AN EXAMINATION OF THE METADATA CAPTURED ABOUT ARTIFACTS OF
BOOKBINDING BY UNITED STATES RESEARCH LIBRARIES
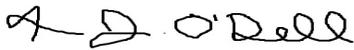

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WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER OUR SUPERVISION BY ALLISON JAI O'DELL ENTITLED "AN EXAMINATION OF THE METADATA CAPTURED ABOUT ARTIFACTS OF BOOKBINDING BY UNITED STATES RESEARCH LIBRARIES" BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING, IN PART, REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN ART AND THE BOOK.
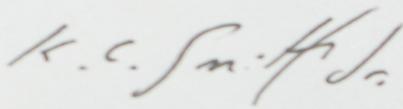
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Thesis statement

       This examination of the metadata captured about artifacts of bookbinding by United States research libraries in their public catalogs will characterize the types of information made available to the research community, focusing on physical manifestations, historical and artistic context, and the arrangement of production. The aim of this study will be to better understand and inform the metadata generated by research libraries regarding bookbindings, encouraging more nuanced and relevant intellectual access to and categorization of bookbinding artifacts.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

In a certain light, libraries can be seen as museums of the book. Primarily responsible for collecting, preserving, and curating objects of the book genre for several millennia, libraries have become a major source for accessing artifacts of the book arts, including examples of bookbinding. Thus, public contact with historic and contemporary bindings is achieved largely through the collections of independent and academic research libraries. Knowledge of the holdings of these libraries is gained through their institutional catalogs (both online databases and in print), as well as exhibition publications, scholarly publications, and cooperative or union catalogs that list the holdings of multiple institutions.

Library catalogs are composed of a set of records, usually with one record corresponding to one bookwork (or publication). Each record is structured the same as another, with consistent data fields across the database, to facilitate search, retrieval, and organization of the content contained therein. This searching and sorting may be performed by staff for a variety of reasons, but it is usually expected that the end user of a library catalog is a researcher or outside patron. Library patrons use the search portals and features available to them to retrieve the content of catalog records and select materials for study.

Analysis of the data contained in research library catalogs can inform how we become aware of extant bookbinding artifacts, what queries may be posed of the data, and what questions can be answered. Retrievability of data by search algorithms and usability of content display also affect how one may find and select bookbindings for study. In short, an examination of research library data entry practices and catalog design will speak to how researchers gather

information about available bookbindings and choose objects for investigation, which has a direct impact on the progress of scholarship.

In particular, special collections units within research libraries and/or collections with a focus on rare materials have a tendency to describe the physical characteristics of their holdings in a way that is akin to museum registration and can be meaningful for studying bookbindings (and other physical features of the book that go beyond its textual and/or illustrative content). The research described in this paper has focused on collections that fit into this temperament. A limited number of institutions were selected based on their adherence to the following criteria: 1) institutional cataloging policy and/or practice that includes description of bookbindings, 2) ease of repeatable access to this data through online and/or print catalogs, and 3) size of the collection. The institutions are:

The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library: a research library housed at Yale University and devoted entirely to collecting rare books and manuscripts, with collection emphasis on literary history and American cultural experience.

The Folger Shakespeare Library: an independent research library in Washington, DC, that houses books, manuscripts, playbills, costumes, films, and other objects relating primarily to William Shakespeare and theater history, and to the early modern age in the West more generally.

The Pierpont Morgan Library: operating as an independent library and museum in New York, with a core collection of illuminated, literary, and historical manuscripts, early printed books, and old master drawings and prints.

The American Antiquarian Society: the largest collection of printed materials produced in the areas of the United States, the West Indies, and parts of Canada, dating up to 1876.

The Newberry Library: an independent research library with a diverse collection of rare books, maps, music, manuscripts, and other printed material.

It was decided that a random sampling of research libraries would yield far too many null results for this survey to be beneficial. The aim is to evaluate metadata about bookbindings put forth by institutions that are intentionally and consistently describing their holdings of bookbinding artifacts, and that serve a user population typically interested in the materiality of the book.

This research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on user-appropriate, intellectual access to library special collections, and is particularly timely for its potential application during the revision of several relevant guidelines for library cataloging. At present, the Anglo-American research library community is undergoing implementation of a new content standard for creating catalog records (*Resource Description and Access*), and the Rare Books and Manuscripts section of the American Library Association is considering the affects of this shift on their own descriptive standards for cataloging rare and/or specialized materials and formats.

By surveying the kinds of data captured by United States research libraries regarding their bookbindings and comparing this with user research needs, this paper identifies discrepancies between offerings and requirements. Implied changes in cataloging practice and cataloger training tools may be easily

incorporated into the new and evolving content standards and accompanying professional development surrounding *Resource Description and Access* and *Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Materials (Books)*.

Chapter 2. Current Guidelines for Describing and

Indexing Features of Bookbindings

The current draft of *Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Materials (Books)* (abbreviated *DCRM(B))*, a manual for writing the content of rare book catalog records, drafted by the Rare Books and Manuscripts Section of the Association of College and Research Libraries, a subdivision of the American Library Association, and published by the Library of Congress, is used in United States research libraries and includes the following guidelines for describing bookbindings:

> 7B10.4. Describe details of an artist's book or a publisher-issued binding, if considered important …

> 7B19.3.1. Use local notes for descriptions of copy-specific bindings, if considered important …

> 7B19.3.2. Make a local note when the number of physical units in which a publication is bound differs from the number in which it was actually issued, if considered important …

> 7B19.3.3. Make a local note to indicate any errors in binding, if considered important …

> 7B19.3.4. Make a local note, if considered important, whenever a publication has been bound with one of more works subsequent to publication …

> 7B19.3.6. Make a local note to describe other details of a copy-specific binding, if considered important. Less detailed descriptions might include the color and nature of the covering material, a summary of any decoration present … and … an approximate date and the name of the binder …

> 7B19.3.7. More detailed descriptions of a binding might include such additional features as: nature of the boards (e.g., wood, paper); details of decoration; country or city of production; nature and decoration of spine; presence or former presence of ties, clasps, or other furniture; flaps; description of headbands; page-edge and end-paper decoration; references to published descriptions or reproductions of the binding (or related bindings), etc. …

Several principles that underlay these recommendations are worth noting, for clarity. The first is the difference between copy-specific and issue-specific elements. If uniform (or repeating) bindings are executed by a publisher, distributor, or bookseller for the entirety/majority of a given issue of a work, then the binding itself can become evidence of publication and sequencing. If, by contrast, the current binding on a book was executed as a single instance within that issue – commissioned by or for an individual owner – then the binding can become evidence of provenance and use.

The refrain, "if considered important," hearkens to the pre-cataloging decisions laid out at the beginning of *DCRM(B)* – with one of those decisions being the depth of description (X.1.3). The invocation of cataloger's judgment – that is, subjective decisions regarding the inclusion of elements in a catalog record, according to an estimation of user needs, knowledge of the subject area, or other criteria – suggests that no one rule is applicable to all situations or objects. Many factors may contribute to the decision to include or disregard information in a catalog record, including time and resources allotted to description, expertise of the cataloger, user needs, focus of the collection in which the item is included, ability of retrieval methods to make adequate use of the data, and more.

