

IMLS

Publishers' Bindings Online, 1815-1930: The Art of Books Report 1

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UA: Jessica Lacher-Feldman, Project Manager

UW: Barbara Walden and Lee Konrad

Project Overview

On September 23, 2003, the Institute of Museum and Library Services announced the 2003 recipients of the IMLS National Leadership Grants.

Decorative Trade Bindings Online (DTBOnline) was awarded to develop a model which other repositories can use with their own collections, including possibly contributing in future to this project, and to broaden a relatively unexplored scholarly field. This resource will encourage interested parties to look at their own collections, and to gain an understanding of design movements and trends both within the United States as well as abroad, comparable to *Jugendstil* in Germany, *Art Nouveau* in France, *Arts and Crafts* in England, and *Glasgow School* in Scotland.

The project will provide end users with a collection of materials that not only provide an understanding of what was being read but will also illustrate the importance of the book as an *object*. These titles will serve as a microcosm for understanding westward expansion in the United States, when both Alabama and Wisconsin were considered part of “the American West”. It will allow users to explore the notion of “cult of domesticity”; the evolution of the notion of leisure; the shift in the manner in which children were treated in the home; the movement towards education, emancipation and women’s rights; the movement toward the modern, Industrialization and Victorian culture--all as reflected in the books and their binding styles.

The project will provide insight into America’s first century, both in history/culture and in design. The bindings provide a forum for the study of the development of a distinctive American style and the movement from America looking abroad for inspiration, to Europe looking towards America for ideas and imagery.

Initiation of Project

Work on the project was initiated immediately, beginning with email and telephone contact between The University of Alabama Libraries (UA) and the University of Wisconsin Libraries (UW).

On December 5 and 6, 2003, the major participants in the grant project convened at the University of Alabama’s W.S. Hoole Special Collections Library to develop plans, goals, communication strategy, and address issues that relate to the grant project. Among the

items created were an initial timeline (See appendix A), the plans for selection, metadata development, and the execution of the project.

The group was joined by some members of the advisory group on Saturday, December 6.

The two-day meeting was a great success, establishing lines of communication, partner responsibilities, initial work plan, and addressing issues such as the development of a timeline, benchmarks, quality control, technical issues, and an overall action plan.

Partners (Working Group)

The key participants from each institution are as follows:

UA

- Lou Pitschmann, Co-PI
- Karen Croneis, Co-PI
Jessica Lacher-Feldman, Project Manager
- Clark Center, Curator of Special Collections [Collections]
- Donnelly Lancaster, Archival Access Coordinator, Special Collections [Digitization]
- Mary Alexander [Metadata]
- Cheryl Ballard [Web Development]
- Doug Anderson [Systems]
- Harriet Deason [Budget]
- Cathy Baker [Consultant]

UW

- Barbara Walden [selection, co-coordinator, UW]
- Lee Konrad [Digital Projects, co-coordinator, UW]
- Amy Rudersdorf [Metadata coordinator]
- Steven Dast [Database development]
- Tom Durkin [Database development]
- Charles Dean [Database systems and programming]

Advisory Committee

PBO established an advisory committee with areas of expertise in various areas relating to the project. The advisory committee is as follows:

- **Sue Allen:** is the foremost authority on 19th c. American book covers. Her research, lectures, writings, and exhibitions guide librarians and conservators in the selective preservation of English and American bindings of the 19th and early 20th c. In 1999 she received the annual award of the American Printing History Association for her contributions to printing history.

- **Michael Seadle:** Assistant Director for Systems and Digital Services, Michigan State University Library.
- **Elaine Smyth:** Curator of Manuscripts, Hill Library, Louisiana State University.
- **Steve Miller:** Director, MFA Program in the Book Arts, UA
- **Anna Embree:** Assistant Professor of Binding, MFA Program in the Book Arts, UA
- **Tonya Tidline:** Assistant Professor, School of Library and Information Studies, UA.

In addition, two members of the advisory committee are to be added in the near future to assist with the development of value-added materials. One advisory committee member will be an expert in Material Culture from UW, the other a professor of American Studies specializing in 19th c. American Culture from UA.

Official Project Name

As of February 17, 2004, *DTBOnline* became *Publishers' Bindings Online, 1815-1930: The Art of Books*. The name change was reached by consensus with all of the participants in the grant project from both institutions. The decision to change the name was due to a concern for another project calling itself DTBOnline, and that *Publishers' Bindings Online, 1815-1930: The Art of Books* (or *PBO*) was a better reflection of the project itself and its goals and deliverables.

Communication

Two email lists were established and are hosted by the University of Alabama Libraries. A list for the members of the “working group” [University of Alabama and University of Wisconsin-Madison] allows for communication and the circulation of attachments to the entire group with ease. An archive of all communication is available online.

A second email list includes the members of the “working group” along with all of the members of the advisory committee. This allows for simple communication and distribution of files to the working group and advisory committee with ease. An archive of all communication is available online.

