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**From the Selected Works of Peter D Verheyen**

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Fall 2019

**Review of: Bogle, Sophia, Book Restoration  
Unveiled: An Essential Guide for Bibliophiles.  
[n.p.]: First Editions Press, 2019.**

Peter D Verheyen

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*Book Restoration Unveiled: An Essential Guide for Bibliophiles*

Sophia S.W. Bogle

First Editions Press

June 2019. 273 pages

E-book, Paperback

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IN *BOOK RESTORATION UNVEILED*, Sophia S.W. Bogle sets out “to provide the tools to spot restorations so that everyone can make more informed decisions when buying or selling books.” Her second reason for writing is the realization that “instead of a simple list of clear terminology, [there] was a distressing lack of agreement and even confusion about the most basic of book repair terms. It became apparent to me that the world of book collectors and the world of book workers were not in communication with one another.” Finally, there is her passionate desire to keep books out of landfills; while passionate, the author is also pragmatic.

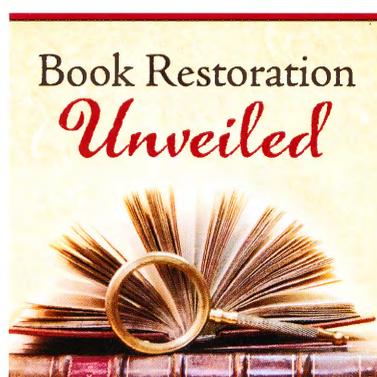
The introduction presents the author and her experiences: how she entered the profession (beginning, as many seem to have, as a work-study student in preservation/binding at their college library), progressed to an apprenticeship with an antiquarian where she started learning what makes books valuable, training with the book restorer David Weinstein as a binder, opened her own studio, and attended the American Academy of Bookbinding among numerous other experiences. In describing her studio, she cracks open the door to the *real* text in the form of a dialog with a book on her bench. Bogle enumerates her professional associations and her efforts to share her knowledge with her audience. Although she never became the antiquarian she thought she might, she did specialize

in the repair of books for individuals and antiquarians who in many respects are the main audience for this book. This is not, however, a “how-to” manual. Rather, it is a “guide to help you understand the world of restoration, to recognize restorations, and to choose the right professional to do those restorations. Further, “this book [is] a bridge between the world of collecting, buying, and selling books, and that of book repair, restoration, and conservation.”

*Book Restoration Unveiled* is divided into eight chapters: (1) A Brief History of Book Collecting and Restoration; (2) Is It Worth It? The Value of Book Restoration; (3) Book Lovers, Book Collectors, and Book Dealers; (4) Bookbinders, Book Restorers, and Book Conservators; (5) How to Identify Book Restorations; (6) Book Damage and Treatment Options; (7) Facsimiles, Sophistications, and Fraud; and (8) Buying and Selling Restored Books. In addition to these main chapters, the text also features a broad and deep list of resources including a glossary and color plates, for more richness than the black and white images found throughout the body text.

These chapters work a reader, bibliophile, antiquarian, restorer, etc. through a logical progression. The brief (1) “History” is broken into eight “eras,” defined by the author beginning in ancient Mesopotamia. For each, she shares information relating to production, the value of the object in its context, preservation, repair, and threats. Included are mentions of significant persons and works from that period, such as de Bury, Cockerell, Diehl, Middleton, and many others.

(2) “Is it Worth It” describes the various criteria one might use in deciding whether it is worth treating a book, leaving as is, or discarding it. These are considerations that are at the heart of conversations between the various sets of antiquarians, collectors, curators, and those being



asked to treat a given item. Bogle describes some of her reasons for making a particular decision, but then demonstrates how these are applied, with an appraiser’s insight and a case study.

Interviews in which (3) “Book Lovers, Book Collectors, and Book Dealers” describe their connections to their books—the reasons they select the items they do, value considerations, condition, when and whether to treat—are featured in this chapter. While there are many similarities in their responses, there are also subtle differences making a closer reading very interesting. After defining (4) “Bookbinders, Book Restorers, and Book Conservators”, the author discusses how these figures approach their work, and provides the bibliophile with considerations and questions to ask when working to select someone to treat her books. Whether the practitioner has the necessary holistic skill, training, and background appropriate for the book in question is a particular concern. Questions include which types of materials and structures they might apply. This is informed by the author’s experiences as a practitioner (along with those of selected colleagues), which is woven throughout the chapter and the book at-large.