The affects of binding on the arrangement of a text are specially highlighted in *DCRM(B)* with the suggestions that the cataloger mention when leaves have been inaccurately gathered or sewn out of order, when a given text is

broken up differently than it was issued, and when distinctly issued texts have been bound together. Efforts in textual criticism are prominently supported by the instructions offered in *DCRM(B),* often overshadowing areas of art and material history. The influence of textual criticism on library practice will be discussed later in this paper.

The enumerated features that *DCRM(B)* recommends describing are: color, material, decoration, accessory elements, localization of manufacture, identification of makers, and research/historical arrangement. Sewing structures and evidence of sewing technique are not mentioned, nor is dating, though it may be implied by the place of production. Most of the suggested elements can be determined through visual analysis by a simply trained cataloger – color, basic material, summary of decoration, presence of headbands and edge treatments, etc. Some suggested elements require access to reference sources for comparison – identification of binders if work is not fully signed, perhaps place and date of manufacture if determined visually rather than concretely, and similar examples or publications on the object. None of the suggested elements require highly specialized training in the history of binding practice or the art historical arrangement of decoration.

DCRM(B) only provides guidelines for describing bindings in the notes of catalog records; it does not make recommendations for normalizing and indexing features of bookbinding present on a given object. For this purpose, catalogers usually turn to another publication of the American Library Association Rare Books and Manuscripts Section, the *RBMS Controlled Vocabularies*, published

online and updated bi-annually.

Through standardized phrasing, the thesaurus terms allow for intellectual collocation of like elements among different specimens, and facilitate relationships between records in a database environment. Originally envisioned as providing access to physical characteristics, the vocabulary for binding terms includes phrases for format, artistic style, tooling and stamping treatments, furniture, edge treatments, covering material, and more. New terms and modifications to existing terms are proposed by members of the public. Though there are no formal limits on the types of terms included, the petitioner must present literary warrant for the form of the term suggested. Venues for authority may include the book specimens themselves, bookseller descriptions, and the relevant professional literature. Trade language used in informal conversation will not be permitted if no written record of the terminology is available.

The education and interests of the petitioners naturally influences which terms are suggested and thus the character of the final document. Cataloger training and current research interests will be addressed later in this paper.

Contemporary methodologies for categorization and classification of book objects are born of nearly two centuries of intentionally bibliographic research. A review of the history of bibliographical studies, including their aims and approaches, will edify our understanding of the catalysts behind the current drafts of *DCRM(B)* and the *RBMS Controlled Vocabularies*, as well as education provided to catalogers.

Chapter 3. Review of the History of Bibliographical

Studies and the Development of the

Description of Bookbindings

This following summary of the history of the field of analytical bibliography, especially the development of the classification and description of bookbindings, will provide context for understanding the impetus for and form of data capture.

The essay, "Mediaeval Bookbinding," published 1878 in *The Art Journal* is concerned primarily with covering materials on extant bookbindings held in public collections, the labor behind bookbinding (that is, who would be involved and how they were employed), and presents a lengthy description and chronology of decorative motifs (Mauris, 1878). Attention to cover material and cover design as a means of historiography is an approach that we will see persists throughout bookbinding scholarship, and seems to be among the first impulses of early bibliographers.

An 1884 discussion on "Artistic Bookbinding" puts forth fifteenth-century Italy as the "cradle of the modern artistic binding" (Child, 1884). The article pays attention to the influence of culture on materiality – noting that much of book and binding practice comes out of monastic life and the needs of religious service, and that expanded uses of the book in renaissance Italy led to new book formats and binding styles. While the information presented is cursory and under-developed by our standards, the desire to look at the relationships between readership, texts, and books-as-objects is an important seed in the growth of book scholarship, and one that feeds into the impetus behind analytical bibliography.

Terry Belanger defines analytical bibliography as, "the study of books as

physical objects; the details of their production, the effects of the method of manufacture on the text" (1977). The final phrase is crucial to appreciating the the momentum behind many bibliographical investigations – when the underlying goal is the furtherance of textual criticism, documentation of book fabrication may be necessary but only incidental.

For instance, W. W. Greg discussed bibliography as a means of determining and reproducing texts that are faithful to an author's intent and original phrasing (1966). As a scholar of Shakespeare, Greg's outlook on the discipline was guided by the utility of reverse engineering book objects in understanding early printings of English drama.

Greg's colleague, Ronald Brunlees McKerrow, published *An Introduction to Bibliography for Literary Students* in 1927 – a work that would remain the standard textbook of bibliography until Philip Gaskell's *A New Introduction to Bibliography* in 1976. McKerrow's work is directed by its intended audience: students and scholars of literary history. Those studying material culture, archaeology, economics, or the history of technology may have differing interests and need additional or varying documentation to aid their research.

Alfred W. Pollard's work on sixteenth-century English imprints focuses on the appearance and transmission of texts – putting emphasis on such topics as literary influences, translations, distribution, and publication.

These early bibliographers appreciated knowledge of bookbindings insofar as binding practice affected textual transmission and could provide evidence for human agency in authorship, readership, and collecting. Ursula Ephraim

Katzenstein explains that these "English researchers were the first to state that certain binding peculiarities and the techniques employed could lead to far-reaching conclusions regarding the provenance of books and, in many cases, to the discovery of previously unknown authors" (1982). Some of the earliest scientific investigations into bookbinding practice and reverse engineering of bookbinding technique were conceived in the context of textual criticism, not in the hope of arranging a history of the production of decorative art objects.

When bookbinding scholarship looked to bindings and books as art objects in their own right, emphasis tended to shift to examples of "fine" binding, and the chronologies, influences (artistic and regional), implements, and hierarchies of tooling and adorning practice took the focus. Esther Griffin White's summary of works shown in "three exhibitions of the work of American 'art' bookbinders" offers a reason for turn-of-the-century interest in book-making as fine art – namely, the influence of the arts and crafts movement, and enthusiasm for the growing number of private press operations (White, 1904). It was a time when learned societies recognized and valued the labor involved in making a book beautiful, and when commonplace books could be approached as relatively easy to produce owing to the industrial advancements of the 19th century.

Richard Ettinghausen's review of the exhibition "History of Bookbinding," shown at the Baltimore Museum of Art, 1957-1958, gives a concise view of mid-twentieth-century interest in bookbinding and the state of the scholarship (1959). Ettinghausen discusses the sharing of a visual grammar between Near Eastern and European bindings. He posits the "sumptuous bindings with gold, silver,

ivory, and jewels," the long tradition of leather binding, and the "spectacular

contemporary bindings" as incidences of binding's major role in craft history.

The emphasis of this history is on cover design – jewelwork, leatherwork, and the

like. It is not, ironically enough, interested in binding – that is, sewing –

practice.

Frederick Bearman, writing on medieval chemise bindings, addressed the

problem of focusing too heavily upon decoration in binding historiography: "On

the one hand, the study of surface decoration has greatly enhanced our

understanding of the function of early decorated bindings within the wider

context of the history of the book; on the other, it has shed little light on

undecorated bindings or the materials and structural components that make up

the medieval bound book" (1996). Decoration can be something of a distraction.

