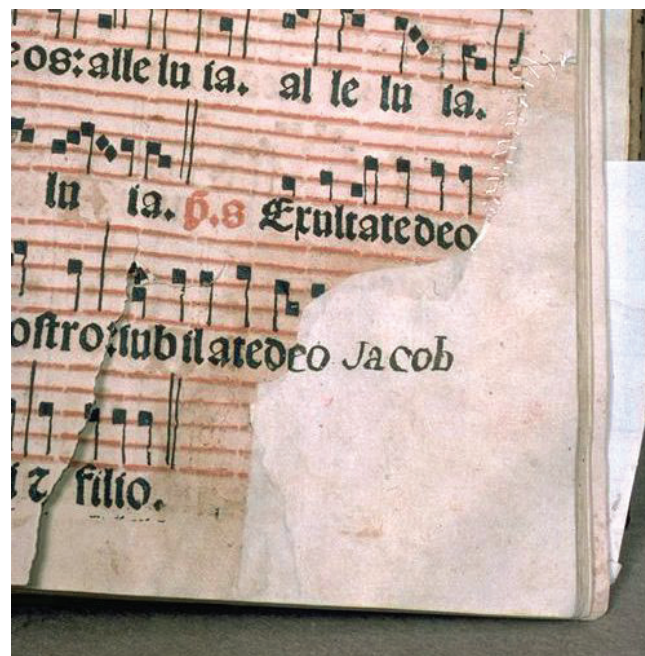


Fig. 4. *Graduale Dominicale* pp. 181(v)–182(r): before treatment, manuscript infills on previous repairs, detail.

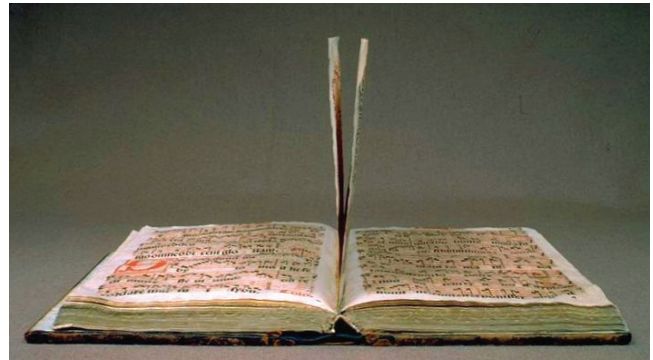


Fig. 5. *Graduale Dominicale* before treatment, stiff paper interfering with opening of text

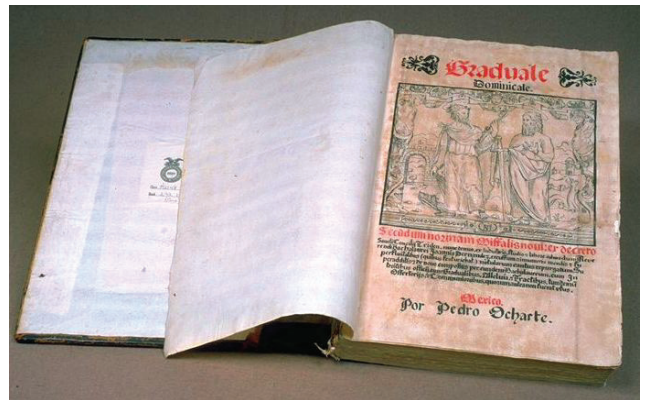


Fig. 6. *Graduale Dominicale*: before treatment, manuscript copy of title page from earlier restoration

