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The Changing Book: Transitions in Design, Production, and Preservation

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Book Review

The Changing Book: Transitions in Design, Production, and Preservation. Kraft, Nancy E. and Huffman, Holly Martin editors. Binghamton, NY: Haworth Press, 2008. ISBN 978-0-7890-3460-1. \$75. A review by Peter D. Verheyen.

The Changing Book: Transitions in Design Production, and Preservation publishes the proceedings of the conference of the same name organized by and held at the University of Iowa July 22-25, 2005. This conference tied together many threads, from an exhibition honoring the life's work of William (Bill) Anthony, the first conservator at the University of Iowa and teacher to some of today's best, to a "tent show" which gave the public the opportunity to learn about the book arts hands-on, to 19 formal presentations spanning from the evolution of the "book," trends in book production, and the future of the physical book in the face of digital technology. Also covered were aspects of the craft of bookbinding, conservation, book arts, and education in the fields.

The proceedings begin with Mary Lynn Ritzenthaler's telling the story of "Craft Bookbinding in Chicago and Iowa," focusing on the work of Helen Gates Starr and the Hull House Bindery, The Hertzberg Bindery, and Bill Anthony. While coming from very different backgrounds, all three shared a strong commitment to the craft of bookbinding and made a significant impact. The art and craft of bookbinding and conservation are also discussed through the papers of Christopher Clarkson who spoke on conservation of the Kennicott Bible, James R. Canary whose paper "From Pothi to Pixels and Back Again" described the book in Tibet, to Pamela Spitzmueller's "Conservation and Book Arts, and Tim Ely's speaking on his own work in "Signal to Noise." Of these, Spitzmueller's paper is perhaps the most interesting in this group as it shows how the book as historical artifact, its conservation, and the book arts have all influenced one another – a reality given that so many conservators are also book artists and vice-versa.

There were also two panel discussions. The first of these composed of Anna Embree, Mark Andersson, Consuela (Chela) Metzger, Julia Leonard, and Steve Tatum discussed "Bookcraft Education" in the context of the leading educational centers where they work to train future generations of binders and conservators – The University of Alabama's MFA in Book Arts, The North Bennet Street School, the Kilgarlin Center for the Cultural Record at the University of Texas at Austin, and The University of Iowa Center for the Book. Central to their discussion were the "conflicts" between formal "academic" training and the apprenticeship model. Both have benefits and drawbacks, but it is the balance between both that will be central to "defining the parameters of fine book craft education.

The second panel discussed "Bill Anthony's Influences on (his) Apprentices." This panel was composed of Bill Minter,

Mark Esser, Lawrence Yerkes, Sally Key, and Annie Tremmel Wilcox, all former apprentices and students of Anthony and conservators working either in libraries or private practice. Often described as the "Johnny Appleseed" of binders for the way he directly or indirectly contributed to the training of generations of binders and conservators, it is clear that this is no idle claim. Traditionally apprenticed and trained in "the trade" like John Dean, Anthony likewise made the transition to conservation by showing that craft and conservation are not incompatible and the good craft is essential for good results in all aspects of bookbinding, conservation, and the book arts. Equally clear were the very deep personal touches that Anthony left with those who worked with him.

Don Etherington spoke on the "Historical Background of Book Conservation," looking back at the past forty years since the floods in Florence that did much to shape the relatively new field of book conservation in the context of the library preservation programs that grew out of through the efforts of such visionary leaders as Peter Waters, Paul Banks, Gary Frost, John Dean. Continuing, Etherington chronicles the development of modern library preservation programs and regional centers. This theme of programmatic preservation is continued in the papers of Yvonne Carignan on "Who Wants Yesterday's Papers," John Dean on the "World View of Book Conservation," Jeanne Drewes on "Alkaline Paper versus Acidic Paper in Current Publishing," and Roberta Pilette on "Book Conservation within Library Preservation."

The future of the book whether in analog, digital, or a combination of both was also discussed at length. Walter Cybulski spoke on how paper will endure in the face of digital collections and some of the pitfalls of digital in "e-Miles to Go and Promises to Keep," Kim White and Sarah Townsend talked about "The End of Paper" and how electronic media are shaping the way people communicate and work in the arts and beyond, and D.J. Stout spoke on the role of "Book Design in the Changing Book" using his own "graphic design daredevilery" to illustrate his points. As we head back towards the physical book, James Larsen spoke to the "Historical Background of Print/Bind on Demand," and Paul Parisi on "On Demand Book Production with New Technologies." The movement to on demand book production is an outgrowth of the outputting of microfilmed texts and is seen as the solution, especially for esoteric titles or preservation copies, both of which carry with them low print runs.

The Changing Book: Transitions in Design Production, and Preservation ties together the many threads of this important conference, providing a valuable starting off point for those just beginning to develop an understanding of these topics, as well as those already actively engaged.