Plainer objects force us to look at their materials and form, and at the craft

behind their execution, for interest and topics of study.

Michele Valerie Cloonan has sagely noted that "bookbindings are intended

primarily to protect the sheets of a codex; this role is structural. Bindings are also

decorative ... the decorative elements have been, at times, perceived as so

important that they have overshadowed the structural elements" (1995). Cloonan

discusses the ramifications for conservation and curatorial practice when

bindings are envisioned and received as fine art rather than functional

craftsmanship. But this outlook also has influence on the role and system of

registration for bindings. There are differences in what we record about our art

history versus our cultural heritage.

Overall, historical inquiry into bookbinding practice and bookbinding artifacts has taken two main approaches: 1) an art historical track, looking at design work and the evolution of fine bindings, and 2) a bibliographic track, investigating binding practice for its interaction with texts and publications.

Training for book catalogers and the development of local cataloging policy largely depends on the answer to the question: are we cataloging art or artifacts? This answer may come from a school of thought as discussed above, or it may be the product of one's training or institution-specific policy and mandate. By looking directly at education materials and cataloging policy, we can gain a further sense of what is most valued as a research element by the institutions and persons responsible for bookbinding registration.

Chapter 4. Current Training for Catalogers in

Describing Bindings and Local Library Practice/Policy

<u>Training</u>

David Pearson remarks that knowledge of bookbinding "remains an area in which even rare book specialists often feel under-equipped or under-trained, and one that is often poorly served in catalogues" (2005). Training for rare book specialists in libraries and other book repositories in North America will usually come through one of the following venues: post-graduate or certificate university programs, continuing education seminars offered through the University of Virginia's Rare Book School, on-the-job exposure, book-making workshops, and independent learning.

Only a handful of graduate programs offer coursework or learning tracks in special collections and rare books librarianship, and even fewer offer cataloging curricula that focus on describing rare materials. The University of Illinois' Midwest Book and Manuscript Program uniquely includes a course devoted to the subject, "Rare Book Cataloging." According to its syllabus, the course is "an introduction to the cataloging of printed monographs from the hand-press period ... [following] the standards set forth in *Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Materials (Books)*" (Olson, 2012). Instruction in the description of bookbindings is limited to a single-session course segment that covers all note areas outlined in *DCRM(B),* leaving an arguably small amount of instruction devoted to cataloging bookbindings. Moreover, one's knowledge of the history of the book (and more specifically of historically arranged bookbinding features) is not a product of this course – this context must be supplied from other educational sources.

Rare Book School offers the following seminars in the history and description of bookbindings: Introduction to the History of Bookbinding; Medieval & Early Renaissance Bookbinding Structures; Advanced Seminar in the History of Bookbinding; The Description of Bookbindings; Publishers' Bookbindings, 1830-1910. It is a compact but thorough acquaintance with the current history of Western bookbinding from the invention of the codex to the industrial revolution. Specifically, the topics included in the Description course are: the materials used in bookbindings; structural and decorative techniques; the description of binding styles; and the relevant literature. The course offers a broad and succinct overview of the techniques and resources available for describing bookbindings that is appropriate to application in a library setting. It has been offered once to date (in 2009), and instructed a student body of eight (of whom not all attendees were professional librarians).   One of the realities of Rare Book School's non-accredited, continuing education platform is that its rather costly (2013 tuition rates are 1095-1195 USD per course) programming is typically only undertaken by working professionals. Many courses are offered infrequently, and class size is small. The influence that Rare Book School's offerings have on enhancing cataloging of bookbindings in United States research libraries is limited by their attendance.

Local Policy

In addition to training, the binding descriptions that catalogers provide rely upon local policies that reflect the character of patrons served by the

institutional mission, and also fit within the scope of budget and resource allowances. For instance, the Beinecke's cataloging policy states explicitly that "binding is touched upon only if it is either contemporary (or nearly contemporary), an extra fine modern one by a well known artistic binder, displays characteristics for which 655 binding tracings are required, or if specifically requested by the curator." Later re-bindings and pedestrian examples of the craft are altogether ignored by institutional priorities.

The Newberry Library has an outdated cataloging policy that does not necessarily reflect current practice (Ballinger, 2013). It does, however, give the following guidelines for describing bindings, which may reflect the appearance of older catalog records, and may influence the legacy of current practice: add subject and name tracing when a specific binder is identified; "note if [the] number of physical units differs from number in which [the] work was actually issued" [e.g., two or more publications bound together, or publications have been broken up]; note "binding errors"; "color and nature of covering, summary of decoration"; "approximate date and name of binder"; "repeat binder's spine title in binding note." These policies reflect three aspects of binding interest: 1) the affect of binding practice on the transmission of texts; 2) the agency of specific makers; 3) the appearance and historical arrangement of the binding work.

The Morgan Library's Printed Books & Bindings Collection does "not have an official written policy on binding descriptions and over the years the level of binding description in the catalogue records has varied greatly" (McQuillen, 2013). Current working practice is to include description or identification of:

date, decoration and material, dimensions, sewing supports, binder(s), spine, endbands, edge treatments, furniture, endpapers, and repairs. However, many older descriptions maintained in the catalog will be skeletal. Discrepancies in the range of content available in bookbinding descriptions affect usability of the search interface and intellectual access to materials.

The Folger Shakespeare Library, as well, does not have a formal written policy for describing bookbindings, but for its more valued holdings, cataloging staff "at least say something about covering material," and will document a publisher's binding (Leslie, 2013). Minimums are important to note as a baseline for both user expectations and professional perceptions of information value.

How does the nature of the field of bibliography, available training in rare book cataloging and binding classification, and the guidelines laid out in local policy affect, influence, or guide the metadata available about bookbindings in United States research libraries? A content analysis of the catalog records of five prominent institutions is given in the next chapter.

Chapter 5. Analysis of the Data Collected from

Research Library Catalogs

Data Collection

Within the catalog of each institution selected, a random sampling of 50 binding descriptions were analyzed for the appearance of data concerning: material(s), color(s), artistic genre, cover design, edge treatment, endpaper(s), approximate date of manufacture, place of manufacture, identified maker(s), sewing/folding structure(s), accessory features, and preservation/conservation needs and treatments. (See Appendix B for examples of records sampled.) These categories were selected to be in keeping with areas for descriptive content suggested by *DCRM(B)*, and to provide a holistic assessment of the binding object. More specific features, such as the application of the turn-ins, binder sequencing, and sewing supports, were consumed by wider categories where appropriate.

The database of each institution was searched for the phrase "Binding" in the genre/form heading field (MARC field 655 preferred target, or else any 6xx field for all subjects) to retrieve records that used a Binding vocabulary index term from the *RBMS Controlled Vocabularies,* and thus hopefully had an associated binding description. Irrelevant hits were discarded. Between the five collections, this random selection approach yielded sample records with imprints ranging from the 15th to 20th centuries. Object types included print and manuscript works, traditional publications, ephemera, and a few artist's books. Both fine and trade publications were represented. Both fancy and unknown provenances were included.