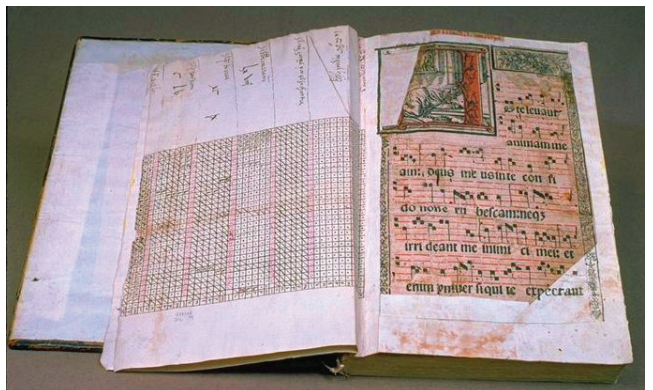


Fig. 7. *Graduale Dominicale*: before treatment, verso of inserted manuscript title page, with unrelated manuscript text

paper. Excessive, discolored adhesive had been used in attaching mends and repairs, which added to the damaging stiffness of the mends. In addition, a few entire pages, including the title page and the colophon, were missing. They had been replaced with extremely faithful hand-drawn pen and ink copies of the missing pages (fig. 6). There was no attempt to disguise the fact that these pages were copies, since they were drawn on reused handmade paper, as is evident from the presence of manuscript on the backs of the copied pages (fig. 7). It is not known when

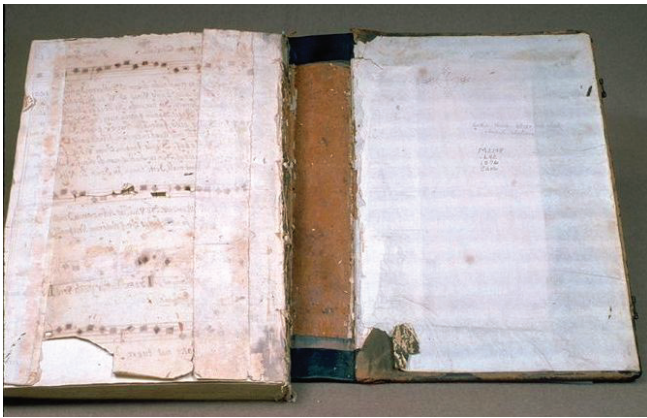


Fig. 8. *Graduale Dominicale*: before treatment, text block detached from binding



Fig. 9. *Graduale Dominicale* pp. 1(v)-2(r): before treatment, previous repairs are pierced by the sewing, demonstrating that the sewing is not original to the text block

these pages were added. (What is especially provocative is how a book restorer had access to a copy of the title page and colophon, considering the rarity of this volume today.)

The text block, which had been sewn on thin alum-tawed thongs that had been laced into the wooden-board binding, was now completely separated from its cover (fig. 8). It was clear that the sewing was not original since many of the paper repairs and hinges were incorporated in the present sewing (fig. 9).

The binding was puzzling. It appeared to be “in the style of” a binding that may have been original to this volume, but there was some evidence that this was not the first binding on this volume. One indication was that there were two places where edges of pages had been turned over and had escaped trimming. When these page fragments were flattened out they indicated a larger page size and a red-colored edge to the text block. The current edges are uncolored and are impressed with a pattern of repeating dots and stars (fig. 10). A solid colored edge would have been more consistent with Mexican binding practices in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.



Fig. 10. *Graduale Dominicale*: before treatment, gilt edge decorated with a pattern of dots and stars

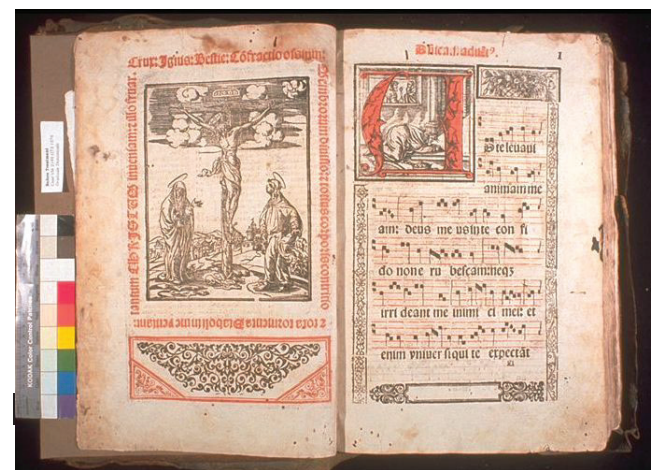


Fig. 11. Pedro Ocharte, *Graduale Dominicale* (1576), Newberry Library: verso of title page showing large margins around text. Photo courtesy Susan Russick.

