A sense of déjà vu

Stations of a Bookbinder’s Life:
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Who would have thought?
Beginnings

- Introduced to as student by John Dean at Johns Hopkins
  - Rehousing and book repair
  - Challenging production environment
  - Nurturing environment and real look at field as profession due to apprenticeship program being on site.
  - Volunteering with Paper Conservator.
  - “Once a twit, always a twit”
A First Look at the Old World

- **Nuremberg**
  - Return to old stomping ground
    - Haunted galleries as small child
  - Learning the basics of the German binding and “the trade”
    - Hierarchical
    - Steeped in traditions
  - Experience working with old materials
    - Not just blank books
    - Variety of structures
    - First encounters with leather
A First Look at the Old World

○ Formed decision to “return” to Germany to learn trade towards career in conservation
  ● Lack of opportunities to learn in US
    ○ Columbia program still young
    ○ No formal schools/programs in US
    ○ No formal apprenticeship system, and informal hard to come by
  ● Opportunity to learn about “old” culture since emigration to US as a child
    ○ Where do I belong
  ● Opportunity to learn in a system steeped in tradition
    ○ Very different from current system of learning
      ● Regulated in terms of learning outcomes and practice of the trade
      ● Ensured minimum level of competency
      ● Vast change in landscape since 1987

Return to US: Finding a “Meister”

- Application to trade “hand” binderies
  - Apprenticeship required for conservation programs
  - Definition of “hand” bindery very broad
  - “Letters of application” and resume
    - Hand-written…
  - Letters of interest and interview trip
A “Meister”: Kunstbuchbinderei D. Klein

- “Artist’s colony” in heart of Ruhr Valley
  - Exposure to creative people
  - Wide range of “treatments.”
  - Small family run bindery
    - Chance to learn more
  - In heart of large industrial area
    - Area in decline and transformation

Apprenticeship / Lehre

- Regimented learning
  - Hierarchical and linear
  - Same skill sets nationwide
  - Learning by doing/repetition
    - Production environment
    - Lots of “library binding,” all by hand
  - Trade School

Life of a “Lehrling”

- Starting at the bottom
  - Sweeping, cleaning, sorting
- Working in large batches
  - Individual or as part of “team”
- Blind obedience
  - The master is always right, …
- Keeping notes
  - Journals part of formal requirements
  - Still useful today
Life of a “Lehrling”

- **Trade school**
  - Filled in gaps between what was required and what was learned in shop
  - Learning to work with the big toys
    - Exposure to industrial binding and equipment
    - Change and adjust 2 meter guillotine blade alone
    - Program cuts to create a postage stamp from A0 (ca 30” x 40”)
  - Chance to socialize and learn from peers.

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An apprenticeship teaches one how to work, be able to complete core tasks, work with a variety of materials, all in a high production environment. These skills are requisite for all further levels of work.

Life of a “Lehrling”

- Examination
  - Three pieces under supervision
  - Theory
  - “Loßsprechung”
    - Being spoken free of the “Meister”

- Next steps and their value
  - Journeyman – work in various shops and assimilate with primary training
  - Master – not just craft, but tools for managing business and staff
Wander Years as “Journeyman”

- Centro del bel Libro, Ascona
- Mellon Internship, Folger Shakespeare Library
- Chicago
  - Monastery Hill & William Minter
- Yale
- Cornell
- Syracuse
  - First chance to set up “own” shop

Centro del bel Libro

- Schools for artistic bookbinding and conservation
  - Course length varied
  - Int’l students
  - Apprenticeship required
Centro del bel Libro

- Participated in full conservation program
  - Chemistry
  - Paper
  - Leather
  - Wooden boards
- Intensive
- Practical

Back in the U.S…

- Finding a job
- Internship at Folger
  - Finer points of conservation
- Monastery Hill to William Minter
  - Old family trade bindery with conservation studio
  - Move to Minter best for professional growth
    - Challenging
    - Greater responsibilities
    - Supportive
Academia and new directions

- **Yale**
  - First job in research library

- **Into the wilds**
  - **Cornell**
    - Greater responsibilities for treatment decisions
    - Seduced by digital
  - **Syracuse**
    - The ultimate work-study job. Established lab, worked as conservator, earned MLS, and became an “administrator”

- **Away from support system**
  - New tools and ventures
    - Will get back to later
Exhibitions and Creative Binding

- First as apprentice
  - Reality check
- Chicago Hand Bookbinders
- GBW
  - Paralleled by 1st stint as GBW Exhibits Chair

Binding Interests

- Love of French vs. German tradition
  - Materials
    - Paper
    - Cloth
    - Leather
    - Vellum
  - Structures
    - Case binding
    - Millimeter binding
    - Vellum on boards
    - Springback
  - Other
    - Pastepapers
    - Historic endbands
Highpoints

- An American in Paris
  - Contemporary American Bookbinding
- 50 x 25
- 2nd National Book and Paper Arts Biennial
- SoB Competition
  - Binding awarded the Harmatan Leather Award for Forwarding in the Society of Bookbinders' 2003 Competition

Giving Back

- Teaching
  - Case binding
  - Millimeter binding
  - Vellum on boards
    - Presenting at 2001 GBW
      - Standards first “big gig”
  - Springback
  - Pastepapers
  - Historic endbands
- The Guild of Book Workers
- Lectures and articles
- Other ventures

The Guild of Book Workers

○ Exhibitions Chair for 6 + 2 years
  ● Why start small
    ○ Fine Printers Finely Bound Too, 1992
    ○ Paper Bound, 1996

○ Publicity / PR Chair for 6 years
  ● Brought Guild online
    ○ Exhibits
    ○ Communications
      ● Internal
      ● External
Guild of Book Workers 100th

- Back again.
  - Biggest Guild exhibit, ever
  - Organizer
  - Participant
- Swansong with Guild
  - Repercussions and “starting over”

Other Ventures

- **Book_Arts-L listserv**
  - Founded to overcome geographical isolation in 1994
  - Over 2000 subscribers worldwide
  - Virtual Community

- **Book Arts Web**
  - Since 1995, grown to become largest book arts resource online

- **The Bonefolder**
  - A foray into “open access”, 2004-

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*W – Peter D. Verheyen, 2007.*
What’s Next?

- Refocus on selected binding projects
  - Designer Bookbinders’ 2008 competition
  - Guild of Book Workers’ exhibitions
- Continued teaching and mentoring
- Continue and refocus online activities
  - *Bonefolder*: Develop plan to make sustainable
  - *Book Arts Web*: Redesign and slim down
  - List: How much longer…
- Thoughts of manual on German techniques in English

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The future? Is there a future?