(5) “How to Identify Book Restorations” is a deep yet very accessible dive into the physical properties of book structure and materials and how to identify repairs and other

potential problems with them. Repairs when not well-done are easy to discover. It can quickly get murkier if the repairs are skilfully applied, and it is here that the author includes the “perpetual caveat:” when in doubt, go for the most conservative option—preservation. The question of whether a collectible item has been repaired or restored is increasingly becoming a criteria for collectors, not just of books. Repair, however, can be critical for ensuring a book can be used without falling apart. This chapter has descriptions of repairs and their impact; it is richly illustrated with very clear diagrams and photos of treatments—good and bad, before and after—which provide valuable context.

(6) “Book Damage and Treatment Options” takes the material from the previous chapter and builds on it by preparing the book’s owner to speak to a practitioner, whether that be a skilled bookbinder for repairs, or a conservator. Bogle defines what is meant by the different categories of repair, restoration, preservation, and conservation lab. To bolster these definitions, she compares and contrasts, also citing the American Institute for Conservation’s definitions. Next, she defines many of the terms binders and conservators use to describe various treatment steps and techniques, again in very clear language. Because amateurs often wish to take matters into their own hands, the author includes a necessary “warning” to the “do it yourself” detailing the dated and incorrect information that can be found online and in print (even if such treatments were once state-of-the-art), also pointing towards credible sources. After this, Bogle provides instruction for some very basic treatments, such as freezing to kill insects, using soot sponges for surface-cleaning, and drying wet books. Dust jackets are discussed, before she takes on structural repairs to the book. Again, the text is accompanied by clear photographs illustrating the problems and their respective treatments. This chapter and its predecessor alone are well worth the price of the book,

providing the bibliophile with sound and pragmatic information in clear language.

(7) “Facsimiles, Sophistications, and Fraud” “includes tips to help you avoid inadvertently buying books that have been touched by the dark side,” i.e. those employing deceptive practices to increase perceived value. As in past chapters, Bogle defines many of the techniques that can be used both for good or evil (depending on their practitioner’s visible documentation), all in clear and understandable language. The author also includes interviews with book sellers, binders, and restorers, in addition to case studies of books where facsimiles, sophistications, and fraud come into play.

Finally, in (8) “Buying and Selling Restored Books” the author comes back to antiquarians who employ binders, restorers, or conservators when needed. Paraphrasing, Bogle asks *what are their criteria for acquiring books to resell, what options do they have, and why chose the option they did?* This is done in interviews with booksellers through a series of case studies. The chapter is a guide to the jargon of collectors’ for-sale announcements and catalog descriptions, often a challenge to those new to the trade. The chapter concludes with links to reputable bookselling associations and sales portals.

Appendices provide links to many of the resources mentioned in the book: bookselling portals, educational opportunities, individual book sellers, book restorers, commercial binders, conservation labs that accept work from the public, professional associations, and vendors for tools and archival supplies. There is also a well-done glossary of terms and bibliography, most mentioned in the text, but handy at a glance in this form. The appendices are rounded out by acknowledgements, notes, and color plates of problems and treatments that could not be included in the main text.

To conclude, *Book Restoration Unveiled* fills a niche in the literature that “lifts the veil” on books, the repair

trades (restoration and conservation), and bookselling, in a way that is above all else clear and understandable. It pragmatically explains nuanced material, provides examples of reasons an item might require treatment (or not), and provides much needed context. Fears of effusive “every book is sacred” were quickly put to rest, as the author systematically worked her way through the process, greatly enhancing it with interviews and case studies that are not often found in books of this nature. Some of these topics could quickly become contentious in discussions between the practitioners, but the author handles this deftly by providing context, caveats, and options, making this a book that collectors, practitioners, and sellers should have in their reference collections. ■