Another indication that the volume had been trimmed is that the margins are narrow and uneven. On comparison to another copy of this volume in the Newberry Library in Chicago, there is clearly substantial page margin that has been lost to trimming in the Library of Congress volume (fig. 11). The trimming even cuts off some of the printing on the top edge of some pages. One theory that was suggested was that the volume may have been trimmed expressly to fit into this binding which was old but was not original to this text.

The binding was not in good condition. The wooden boards were weakened by insect damage, most components of the clasps were missing, and the endcaps had been previously repaired. It would have required major restoration to reattach the text to this binding. With skepticism as to whether the binding was even original to the text it seemed that the best approach would be to retain the binding intact, unrestored and available for any future interest in it.

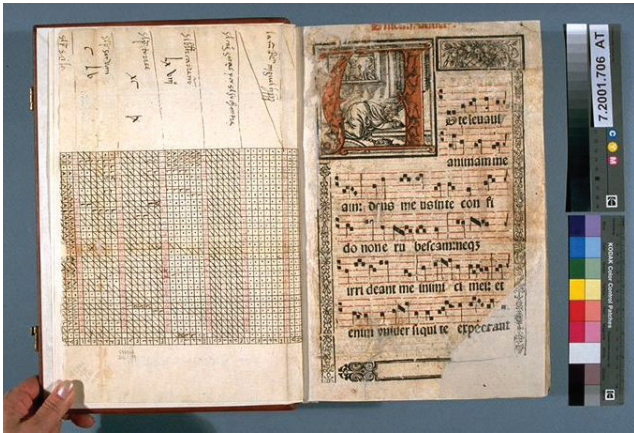


Fig. 12. *Graduale Dominicale*: after treatment, verso of manuscript title page replaced in the text block



Fig. 13. *Graduale Dominicale* pp. 1(v)-2(r): after treatment, paper repaired with Japanese paper onto which the prior manuscript infills had been photocopied

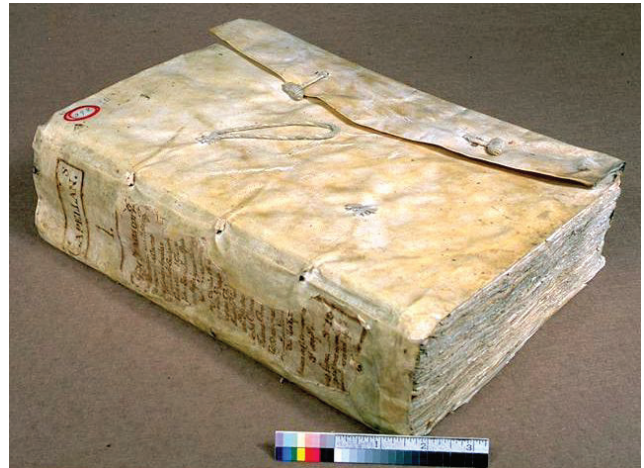


Fig. 14. Convento de Santo Domingo Capellanus [Dominican Order in Puebla, Mexico, 1591-1724], H. A. Monday Collection of Mexican Colonial Material, Library of Congress: example of an early Mexican limp vellum binding

Because of the stiffness of the paper, the presence of excessive discoloring adhesives, and the damaging stiffness of previous mends, it was felt that the text would benefit greatly from aqueous treatment and removal of mends and adhesive. With the decision that the binding would be replaced it was possible to proceed with disbinding and paper treatment. The pages were washed in deionized water and previous repairs were separated from the original paper. Enzymes were used in poultices to assist removal of some heavy deposits of adhesive. The pages were bathed in a calcium hydroxide solution to add an alkaline buffer to the paper. The volume was reassembled and the pages were guarded and mended with Japanese paper and wheat starch paste (fig. 12). Where previous fills had had inscriptions Japanese paper was photocopied and the new fills were constructed retaining the inscription (fig. 13).