In addition to the stable public URL that has been created for the project (bindings.lib.ua.edu), a private, password protected website bindings.lib.ua.edu/private/ has been established for all of the participants in the project, including staff at UA, UW, and the advisory committee. This private, password protected URL serves as the gateway to components of the project in the test phase, including the developing

bindings-related glossary, both in database and document form; meeting minutes, and the draft bibliography and webliography of publishers' bindings-related scholarship.

Travel

As part of the PBO grant project, Karen Croneis, Co-PI, and Jessica Lacher-Feldman, Project Manager participated in the Outcomes Based Evaluation training offered by IMLS in December 2003 in Washington, DC.

Barbara Walden, responsible investigator at UW, attended the IMLS/NS Principal Investigators meeting in December 2003 in Washington, DC.

From UA, Karen Croneis, Jessica Lacher-Feldman, and Mary Alexander, Metadata Coordinator; and from UW, Lee Konrad and Amy Rudersdorf attended the IMLS-sponsored Webwise conference in Chicago, IL.

Test Project

One of the many positive outcomes of the December 5-6 meeting at UA was the decision to create a small testbed project that will allow the entire process to be tested from the point of initiation to completion. Selection of 25 items per institution would be described, digitized, metadata created, and a database of these materials developed and evaluated.

A selection of 26 books (26 metadata records, 61 images) representing all types of materials anticipated for UA contribution to the database was completed and provided to UW for including in the test database.

A selection of 27 books (27 metadata records, 78 images) representing all types of materials anticipated for the UW contribution to the database was completed and provided to the Digital Content Group for inclusion in the test database.

UW developed and hosts the interface serving the collection, and that database is up and running as of March 29, 2004. It can be viewed (in a rudimentary, test form) at <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/PBO>. This database currently contains 53 records (comprised of 140 images and 53 metadata records) from both UA and UW.

Selection

UA: UA has initially identified approximately 2700 items from the W.S. Hoole Special Collections Library that have been deemed appropriate and desirable for the project. UA will focus on breadth, with some areas of depth including early 20th century works of Lafcadio Hearn, and a collection of rare confederate imprints (books printed in the South

during the Civil War). A student assistant has been hired to assist in the retrieval and processing of these books. Books will be from several collections in the Hoole Library and in other UA libraries, including Rare Books, Rucker Agee Collection, Wade Hall Collection of Southern History and Culture, and the Hoole Alabama Collection. In addition, a significant gift of rare and pristine works by noted African-American authors and other 19th c. American authors including Hawthorne, Paul Lawrence Dunbar, and Mark Twain will be included in the project. Jessica Lacher-Feldman has developed a training program to work with circulation staff and the gifts staff member in UA acquisitions to enable them to identify rare and unique materials in the general stacks in the UA Libraries for possible inclusion in the project.

UW: UW has completed the identification and selection of the items which it will contribute “in-depth” to the database. These materials include: 181 versions of Uncle Tom’s Cabin, 172 versions of the works of Louisa May Alcott, 100 versions of the works of Sarah Orne Jewett, and 54 versions of the works of Emily Dickinson. These materials are found in UW-Madison’s Special Collections (Cairns Collection of American Women Writers). In addition, 45 juvenile items for inclusion in the project have been identified and cataloged in the Special Collections Juvenile Literature collection. Currently the selector (Barbara Walden) is working with Special Collections staff in identifying the most appropriate of 132 gift books for addition to the project. A student assistant has been hired to retrieve the Special Collections materials and they can be scanned and provided with metadata as soon as the issues raised by the test database have been resolved.

Work is proceeding in selection of additional materials for the project, from the UW-Madison’s General Library System. Two student assistants have been hired to assist in identification of items and provision of retrieval. Currently selection is focusing on identifying appropriate Scandinavian-American materials, as well as bindings attributed to Margaret Armstrong in standard bibliographies. Because there are no standard bibliographies of Scandinavian-American materials, selection of these materials has been greatly aided by information provided by Susanne Nevin, North European Studies Librarian at St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota, who has generously shared her knowledge of Scandinavian-American publishing. To date, 85 Scandinavian-American books have been identified and retrieved from Memorial Library, the Wisconsin Historical Society Library, and the Steenbock Library, and 36 of these have been identified as first-priority for scanning. 59 Margaret Armstrong bindings have been identified and retrieved from Memorial Library; retrieval has not yet begun for Margaret Armstrong bindings located elsewhere on campus.

It is anticipated that identification and retrieval of the above items will be completed by the end of May, 2004. Remaining to be identified and retrieved are the German-American materials, primarily in the Max Kade Institute of German-American studies, and additional materials to complete Madison’s contribution to the database. It is anticipated that this work will continue through the summer of 2004. This project has generated tremendous enthusiasm from the library staff that regularly finds and proposes items for the project.

The selection/metadata creation form (See Appendix B) allows for controlled language and descriptive hierarchy from the point of selection through metadata creation.

Metadata

The metadata was completed using the first sample selection/metadata form developed by the PBO working group. The description form facilitates smooth transition from initial selection and description by the subject specialists to the metadata development by the metadata coordinators.

UA's metadata coordinator, Mary Alexander, and UW's metadata coordinator Amy Rudersdorf established the Dublin Core elements to be used for the project.

