Medieval and Early Modern Bindings in Archives

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Presented as part of the Brodsky lecture/workshop series
November 7-9, 2008
Many People Helped

- Photos from Ellen Cunningham-Kruppa
- Photos and diagrams from Eileen Wallace
- Photos from Nora Ligorano
- Workshop by Enrico Flaiani, conservator at the Vatican Secret Archives
Books Structures in Archives

- Szirmai (p. 289) says: “Studies of binding structures in archives are very scarce…”
- He also says (p. 286): “Systematic classification of limp bindings is by no means a straightforward matter.”
Long Tradition

• Pickwoad notes (P. 121): Tacketing in one form or another was well known in the archival world, was used for much of the medieval period, and survived into the twentieth century in most European countries in institutional, governmental, and commercial use.”
Separate Trade?

• "Stationery or Vellum binding, as it is variously called...is the sister art to the much more ostentatious branch of letterpress binding"
  – Monk and Lawrence, *A Text Book of Stationery Binding*, 1912
Real Life Archives

Jan Lievens: *Vanitas* 1620-1630
Archive in Cortona Italy, photo by Eileen Wallace
Archive in Aix En e, photo by Ellen Kruppa
Big Books
Aix-en e, photo by E. Cunningham
Archives in France-Photo by E. Cunningham
Big Sections

From Ligorano’s Book
Detail from “The Merchant” at the National Gallery
Flat Spines

From Cortona Archives 1550’s, photo by E. Wallace
Detail from binding in Cortona, by E. Wallace
From Szirmai Archeology of the Medieval Book
Fore edge Flap

Montefiasconi seminary library
On Internet as a “Mudajar” binding, no date
Fasteners

From Ligorano’s book
Primary Tacketing

From Szirmai, *The Archeology of the Medieval Book*
From Aix-en e Archives, photo by E. Cunningham
Secondary Tacketing

From Szirmai, *The Archeology of the Medieval Book*
Endband Tackets

From Cortona Archives, Photo by E. Wallace
Adding New Sections

From Ligorano’s book

Sections added

Spine edge
Registers
Overbands

From Cortona Archives, photo by E. Wallace
Lacing Patterns
Late 16th Century British

Folger Library shelf mark V.b. 296, photo from catalog
Spanish “Mudahar” lacing patterns

From Ligorano’s book
Back of “Mudejar” pattern

Photo from Ligorano’s book
Corona Archives, photo by E. Wallace
Edge Treatment

Date and coat of arms, Cortona. Photo by E. Wallace
Cortona Archives, photo by E. Wallace
Decorative Finishing Methods

Cortona Archives, photo by E. Wallace
Not afraid of color
Evolution of a Type

Image from Jane Greenfield
Record Keeping Structures

- Kellis wooden account book (8 wooden pages)
- 360-370 AD
- Written to the edges
- Opens flat
Roll to Codex/Parchment to Paper

• Anne Thick wrote an article on the shift to paper codex from parchment roll for accounting in England, 1285-1307
Writing Technologies

• Writing Tables research, Frank Mowery, in *Shakespeare Quarterly*. (Peter Geraty made model)

• Development of loose leaf structures for accounting
Stationery Binding 1912

WHITE VELLUM.
SINGLE RUSSIA BANDS

WHITE VELLUM.
RUSSIA BANDS, BRASS BOTTOMS.
Still for Sale

- Some record keeping books are remarkably unchanged in form.
- We still use the terms ledger, memo, day book, rooted in Italian double-entry accounting methods.
Conservation Concerns
Media and structure loss

- IRON GALL INK CORROSION is the worst problem
- Copy paper and copy ink are difficult to treat
- Safe storage and handling can be hard for these volumes
- Loss off binding styles as archives are tidied up
- Typical structural problems of large, heavy mechanical tightbacks
SHRINKING TACKETS DUE TO WATER OR FIRE
BROKEN MATERIAL IN JOINT
Loss of material culture

“Portrait of a Merchant” The National Gallery (from JAMA 2001)
Artistic Possibilities
Opportunity for Scholarship
Areas to explore

• Overlap between changes in writing and the structures available for writing. Example: Mowery and the article on writing tablets.
• Jana Dambrogio and the Rome Prize to study Northeastern Italian Monastic Legal and Accounting Documents and Bindings at the Vatican Secret Archives.
• Connections between binding and other crafts such as saddlery, tailoring, shoe-making
More basic surveys
Szirmai and Pickwoad agree

- There are not many surveys of binding styles in archives
Thanks again

- Danielle made the sample cards
- Martha Romero is my sister in bookwork
- Eileen, the Cortona Connection! (no photo)
- Ellen Cunningham-Kruppa, Karen Pavelka at UT-Austin
THANK YOU Syracuse!