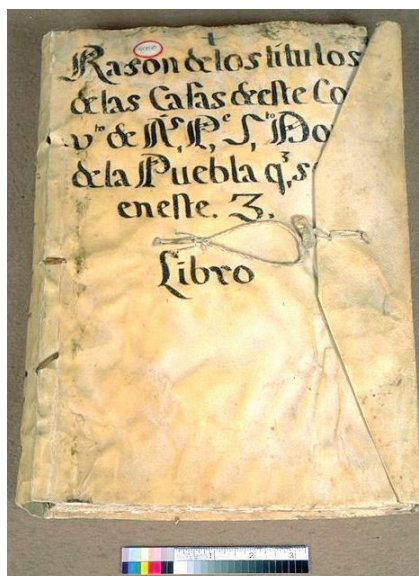
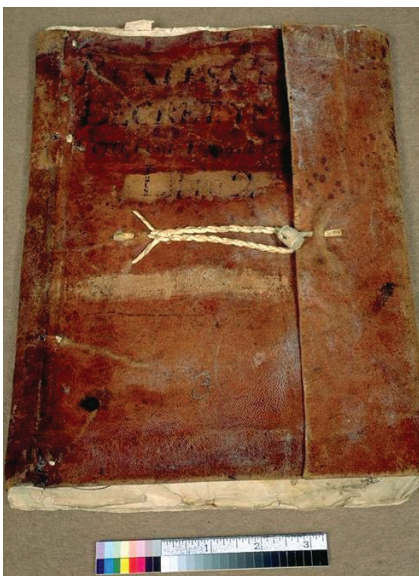


Fig. 15 (far left). Juan de Sernal, *Relacion de Meritos* (1577), H. A. Monday Collection of Mexican Colonial Material, Library of Congress: example of an early Mexican limp leather binding

Fig. 16 (near left). Legal papers and reports (1617-1754), Province of San Miguel and Santos Angeles, Mexico, H.A. Monday Collection of Mexican Colonial Materials, Library of Congress: example of an early Mexican limp vellum binding

Deciding how to bind the *Graduale* was an interesting project in itself. With the help of Terry Boone, one of the Conservation Division liaisons to the Library's Manuscript Division, I was able to survey some of the Mexican Colonial materials in that Division. Most early Mexican books are not bound in stiff wooden boards, but in limp vellum or leather wrappers (figs. 14–16). The texts are sewn on leather or tawed thongs, which are laced into the covers. The covers most often have a fore-edge flap that is secured to the front cover with leather ties or some kind of a toggle and loop. Books that were intended for use in a church for the purposes of prayer or the Mass appear not to have been bound in these wrapper structures. A large volume, which was going to be displayed in a semi-vertical manner, would need the support of a rigid cover. Moreover, these books were not intended to be carried around—they were designed to be permanent furniture in a church. A few examples of these wooden board structures are: the 1576 Ocharte *Graduale* in the Newberry Library in Chicago (fig. 17), an Ocharte *Antiphonarium* believed to be dated 1572 in the Rosenwald Collection of the Rare Book Division of the Library of Congress (fig. 18), a 1602 choir book in the H. A. Monday Collection of the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress, and a



Fig. 17. Pedro Ocharte, *Graduale Dominicale* (1576), Newberry Library: example of an early Mexican binding in leather over wooden boards. Photo courtesy Susan Russick.

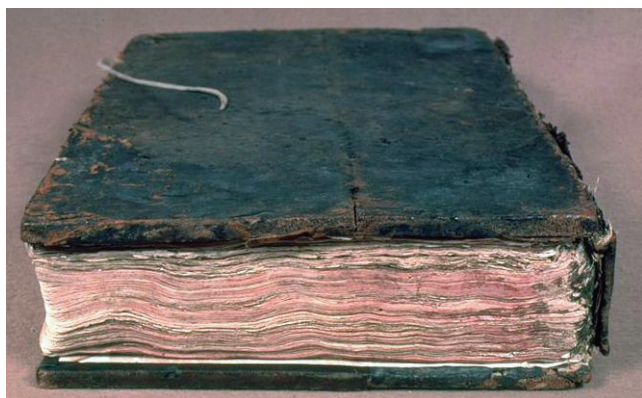


Fig. 18. Pedro Ocharte, *Antiphonarium* (ca. 1572?), Rosenwald Collection, Library of Congress: example of an early Mexican binding in leather over wooden boards.