Data was collected in a spreadsheet, with a row for each record noting the

institution, the record's unique identifier in its database, and whether a descriptor that fell into one of the named categories appeared in that record. Only one instance of a category was necessary for that record to be tallied as an example of it. The results are given below. Graphical representation of the data is available in Appendix A.

Material

Material was the most often notated element of bindings, with 83.6% (209/250) of records giving some mention of material type (usually leather, vellum, cloth, or paper). Designation of material(s) used in binding appeared more than twice as often as any other element, and covering material is by far the predominant identifier. In cases where the covering material is not named, it can often be inferred. For instance, an armorial binding is most likely made of leather; an accordion-fold structure is most likely made of paper.

Materials used elsewhere in the binding process – such as what threads composed the endbands, what sewing supports were employed, etc. – were infrequently noted, unless given in the context of another descriptor, such as a silk bookmark, or brass furniture.

Color

Color was the third most-often cited feature. 39.6% (99/250) of records surveyed included a mention of color in their binding description. Color identification may be for the covering material, stamping or tooling, endpapers,

or other elements. Again, only one mentioned color attribute was required for a record to be counted under this category, and frequently, the only named color in a record is "gold" or "gilt." Color is also often given as an adjective alongside the covering material, such as "green cloth." Color naming was not usually applied to features other than cover material and cover design. (One might have expected color to identify the endbands, endpapers, and edge treatments, for instance.)

Artistic Genre

The artistic genre may be a style of bookbinding, such as "pictorial publisher's cloth," or "Cambridge-style tooling," or it may be a wider artistic style, such as "Art nouveau." Only 6% (15/250) of records surveyed included an explicit designation of an artistic genre. Naming artistic genre(s) helps to contextualize the book as a cultural artifact within greater social and cultural contexts, and can contribute to deepened understanding of the book genre and further cross-disciplinary applications of its study.

The majority of records falling into this category gave mention of a publisher's cloth binding. The emphasis on identifying publisher's cloth may be the product of a recent surge in scholarship on these bindings, on the challenges of bibliography for the 19th century, and on nineteenth-century popular culture more generally. In this way, cataloging practice is responding to a trend in research, but not quite anticipating or inciting future areas of investigation.

Cover Design

Cover design was the second most prevalent element mentioned, with 40.8% (102/250) of records surveyed making a reference to non-structural cover design elements, such as tools, stamps, and printing. This category included treatments applied to the spine and turn-in area, but excluded added elements such as onlays. Since much of the developed history of bookbinding has emphasized graphic design and decoration, a strong representation in catalog records of this kind of data can be expected.

Edge Features and Treatments

Only 8.4% (21/250) of records mentioned edge features and treatments. Possible topics may have included gilding, sprinkling, fore-edge paintings, un-trimmed or trimmed edges, marbling, and more. While not all book objects have historically or artistically relevant edge appearances, edges are an infrequent topic in the binding descriptions studied.

Endpapers

Endpapers were recorded in 10% of records (25/250), with decorated papers accounting for the majority of mentions. All of the records surveyed with endpaper descriptions gave a declaration of the paper itself, not its method of integration with or adherence to the book object. For example, Morgan record ID 53113 states, "gilt endpapers with lavender flowers." Folger record ID 186913 says the book has "marbled endpapers," and nothing further.

Date of Manufacture

An approximate or exact date of binding manufacture was given in 25.6% (64/250) of records surveyed. There was a distinct trend towards noting when a binding was contemporary with the printing of the book's text-leaves, or when it was a modern re-binding, but rarely were non-original or non-recent binding dates suggested. The Folger Shakespeare Library would assign the vague terms "early" and "later" to their binding holdings, but of course these phrases are relative to the object in question. They are not as concrete and discernible as the phrase, "circa 17th century." A high degree of contextualization necessary for interpreting data hinders its ability to be repurposed.

Place of Manufacture

Only 3.6% (9/250) of records localized the activity of bookbinding.

Maker(s)

Information on binders and other binding maker(s), such as cover designers, were given in 14.4% of records (36/250). Reference to the presence of a binder's ticket (without a transcribed name) met the criteria for this category. Named binders and designers were even rarer, and most relied upon internal evidence, such as a signature, for identification.

Structures

Sewing and folding structures were described in 8% of the records

(20/250). Generally, structures were noted when they deviated from a traditional codex format. This was especially true with accordion-fold books surveyed in the Beinecke sample. In only one instance were the sewing structures associated with a codex format mentioned, by giving reference to raised bands.

Accessory features

Accessory and added elements appeared in 26% (65/250) of the binding descriptions. Non-integral features such as clasps and other furniture, ties, labels and lettering pieces, beadwork, embroidery, and aesthetic endbands are included in this category. This is another instance where the lack of presence of an element would naturally result in absence of its mention in a catalog record, though 26% seems a low rate to have all bindings with accessory features properly recorded.

Preservation Treatments and Needs

5.6% (14/250) of records included information on previous preservation/conservation treatments or current condition and preservation needs. Besides the necessary tracking of procedures and a preservation queue, noting the state of an object – as consolidated or deteriorated – has implications for access, handling, and reading room operation. Additionally, unraveled, exposed, or otherwise bare bindings may provide clues for study and education about binding practice that sound objects cannot owing to their own obscuring

factors.

Indexing

Since index terms were used as the criteria for retrieval of relevant records, this study could not evaluate the prevalence of in-depth indexing for binding features in catalog records. However, it is beneficial here to note a particular trend.

Institutions tended to take an index-heavy or a description-heavy approach to cataloging, rarely both. For instance, Newberry record ID 166185 has a binding note of, "blue silk over boards, with slits on upper and lower boards for ties; binding reinforced with leaf of printed waste paper, with Gothic letters; all edges gilt; marbled endpapers." Yet, the binding is indexed only under "Printed waste (Binding)," whereas additionally one might have provided normalized terminology for accessing the silk covering material, the former presence of ties, the Gothic typeface, gilt edges, and marbled papers. One salient element was selected instead of an in-depth approach to indexing, and access to most features is limited to a keyword search of the note field.

By contrast, the American Antiquarian society performs in-depth indexing of binding features, but often does not otherwise describe them in a prose note. These procedures have ramifications for how library researchers engage with the catalog database – how they retrieve and sort information about objects of study. Additionally, the discrepancy between methodology from institution to institution affects user expectations and diminishes the level of intuition involved

in information-seeking behavior.

Discussion

Overall, the binding descriptions surveyed used internal evidence for their content. That is, generally, only what could be observed or determined from the object at hand was recorded. Thus, dating and localizing of bindings, which requires external examples for arrangement and an art historical education for an informed cataloger to make visual judgments, was often overlooked.

Some features, of course, are not present in all bookbindings. Accessories and onlays may not be described simply because they are not present. Preservation treatments may not be necessary. Endpapers and edge treatments may not be of much historical or artistic relevance. Still, all but one of the categories examined fell below the 50th percentile in appearance, and we can think of library catalog data regarding bookbindings as focusing on covering material and finer decorative applications.

Chapter 6. Contemporary Literature that

Uses Bookbindings as Evidence

The following review of contemporary literature on bookbindings, and/or works that significantly use bookbindings for evidence and discussion, will serve as a basis for determining user research needs by establishing trends and methodologies in modern research. Setting this baseline will allow us to compare the metadata offered by United States research libraries with the data requirements of current research projects. Identifying gaps and discrepancies can enable an informed revision of practice, training, local policies, and national guidelines.