UW developed the web interface to accept the entry of metadata records. This interface was developed by Tom Durkin, using FileMakerPro. The web interface allows for direct communication with regard to metadata development between UA and UW.

Website

In order to establish exposure for the project and its mission and goals, a public website with a static URL was established within the first three months of the project. That url: bindings.lib.ua.edu (See Appendix C) provides a gateway to the project itself, and will grow along with the project. Currently the grant narrative, a key article about the project, and additional related web resources, along with the IMLS logo and a link to the IMLS site is available. This URL will remain the gateway to the project itself.

A private, password protected website bindings.lib.ua.edu/private/ has been established as the gateway to components of the project in the test phase. (See Appendix D)

Project Database

We have completed a new visual style for the database interface serving the collection, and that database is up and running as of March 29, 2004. It can be viewed (in a rudimentary test form) at <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/PBO>. This database currently contains 53 records (comprised of 140 images and 53 metadata records) from both Alabama and Wisconsin. This is the agreed upon number that were to be completed from selection, through digitization, metadata development, and database development.

Upon completion and evaluation of the test, the database will continue to grow and will include up to 10,000 images from up to 5000 books from UA and UW as part of the three year IMLS grant-funded project.

Value-Added Components

UA has begun to compile a collection of published materials on 19th c. bindings, including articles and books. This resource is to be used in the development of the project and its value-added components.

A test glossary database was developed in part by Cathy Baker, consultant on the PBO project. Baker, a doctoral candidate with a focus on book history, developed a glossary from several resources that help to define and clarify elements and terms relating to 19th c. publishers' bindings. Additional emphasis was made on the development of a glossary for differing UK, US, and continental terms. (See Appendix E)

The selection/metadata form for "themes" is a growing controlled vocabulary of decorative elements and historical/cultural topics represented on these bindings. This controlled vocabulary is the basis for additional value-added components to be developed for the project, including teaching tools, galleries (selected bindings grouped together for the end user to view as a single entity for the purpose of understanding one particular aspect of 19th c. bindings, publishing, and subject matter).

A bibliography/webliography of published scholarship in the areas relating to 19th c. publishers' bindings has been compiled. The document, which is continually growing, is available for evaluation on the private, password protected part of the bindings website. [bindings.lib.ua.edu/private/] (See Appendix F)

Publicity and Promotion

On January 10, 2004, Jessica Lacher-Feldman presented a paper at the American Historical Association in Washington DC, *Exploring Book History in the Digital World: Collaboration, Exhibition, and Outreach*. The focus of this paper was the PBO project and its scholarly impact.

On December 8, 2003, the University of Alabama's University-wide newsletter, *Dialog* featured a front-page article with photographs of the PBO project. An electronic version of the article is available at <http://dialog.ua.edu/dialog20031208/bookcovers20031208.html> (See Appendix G).

On March 9, 2004, Jessica Lacher-Feldman spoke to the University Women's' Club at the University of Alabama about the PBO project, and 19th c. decorative bindings.

In March of 2004, Jessica Lacher-Feldman gave a presentation about the PBO project to the UA Libraries at the Libraries Forum.

A presentation is planned for the Fall of 2004 for the University of Wisconsin-Madison Libraries staff.

At UW, an article on the PBO project is included in the May 2004 Friends of the Library Newsletter.

A brief article on the PBO project will appear in the Spring 2004 Society of Alabama Archivists newsletter.

Exhibitions

In March of 2004, Jessica Lacher-Feldman curated an exhibition “*Victorian Exotica: Japanese Design Influence in 19th c. Publishers’ Bindings*”. (See Appendix H) The exhibition featured bindings from the 1850s-1910s that embody Japanese style and influence. The exhibit included 1st editions by Lafcadio Hearn, as well as cloth bindings with Japanese images. As part of the University and Tuscaloosa community-wide Sakura (Cherry Blossom) Festival, this exhibition received wide publicity and brought visitors to the Hoole Library from the University, and the community at large, including visiting students and faculty from Chiba, Japan.

At UW, Barbara Walden and Tracy Honn (Silver Buckle Press) are currently working on an exhibit and accompanying website to introduce the project. The exhibit, entitled “*Publishers’ Bindings – The Art of Books*” will be on display from May through September 2004 in Memorial Library on the UW-Madison campus.

An exhibition of 19th century publishers’ bindings is currently on display in the Gorgas Library on the UA campus. The exhibit includes over seventy books from private collections. The exhibit focuses on publishers’ bindings in a variety of styles and materials with examples produced from 1828 to 1944 from a variety of countries, including the United States, Denmark, Germany, and Hungary.

Appendices

- A. Initial Project Timeline
- B. Selection form (two sided document). Page one is devoted to the physical description of the item (cloth type, color, decorative components, binding designer, etc.). Page two is devoted to thematic elements.
- C. Printout of PBO website main page [bindings.lib.ua.edu]
- D. Printout of PBO private main page [bindings.lib.ua.edu/private/]
- E. Bindings Glossary (sample pages 1-3. Entire document is currently 84 pages)
- F. Bibliography/Webliography of related scholarship
- G. Dialog article
- H. *Victorian Exotica* Flier