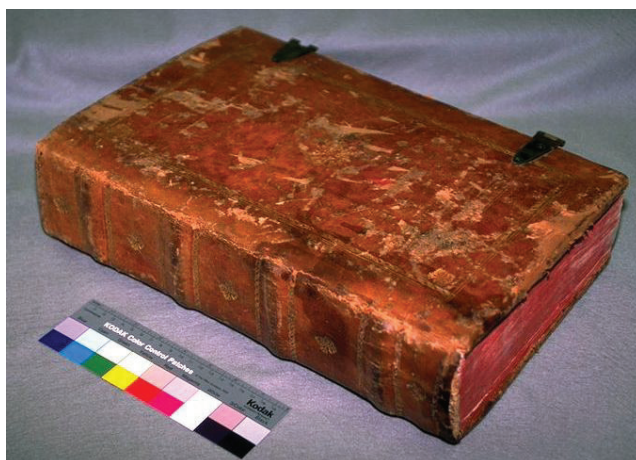


Fig. 19. Pedro Ocharte, *Antiphonarium* (1589), Benson Library, University of Texas: example of an early Mexican binding in leather over wooden boards. Photo courtesy April Smith.



Fig. 20. Pedro Ocharte, *Antiphonarium* (1589), Benson Library, University of Texas: spine detail. Photo courtesy April Smith.



Fig. 21. Pedro Ocharte, *Antiphonarium* (1589), Benson Library, University of Texas: detail showing fore edge and clasp. Photo courtesy April Smith.

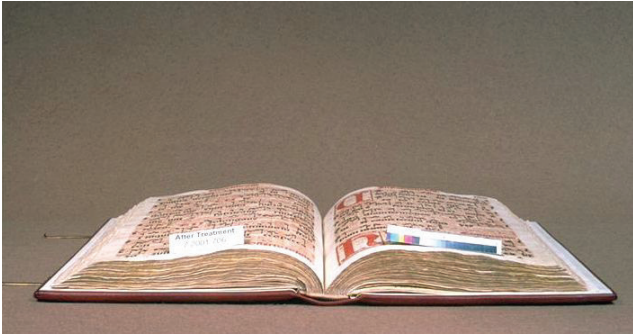


Fig. 22. *Graduale Dominicale*: after treatment, opening of text block



Fig. 23. *Graduale Dominicale*: after treatment, new binding showing tooling on sides

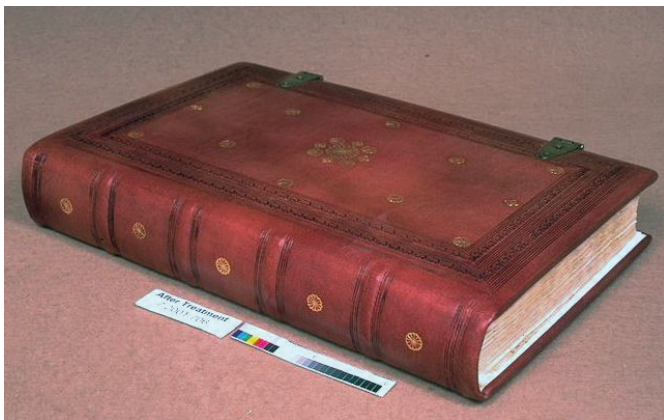


Fig. 24. *Graduale Dominicale*: after treatment, new binding showing tooling on spine

1589 Ocharte *Antiphonarium* in the Benson Library at the University of Texas at Austin (figs. 19–21). And of course there is the 1584 *Psalterium* that April Smith discussed in Part 1 of this paper. While it is not known whether all of these bindings are original to the volumes, it clearly shows a pattern in binding style for volumes containing music for worship. In my effort to determine a historically appropriate binding style for the *Graduale* it was quite clear that it would have to be bound in wooden boards.