Several trends exist in the emphases of contemporary literature on bookbindings. One is the **employment of under-studied material genres**. Carmencho Arregui, Monica Langwe Berg, and Denise Gid have done excellent work investigating material forms that are typically not treated by scholarship. They raise questions about documentation of disremembered book varieties, and provide a reminder of the multifarious value in all cultural objects.

Arregui, Carmencho. "Old Italian Paper Bindings" (2011)

Carmencho begins by saying that "important books are rarely bound in decorated papers," which leaves these bindings subject to neglect. Thus, he presents cover scans and brief descriptions of 17 paper bindings to entice further study. His examples are wood-block printed, embossed, gilded, pulp dyed, letterpressed, sponge printed, and gold or black tooled. The variety of techniques and patterning invites questions and further investigation. Here is an under-documented, under-collected genre presented for craft inspiration and historical

inquiry.

Berg, Monica Langwe. "Limp Bindings from Tallinn" (2008)

Berg became interested in limp leather and parchment bindings owing to their previous lack of attention in the literature on bookbinding. She selected volumes at the City Archives of Tallinn for study based on their diversity of sewing structures. Through close examination of sewing stations, she noted re-use of materials, and conjectures in this article on one of the main functional advantages of these long stitch, chain stitch, and tacketed limp bindings – they are easier to repair than adhesive, hard-cover bindings.

Berg's work has two main emphases: 1) The originality of the scholarship, 2) sewing patterns and sewing supports. She thoroughly documents the sewing patterns of eight bindings, as well as thread and cover material, in her self-published book of the same name. Literary warrant is a common requirement for the formulation of normalized terminology in library and museum catalogs – but might research and researchers be assisted by offering data on features and topics not yet treated in the literature?

Having five days of travel to complete her study at the Archives, quick selection of representative objects was important to sparing time for Berg's research. The realities of reading room operation, travel, funding, and professional leave all affect the ability of researchers to engage directly with objects, and the observational strategies that they undertake. The more information that can be accessed, organized, and reviewed remotely, the less the

burden is on physical handling and scheduling. In Berg's case, knowledge of general sewing structures was crucial to her selection of resources.

Gid, Denise. *Catalogue des reliures Francaises estampees a froid Xve-XVIe siecle de la Bibliotheque Mazarine* (1984)

A detailed cataloging of the decoration on colloquial bindings forms the core of Gid's work. Working with the holdings of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century bookworks in the Bibliotheque Mazarine, she discusses the blind stamped leather bindings common in the period. By their very ordinariness – the simple, often imitated and under-inventive appearance of common goods – these books are studied en mass to facilitate a discovery of binding practice that can be geographically and chronologically arranged in ways that fine bindings do not allow owing to the nature of their intentionally artistic design and their relatively low numbers.

Detailed documentation of physical appearances of a binding's make-up is another vogue tool of investigation. The researchers who take this approach benefit from diversity in data collection, and they inspire questions regarding value added to the selection process by expanded details in the library catalog.

Bearman, Frederick. "The Origins and Significance of Two Late Medieval Textile Chemise Bindings in the Walters Art Gallery" (1996)

In his essay, Bearman looks at the following information about these bindings to elucidate their significance: number of leaves and how they are gathered; joint adherence and function; stitching patterns; edge treatments; textile and thread color; endband formation and core material; dimension of the squares; sewing stations; lacing channels; straps, catches, and other fastenings; turn-in formation; method of rounding; furniture; chemise adherence; selvedges; fringe/textile decoration; and localizing features. Each is important to appreciating the work of the binder and the variances that inform historical value.

Ohta, Alison. "Filigree Bindings of the Mamluk Period" (2004)

Ohta discusses leather filigree work in North African bindings around the 14th and 15th century, exploring cross-disciplinary and multi-regional influences. In her illustrations, she details materials used for covers as well as the pattern and shape of decorative elements to draw up a chronology of extant pieces. The emphasis of her research is on transitions in style, and what she builds through careful recording is a history of design.

Foot, Mirjam M. "English Decorated Bookbindings of the Fifteenth Century" (1989)

Offering a summary of extant examples of and evidence for the practice of bookbinding in Britain during the 15th century, Foot's article presents the following details: sewing and adhesion techniques; what source materials were

used for boards, glues, treatments, sewing, and more; finishing techniques; the color and character of endbands; evidence of furniture; the material and application of endleaves; presence and location of furniture; the nature of the book trade during the period; typical cover designs and tooling patterns. The majority of the article is devoted to a detailed discussion of specific bindings and their cover tools. With this thorough investigation, she is able to track the shared use of specific instruments, and thus establish a history of working relationships.

A similar inquiry could be begun remotely, if databases of book objects consistently provide detailed metadata about and/or images of cover designs. A union catalog environment furthers this end.

Krupp, Andrea. *Bookcloth in England and America, 1823-50* (2008)

Krupp used the Library Company of Philadelphia's holdings in nineteenth-century publisher's cloth bindings, and compared the date of publication of the text to the grain pattern in the bookcloth. She explains in her introduction, "cloth-bound books themselves are a rich source of empirical information, and repositories … hold them in plentiful supply" (Krupp, 2008, pp. 1-2). Her data is drawn from an in-house database of the Library Company, in which each book is described by "over sixty fields of information that record the details of the book's structure and appearance." Krupp's investigation was built upon existing data about bookbindings collected by a library repository. After sorting and analyzing library data, she was able to establish a chronological timeline of the development of graining techniques and patterns, and to highlight trade

relationships between different manufacturers. Her work would have been halted or severely slowed had The Library Company not undertaken to collect and make available data on grain patterns at the time of cataloging. This is a level of description that goes beyond identification of the covering material (as cloth) and delves into its material-specific peculiarities.

The **cross-disciplinary use of bookbindings as evidence** is a growing trend in scholarship. Bookbinding is a textile craft; it is leatherwork and woodwork, metal casting, and more. Researchers can use bookbindings to better understand the history of related technologies. The examples below encourage us to reconsider the medley of applications for library catalog data on bookbindings.

Boudalis, Georgios. "From fabric to bookbinding: the technological background of the codex structure" (2012)

In his talk, Boudalis made the point that the technologies which underlie construction of a codex book – sewing, woodwork, leatherwork, etc. – were previously established and refined at the time of the codex's invention. Codex production relies upon other industries not just for materials, but for skills and knowledge as well. Using etymological commonalities for terms describing materials and techniques in bookbinding and other crafts, Boudalis believes that these are similar, if not same, talents and tools. His research implies that looking at the make-up of early (pre-seventeenth century) codices can help us gain insight into late medieval embroidery and basketry. Thus, thorough registration

of bookbinding objects could have applications for studying other cultural artifacts and the history of their design.

