This workshop will provide a comprehensive study of five historical bookbinding structures and their relevant adaptive applications to book conservation treatment genres. This array of prototypes and methods will be integrated as a cohesive book conservation practice.

The structures studied will include (1) late Antiquity and manuscript era unsupported, sewn board construction as widely adaptive to conservation of damaged letterpress texts, (2) 16th century wooden board supported sewing applied to conservation of early printed books, (3) one-piece cover, laced-case prototype adapted to case construction rebinding of 18th to 19th century pamphlets, (4) later tight-joint, leather covered prototype studied as a negative exemplar, and (5) 18th century lapped component, paper cover, case construction prototype as an exemplar for conservation rebinding and conversion from tight joint construction.

Specific treatment correlations will include sewing repair, re-sewing and reconstruction of cover-to-text attachment with focus on renewed mobility and functionality for current access routines including imaging and exhibition.

Students will make and manipulate book structures and refine skills of examination, interpretation, reconstruction and rebinding with focus on safe, productive, elegant methods. Reference resources and methods documentation will be provided. This workshop will be enjoyable and engaging. The focus is on industrious hand skills for book conservators.
PROTOTYPES

The five book bindings to be studied are carefully chosen. Each has its own place in historical methods and representation in library collections. Each can also be resolved as a prototype of its exemplars; we can typify the features and structure and produce a prototype model. In turn each prototype can be adapted to categories of book conservation treatment. So there are many representations at issue; these are the exemplar, the prototype, the conservation adaptation type and the accomplished treatment for a given imprint.

What sort of approach to book conservation is this? It is a direct approach for the practitioner who must treat old books out of context with those who made them. At first it is an oddity that historical structures and methods should infiltrate modern work or present a treatment strategy in accord with current library services such as digital imaging. But this is an enriching conservation action and it fits the resilient legacy of book use. This also a conservative approach; innovation springs from tradition.

Another validation of this model-based practice is an easy and successful adaptation (or avoidance) of a historical prototype in daily work. The sewn board model easily adapts to performance needs of texts with weakened papers and pre-existing saw-korf sewing stations. The wooden boarded, supported sewing model naturally provides protective control of forces of board leverage transmission while the later, lapped component cover offers an exemplary case construction adaptation. Meanwhile the later tight-joint leather covered model is our guide for avoidance of proven failures!

So the approach is craft oriented and performance validated. Nothing in the history of bookbinding is obsolete; all is relevant. Perhaps most relevant is the bookbinders reliance on the hands prompting the
mind as books are built to ease reading manipulations and provoke cognitive skills. The material enactment of book transmission now depends on intervention and non-intervention of book conservation. Ambivalence, stealth, good humor and eerie relevance are at work.

PRACTICE

So, how will this array of prototypes and methods be integrated into a cohesive and resilient book conservation practice? Here we are in the early twenty first century using an array of resources across almost two millennia that have been extracted from an immense scope of cultures. Can we hope to make a coherent practice and develop a graceful skill set from these resources? Yes we can!

Our preservation and approach must encompass the entire surviving array of books. The five prototypes set the stage. Most adaptive is the sewn board binding providing leaf attachment and cover to text structure that adapts from the papyrus codex to the paperback. The prototype derives from binding types that were eclipsed before the advent of printing. Oddly the structural features of equitable leaf attachment from head to tail and from beginning to end, the covers attached as outermost leaves, and a flush trim of three book edges are as relevant to the machine made paperback. Even the odd double cover Coptic type can return to modern use.

The wooden board model as extracted from 16th century turns out to offer a useful model for rebinding early printed books. The parabola derived from co-ordinate vectors of board transmission continues as an elegant exemplar of structure and action. Meanwhile, the one-piece laced case prototype carries us across to the 18th century and includes the important pamphlet and booklet formats. Here we convert the historical structure to a fold sewn, cased cover design.
The more modern binding exemplar of the cord sewn, tight joint, and leather covered type fills the collections from the 19th to 20th centuries. It provides a diorama of failures and a stream of conservation repair work. The agendas of methods and structures in the original bindings are matched by an almost equal array of counter agendas of re-attachment. The prospect of endless re-hinging haunts this context. Finally, the lapped component, paper cover, and case construction prototype carries us into agendas for case construction cloth binding. Here the fragile collections stream into the current work flow of book conservation.

PROTOTYPES IN PRACTICE

So the array of prototypes supports practice across the whole chronology of the book collections and across a scope of structural types. You can see that any less than five would be insufficient and an array of a dozen of these historical types is even better. We could extend our attention to prototypes such as the Dutch quarter-tawed, tight back echoed in the “English library style” or non-adhesive applications derived from classic archival long stitch. Less exotic would be choice of a natural hollow vs. tube hollow for constructions with spine free of back.

Other influences of current practice derive from study of the prototypes and the influence of book action. We can observe consistent failures or challenges posed with structures intended for hand manipulation. So we are thrown into the very stream of product manufacture that all historical bookbinders shared. Each generation of structure type and book worker must include innovation and address the expediens and deficiencies that surround them. There is plenty to do to counter the current failures of on-demand binding now associated with scholarly monographs. Artifact evidence of struggles and resilience of historical binders can help us.
THE WORKING CODEX

Use of prototypes provides a lively and enriching motivation for book conservation but the resources must also be integrated into a coherent practice. Otherwise the complex relation of structures and actions will become confused. Bookbinders will say that a method is intended to produce one kind of action when it obviously doesn’t. A tube hollow restricts opening, as does rounding and backing. We need to examine the performance of fold mending, sewing methods, cover-to-text attachment types and functional aspects of design proportions. This is a workshop about these matters.

Can we describe the working structure of a codex? A similar classical challenge is description of the living anatomy of the body. The bionic model illustrates the musculature, its vascular and neurological connections and the skeletal support. However such a description also needs explanation of embodied performance, movement in space and kinetic experience.

A challenging aspect of codex structure description also needs attention to performative action of structure and its functional relevance for use of books. We will be looking at such aspects in this workshop as we make prototypes and resolve their applications to book conservation methods. This is a process already embedded in the development of book conservation practice but we will accentuate it.

So, is the working structure of the codex related to the living anatomy of the body? They do work together in adaptive episodes of reading and library use. Lively structure is also the intention of book conservation. Books are the products of cognitive actions that document living manipulations and deliberate interventions including the interventions of book conservation.