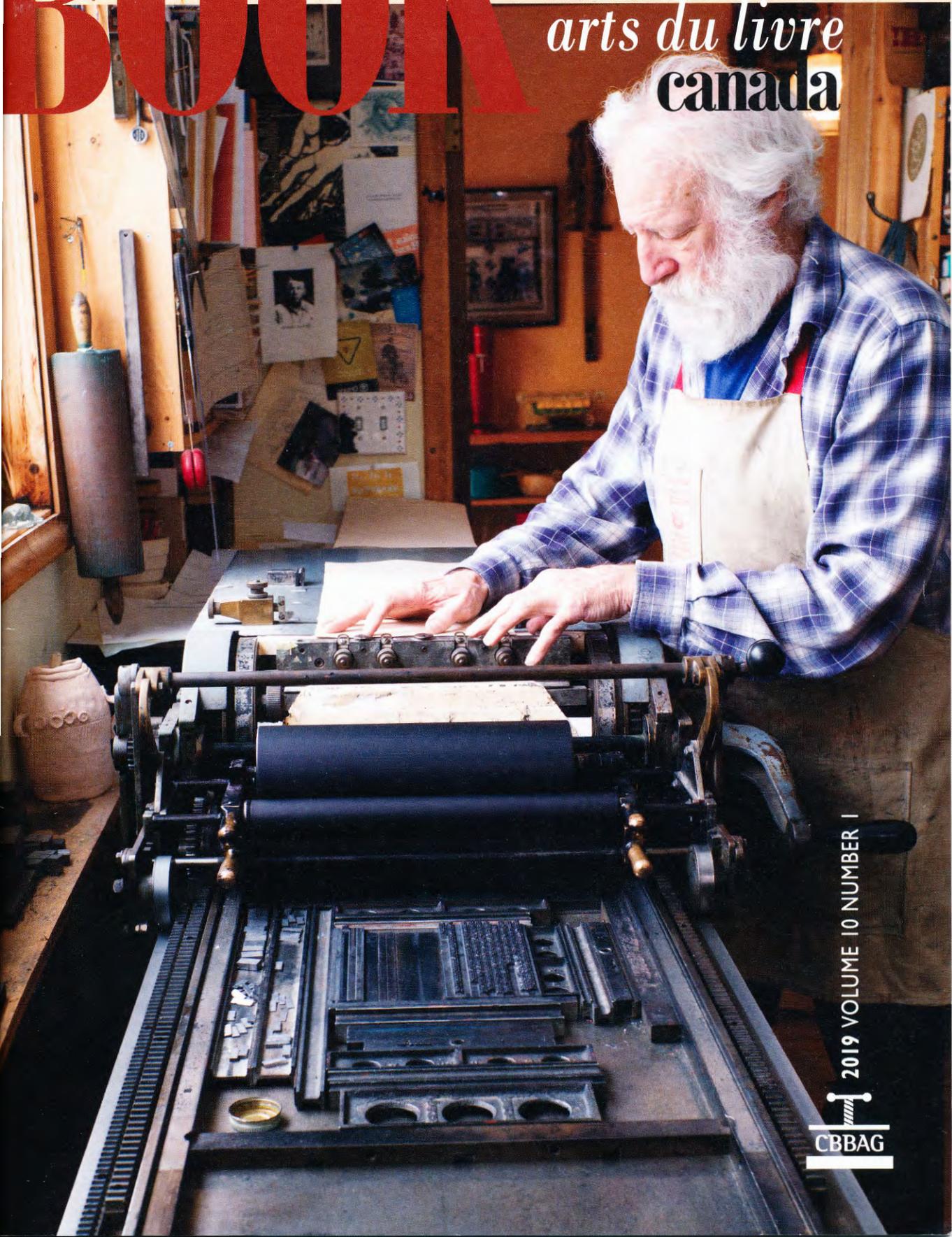
— Peter D. Verheyen

*A previous version of this review appeared in The Bone Folder Extras.*

# BOOK

# arts

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#### ON THE COVER

Alan Stein at his Vandercook #4, Parry Sound.

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■ **Brian Queen** lives in Calgary and has been making paper by hand for 20 years. He specializes in creating light and shade watermarks, and building papermaking

equipment; but his interests span the book arts, including letterpress printing, and the impact of new technologies. In his day job Brian owns and operates Sensa-Light, a company that manufactures custom architectural lighting for offices, hotels, and restaurants.

■ **Tom Smart** has worked in art galleries and museums across Canada and the United States—among them, the Beaverbrook Art Gallery (where he is currently its Director and CEO), The Frick in Pittsburgh, and the McMichael Canadian Art Collection.

■ **James Spyker** is the proprietor of "2x4 to the forehead", where he makes books, boxes and other ephemera in his home bindery in Toronto.

■ **Stephen Sword** has explored the history and practice of letterpress printing for over 35 years, working at his own "stiff 'n' sore press", and with various museums and institutional collections. Only recently has he begun to write about his findings, and looks forward to writing more on the subject. He lives, with his wife and two cats, in Stouffville, Ontario.

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■ **Robert Wu** is a Taiwanese-Canadian hand bookbinder, gilder and paper marbler. He custom makes one-off or small editions of books, presentation boxes, leather fine art bindings or jewellery boxes and decorative papers for individual collectors, libraries or institutions.

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