Butler, Betsy. "There Ain't Anything in This World That Sells a Book Like a Pretty Cover: Nineteenth-Century Publisher's Bookbindings in Library Collections" (2010)

Butler succinctly discusses the relevance of publisher's bookbindings to understanding the aesthetic tastes and popular culture of their contemporary consumers. In this instance, the design of decoration has far-reaching cross-disciplinary applications. She offers a chronological outline of technologies and design trends to inform better cataloging of the objects, placing strong emphasis on the situation of book cover design within the decorative arts. The impact of social and economic changes on material goods, such as the sobriety necessitated by the Civil War, are given in detail. Technological advances in textiles and dyestuffs are detailed for their impact on bookmaking. Purchasing habits and marketing are described in relationship to the appearance of the covers. Specific artistic genres are named with accompanying illustrations. Overall, Butler's article highlights material nuance, color, and cover design as most relevant to historical understanding of this book genre.

The **intentionally archaeological examination of bookbindings** is a growing method of inquiry, and one that approaches the book object through quite a different lens than traditional bibliography. Scholars such as Barbara

Eike Dürrfeld and J.A. Szirmai seek to reverse engineer the making of bookbinding artifacts. Hille and Merian's work especially highlights the utility of recording a book object's state of conservation to selecting resources for bookbinding research.

Dürrfeld, Eike Barbara. "Terra Incognita: Toward a Historiography of Book Fastenings and Book Furniture" (2000)

Following a literature review that tackles what research methodologies are most effective in discovering information about fastenings and furniture, Dürrfeld lays out the following program for scholarship: establish a "common vocabulary"; cooperate across projects and across disciplines; take an archaeological approach that situates fastenings and furniture technologically as well as culturally; build a databank around extant bindings that are original, firmly dated, and localized; investigate primary sources on the trade of materials and the bookbinding craft in archives and pictorial representations; make use of partial archaeological finds; and build binding models.

The following data would thus contribute to this scholarly endeavor if made available in library catalogs: use of a controlled vocabulary employed by the non-library community, or that has been mapped semantically to phrasing in the scholarship; notation of binding data and region of production; include subject access for binding resources in archives finding aids; and record of incomplete objects of pieces of books.

Szirmai, J.A. *The Archaeology of medieval bookbinding* (1999)

  Szirmai's canonical handbook of medieval binding practice looks heavily at sewing patterns, sewing supports, and sewing materials. It is an archaeology of binding as such, not an art history of cover design. Between Szirmai's pioneering work and the recent research of Nicholas Pickwoad into describing the nuances of binding practice, of Georgios Boudalis and the textile context of sewing and wrapping structures, and others like them, there is a shift in thinking about bookbinding investigations that is veering towards a more refined archaeological, rather than bibliographic or art historical, methodology. Serving these new archaeologist users with library catalog data may necessitate a depth of description based on practical knowledge of binding practice.

Hille, Jenny and Sylvie L. Merian. "The Armenian Endband: History and Technique" (2011)

  Hille and Merian examined 17 Armenian bindings held in New York-area research libraries, looking at partially unravelled and damaged endbands to determine their construction. Contextualized by familiarity with hundreds of bound Armenian manuscripts, the authors are aware of common physical characteristics, such as the distance of the projection of the endband off the text-block, that contributed to their understanding of regional practice. For their work, the dating and localization of bindings were key, as was the identification and selection of a specific form of deterioration.

Chapter 7. Conclusion

Several trends can be seen in the contemporary research on or using bookbindings. 1) Information becomes more meaningful through quantity, and determination of customs can be gleaned through large sets of metadata. 2) Detailed data that is structured according to a set schema, rather than presented in variable prose, better facilitates knowledge discovery. 3) Information not typically represented in library catalogs – description of commonplace bindings, of structures, of manufacture date and locality, details of tools and decorations – is information that is relevant to today's binding researchers.

The data collected shows that the most commonly recorded categories of bookbinding description are covering material and cover design, with much room for improvement in elaborating on specific decorations and their artistic contexts, expanding color designations, describing edges, endpapers, and accessories, identifying makers, localizing and dating bindings, and notating the state of consolidation or relative decay. Enhanced content in each category could be valuable in different ways, and the variety of research topics and areas of focus in the contemporary literature suggests that a holistic, multifaceted approach to building binding descriptions and indexes in library catalog data would support increased information awareness and enable research queries.

Discrepancies between data offered by an institution's catalog and the research needs of its patrons may be a product of: a lack of assessment of user needs; a content structure based on outdated schools of thought; the training available to catalogers and their knowledge of binding practice or history; low institutional resources (human, financial, or technical); or, as is most likely, a

combination of the above.

Each repository's staffing and workflow situation is unique, and offering prescriptive suggestions for changes in library practice would not be productive. But it is hoped that this assessment of the catalog data versus the atmosphere of current research and associated data requirements will act as a catalyst for informed re-examination of local practice and policy. A few suggestions of avenues for reform and reconsideration will follow in the concluding chapter. These are generic conceptual changes, not utilitarian solutions.

Chapter 8. Suggestions for Enhancements to Library Practice

Expansion of Curricula

If current training opportunities within the United States library community (namely, post-graduate education and Rare Book School) are insufficient to providing a holistic understanding of bookbindings, then study in other disciplines, such as experiential craft practice and archaeological methodology, can supplement the cataloger's education. Either by incorporating these elements into standard curricula, or undertaking additional independent training, a well-rounded course of studying the bookbinding artifact that goes beyond the field of bibliography can elevate cataloger output.

Human Resources

Where cataloging staff expertise presents a hindrance to enhanced content generation, then changes to how libraries engage with human resources can amplify the use of available abilities. Institutions may employ or otherwise enlist (through internships and other cooperative working relationships) the assistance of non-librarians with the technical expertise to describe the elements of bindings that may require specialized knowledge. Opening up internship and fellowship opportunities to students of the book craft and its history, rather than only students of the information sciences, provides a more variegated set of perspectives on the book object. Concerns regarding data and database integrity when using non-professional labor can be mitigated through workflows that allow for non-professional content generation combined with professional encoding and data entry.

Collection of User-Supplied Data

Thinking still of the expansion of individual knowledge-bases in the data collection process, an institution may seek methods for harvesting and controlling user-supplied information. This could be a catalog interface that allows for commenting and/or tagging, coupled with a mechanism for staff review of this information. One might use an exit interview to allow researchers an avenue for contributing information to the catalog about the objects that they have consulted and studied in depth.

Progressive Approach to Cataloging

Informal correspondence during this study routinely illuminated a practical hindrance to information availability: that revision of current practice does not affect data available about book objects that have already been cataloged. As has been mentioned in this paper, data inconsistency has affects on both usability and retrieval within the catalog interface. This problem relies upon the guiding assumption that books are cataloged as a one-time procedure. Though realities of handling, staffing, and project funding may make this approach most feasible, a more progressive attitude towards information recording, wherein cataloging is seen as an ongoing activity (and workflows and statistics are built around *this* assumption) has been shown to have benefits for furthering bibliographic research (Ascher, 2009).

Access to and Manipulation of Catalog Data

The review of contemporary literature on bookbindings presented in this paper featured several examples of research projects that worked with datasets remotely in order to discern trends and make historiographic judgments. And other scholars use presumably trifling information in ground-breaking ways. It is crucial to these projects that available data be fully accessible, and that instruments for its manipulation exist. Ensuring that all relevant data about bookbindings is displayed, searchable, and sortable through the catalog interface can be a significant step in bridging the gap between the library database and its users' research needs. Allowing exporting of data elements and/or object records provides possibilities for re-purpose, and grants researchers the ability to exploit library data in ways that are prudent to their work.

