

In situ conservation: an alternative approach for library collections

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Abstract

From limp-vellum to ornately stamped cloth publishers' bindings, books are as varied as they are beautiful. Books are complex and intricate packages and there is often as much to be learned from examining an individual structure as there is from the written material itself. Within the sphere of rare books, collection managers have the daunting task of juggling the care of historically significant structures while also providing access to the information they contain. The realities of conservation and preservation can far exceed the limitations of budgets - where to start?

There are many benefits of implementing an in situ conservation program for rare book collections: developing a close working relationship with collection managers and staff; the ability to assess individual items within the context of the collection; and addressing item storage and access. Treatments may range from tailor-made housing and book-shoe supports to repairing damaged leaves and cover consolidation. In my presentation I will cover the scope of work achievable with basic tools and materials, giving examples from collections I have worked on in situ in the UK and Australia.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Sarah Bunn trained in a private conservation studio in Sydney and at Camberwell College of Art, London. She worked as a freelance conservator in England for nine years on rare book and archive collections. Major clients included The National Trust, English Heritage, The Royal Society of Medicine, The Royal College of Surgeons, The Royal Pharmaceutical Society and The Natural History Museum.

Since returning to Australia in 2004 she has combined studio and in situ work with Historic Houses Trust, The Australian Museum, Rookwood Anglican and General Cemetery, St Mary's Cathedral, and The Botanic Gardens in Sydney. She is also currently working part time at State Records of New South Wales.

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