In his book *Sixteenth-Century Gold-Tooled Bookbindings in the Pierpont Morgan Library*, Howard Nixon described the binding on the Benson Library's 1589 Ocharte *Antiphonarium*. He felt that this binding looked "like one would expect of a sixteenth-century Mexican example" (Nixon 1971, 256). Based on this recommendation I used the Benson Library's *Antiphonarium* as my general guide in the rebinding of the *Graduale*. The Benson Library curators were kind enough to take snapshots of the binding for me since there were no published photographs of this binding that they knew of. The photographs were helpful in giving me a sense of the general shape and appearance of the volume, the rose-colored leather, the relatively flat spine, the shallow raised bands and the construction of the fore edge clasps.

The *Graduale* was sewn on split raised thongs and bound in full Restoration calf over wooden boards (fig. 22). Two brass clasps were constructed for the fore edge of the volume. The tooling consists of a combination of both blind and gold tooling. A few decorative tools are used repeatedly to create the design (figs. 23–24). This kind of decorative scheme was used on a binding dated 1597 that Howard Nixon illustrated in his book and was also present in several early Mexican bindings I studied.

A block and wrapper were constructed to store the *Graduale*'s previous binding and it is housed with the volume in a clamshell box (figs. 25–26). Previous paper repairs, which were removed during paper treatment, were also retained and are stored with the volume.

As April Smith mentioned in her paper, choosing an approach to treatment of an object is an individual judg-

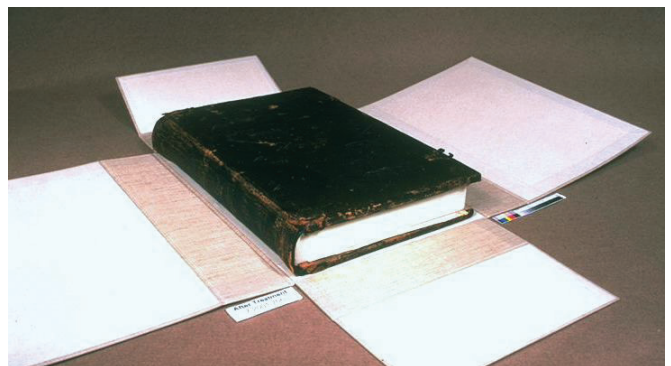


Fig. 25. *Graduale Dominicale*: after treatment, previous binding supported on a block and enclosed in a four-flap wrap

ment and one always hopes that future generations of scholars will respect your choice of treatment. In the case of the Library of Congress's *Graduale*, the decision to pursue a full treatment was based on concern for the condition of the volume, deep skepticism about the authenticity of the present binding, and a desire to retain as much information as possible, while making the volume safe for limited use and handling. At the same time it is hoped that the volume is returned to something that is closer in function and appearance to the way that it was when it was originally in use.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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REFERENCE

Nixon, Howard. 1971. *Sixteenth-century gold-tooled book-bindings in the Pierpont Morgan Library*. New York: Pierpont Morgan Library.

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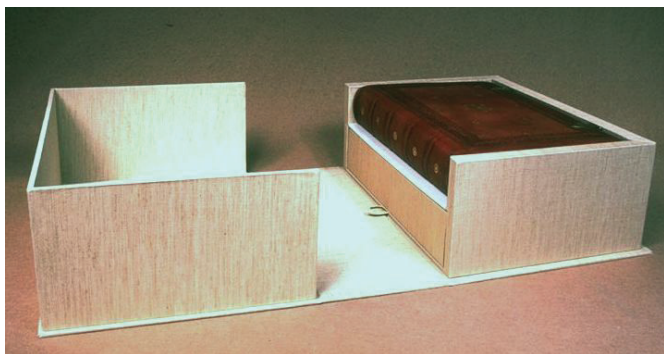


Fig. 26. *Graduale Dominicale*: after treatment, rebound book and previous binding housed together in a box