A symbiotic relationship between libraries and scholarship working with bookbinding artifacts will help facilitate the unraveling of complex information and speed the development of knowledge.

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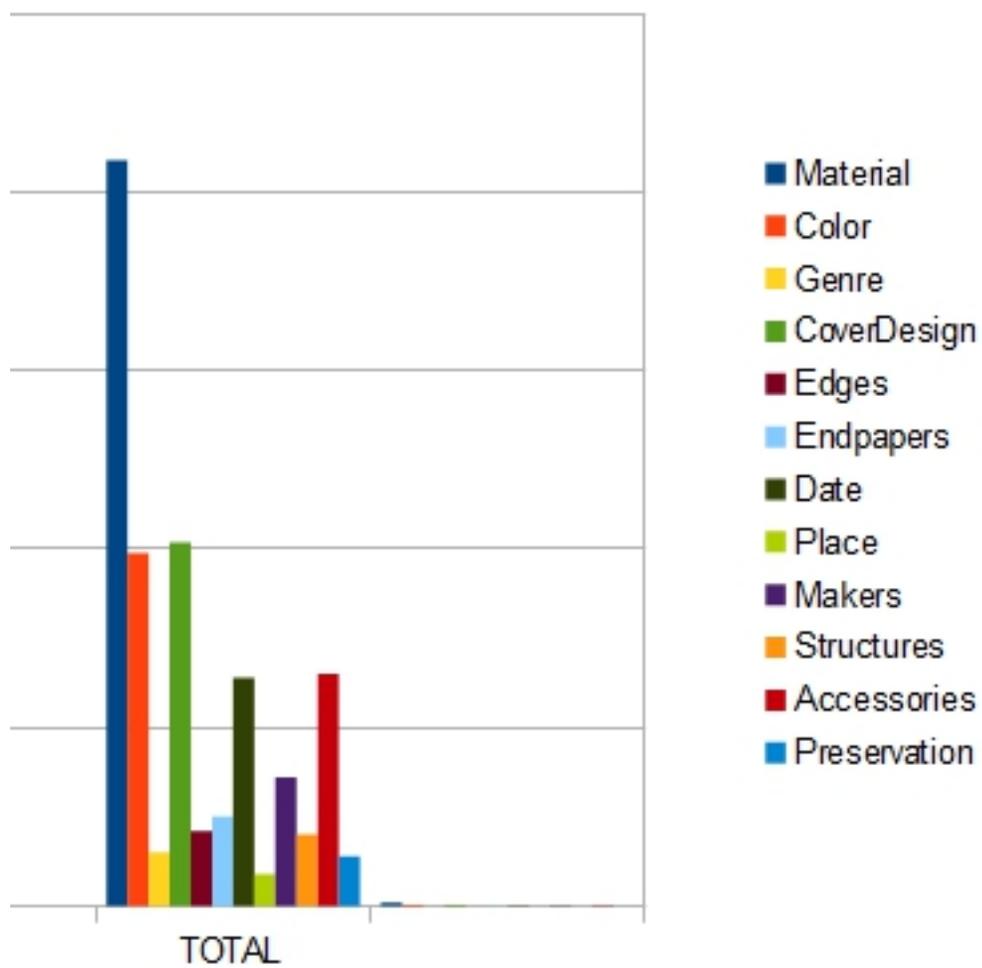
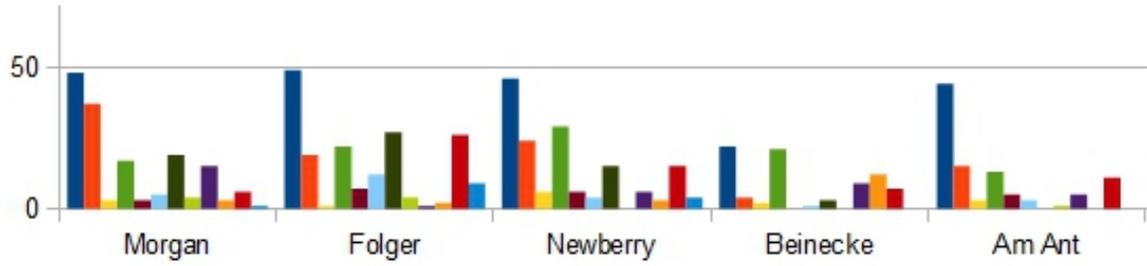J.A. Szirmai, *The Archaeology of medieval bookbinding* (Farnham: Ashgate

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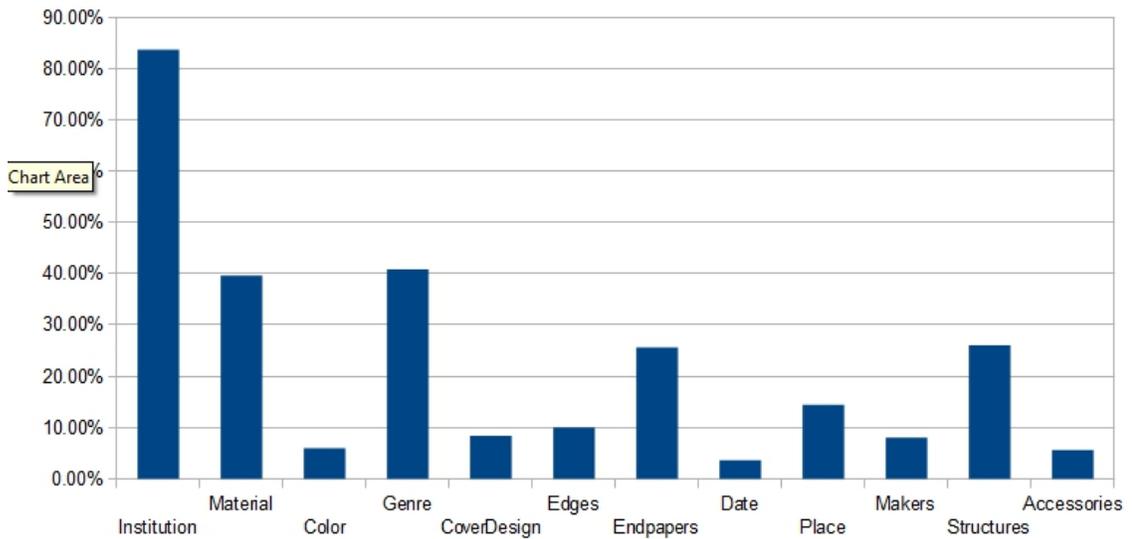Esther Griffin White, "Some American Art Bookbinders," *Brush and Pencil*, Vol. 13, No. 5 (Feb., 1904), 373-379, 389.

