

Poster abstract

Jean Holland and Albertine Hamilton

Conservation Treatment of a small volume - the Circumcision Book, from the Manuscript Collection of the State Library of Victoria

The *Circumcision Book* is comprised of two parts, namely printed Hebrew prayers associated with the circumcision service followed by handwritten records of births, deaths and circumcisions. The book belonged to Rev. B.A. Selig, who performed circumcisions in Cornwall, Australia and New Zealand between 1849 and 1870.

The poor condition of this book was highlighted in 2012 when requested for display by the Jewish Museum of Australia. State Library of Victoria book and paper conservators discussed possible conservation treatments and digitisation of the book with the manuscripts librarian. Given its historical significance, frequent use, and fragile state the treatment of the book was given a high priority after return from loan. The volume was disbound, paper treatment was undertaken, the volume was digitised by the Library's photographic studio, and then rebound.

The joint approach aimed to achieve structural stability while conserving the original character of the *Circumcision Book*. Preliminary investigations included testing all media for solubility against a variety of solvent mixtures and the construction of binding models to assess approaches to resewing and spine attachment. Interesting challenges included piecing together many fractured pages (unnumbered for the most part, and in Hebrew) and a reconstruction of the original section composition, complicated by numbers of loose, tipped-in and missing pages. The treatment was carried out as a collaborative project resulting in the repair and reconstruction of an unusual and historically significant item, while also providing a digital facsimile available to a wider audience.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Jean Holland has worked as a book conservator in the Conservation Department at the State Library of Victoria since 1989. She completed a two year course in Archival Preservation and Repair at the Camberwell School of Arts, London, in 1972. She then studied hand bookbinding at the London College of Printing, London for a number of years while also working in hand binderies, W.T. Morrells, Covent Garden, and University College of London Library Bindery.

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Albertine Hamilton has a BA in Fine Arts from RMIT University and a MA in Cultural Materials Conservation (specialising in paper conservation) from The University of Melbourne. The title of her Masters thesis is: *The materials and techniques of children's pop-up and movable books in Australia*. Albertine has since completed internships with the National Archives of Australia (NAA) and the Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation (CCMC), and has worked with the State Library of Victoria, Museum Victoria, and the CCMC. Albertine currently works as a Paper Conservator at the State Library of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia.

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