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Bookbinding tradition distinguishes bound and cased work. In cased work, the block and cover are separately manufactured, then married to create a book. In bound work, block and cover are a single, integral unit. The Dutch marbler and binder, Karli Frigge has devised methods for binding books in limp and boarded leather in a style reminiscent of laced limp and stiff vellum but which is, she says, much less complicated, and much faster, than traditional leather binding. *Leather Books* is Frigge's report on work-in-progress with these methods.

In a review of her book in *Zelf Boekbinden 2* (1998), a Dutch journal, A. Van der Knaap quotes Frigge as saying, "Today, most books bound in leather are intended to be kept in a glass showcase, like a relic of a saint. But I like to hold them in my hand, which means that the books must be strong and be bound in a type of leather that only gets better with use." It appears to be this desire which led her to experiment with non-traditional structures. Van der Knaap also quotes her claim, "Binding in accordance with my method takes less than a quarter of the time needed to make a traditional volume and these books are so much stronger."

Frigge describes and illustrates (with about 75 line-drawings) two methods, both of which rely on sewing the block on thongs (she recommends cutting these 6 mm. wide from a waste piece of the hide) which are laced into the covering material. The first style she calls "wrap-around binding", suitable for smaller books (up to six inches wide, she says), cutting leather the height but roughly three times the width of the block so that the part which becomes the rear cover can be wrapped back over the fore-edge and under the front cover (rather as the cases of Persian bindings have a fore-edge flap). The sewn block is rounded and backed with a paper hollow, the cover is glued in position, holes are then chiseled through the leather, the thongs drawn through the holes, and the cover trimmed to size. The covers can be stamped, scored, burned, or otherwise decorated.

The second method, recommended for books wider than six inches, Frigge terms "laced-in boards". These books have flexible leather spines and boards of thick, stiff material (which might include not only binder's board but colored cardboards, harness leather, plastic, metal, wood, etc.). In this style, the block can be backed with or without a paper hollow. A piece of leather is glued to the spine, holes are chiseled through the leather, and the leather thongs are laced through the leather at the joints so that they appear outside the leather, and then are laced back through the board and glued to the inside. Excess leather is trimmed and endcaps turned-in.

Frigge's text and illustrations work very well together to make the methods quite clear -- words alone, as in this review, are not adequate to convey them fully. The methods are not complicated, but Frigge's claim that they are much faster than traditional bindings to construct could be verified only with the experience of constructing several of them. While neither of her styles requires leather paring, it is not obvious what other steps save time. One would also want to see how these books handle over time: are they better on the coffee table than the shelf? In her desire to achieve economically the tactile pleasure of a leather binding, Frigge also seems less concerned about the quality and durability of materials. Or perhaps that is another book.

*Leather Books* encourages others to join in the experimentation. Frigge persuades me it will be fun.