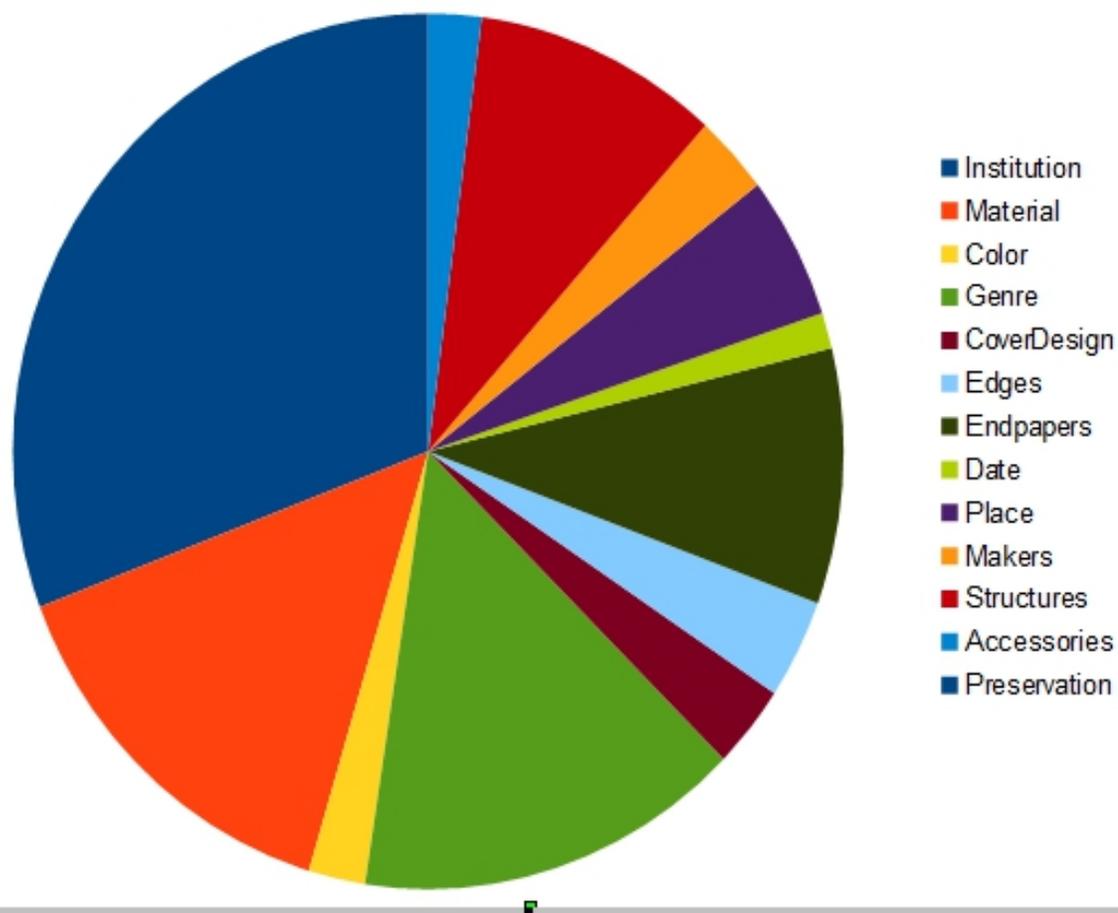**Appendix A. Graphical Representation of the**

Data Collected

Data Totals

Total Percentages

Total Percentages

Appendix B. Samples of Records Surveyed

Newberry Library Record ID 166429

Author: [Mann, Edwin John, b. 1812.](#)

Title: The deaf and dumb, or, A collection of articles relating to the condition of deaf mutes : their education, and the principal asylums devoted to their instruction / by Edwin John Mann, late pupil of the Hartford Asylum.

Published: Boston : Published by D.K. Hitchcock, 1836.

Physical Description: 312 p. : ill. ; 19 cm.

Subject (LCSH): [Deaf.](#)

[Deaf --Education.](#)

Subject (Other): Massachusetts Boston 1836 Imprints.

Genre/Form: [Publishers' advertisements --Massachusetts --Boston --1836.](#)

[Labels (Binding) --Massachusetts --Boston --1836.](#)

Other Name: [Hitchcock, David K. (David Keyes), b. 1813.](#)

[Brown, Richard Holbrook, 1927- former owner.](#)

References: Checklist Amer. imprints, 38725

Former Ownership History: Former owner: Richard H. Brown.

Binding Note: Publisher's cloth binding with paper spine label.

Notes: Publisher's advertisement [2] p. precedes frontispiece and t.p.

LC Card Number: 09015137

Persistent link to this page: https://i-share.carli.illinois.edu/nby/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?DB=local&v1=1&BBRecID=166429

Folger Shakespeare Library Record ID 89755

Uniform Title: Bible. Latin. Vulgate. 1486.

Title: Biblia que[m] retinet sequit[ur] nunc metricus ordo.

Created/Published: [Speyer : Peter Drach], 1486.

Description: [1164] p. ; 29 cm. (fol.)

Notes: Title from distich in colophon (leaf X6v).

Place of publication and publisher statement from Goff, date of publication from colophon (leaf X6v).

Signatures: a-2c^8, 2d^6, 2e-2z^8, A-E^8, F-G^{10}, H-T^8, V-X^6, Y^8, 2A-2E^8 (r3 signed q3).

Printed in 2 columns.

Capital spaces with guide letters.

The 1st leaf is blank.

Folger Copy: Folger copy: leaf a1, blank, lacking; edges have been trimmed, affecting manuscript notes.

Large initial on leaf a2r, in blue with white modeling, within a half red, half green frame, with gilt ground bearing impression of bird and flower design; initials at beginning of a few of the Books, in interlocking red and blue paint; smaller initials provided in red or blue, alternating irregularly, and capital strokes in red throughout the book; a few paragraph marks; sign of a wheel at foot of leaf a5r in same red paint.

Early manuscript notes and commentary in margins, underlining and brackets mostly in brown ink; manuscript corrections and interlineary notes in text; manuscript correction of signature on leaves r3 and O2 of headline on leaf Q3, in brown ink.

Bookstamp at foot of last leaf and on leaf g3, with a hand lighting a candle and motto "Plus de lumière"; bookplates of Christopher C. Yates and of Nell Rose Wheeler and Charles Van Cise Wheeler (no. 331 in the Walpole Galleries sale catalog of Charles Van Cise Wheeler's library, July 1919); purchased in 1919.

Later pigskin German binding blind tooled with floral and medallion borders, central panel on front cover depicting the Virgin, God and Christ; 2 brass clasps; 2 paper spine labels, one on top of the other, the top one bearing inscription in red paint and brown ink, reading "S. Biblia Lat. cum nom: Hebr. interp."; date of printing inscribed in lower pt. of spine; too fragile to be microfilmed.

Folger Accession: cs855

Cited In: Goff B-582.

BM 15th cent., II, p. 495 (IB.8578) and I, p. 119 (note).

GW 4259.

Associated Name(s): Yates, Christopher C., 1778?-1848, former owner.

Wheeler, Charles V. (Charles Van Cise), b. 1866, former owner.

Drach, Peter, d. 1504, printer.

Production place(s): Germany --Speyer.

Genre(s)/Form(s): Illuminations.

Annotations (Provenance)

Pigskin bindings (Binding) --Germany.

Other Title: Biblia Latina

URL for this Record: http://shakespeare.folger.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?
BBID=89755