

There have been a few reports recently on the so-called 'simplified binding', the book structure illustrated in Fig. 57, page 71 of *New Directions in Bookbinding*, Studio Vista 1974. This designation was given (I understand) by Sim Evrard in France, as a result of Claude Blaizot asking for paper bindings for a particular exhibition. Stin did not find the term 'ordinary case binding' appropriate for describing this structure. Reviews or catalogue introductions for some exhibitions (there is one by Joanne Sonnichsen in the catalogue for the 1992 Leah Wollenberg Competition) have therefore assumed that the style was invented fairly recently in France.

My first encounter with this style was when Roger Powell, Peter Waters and myself were looking at a facsimile copy of *The Book of Kells* in the V & A Library during my time as a student at the Royal College of Art in London (1951-54). The edition of *The Book of Kells* facsimile had been commercially bound in Italy. The principle of this structure (there are slight variations in detail on later models) was a separately covered spine, with separately covered boards glued down to the overlap from the spine strip (which had been glued to the endsheet of the text-block). The materials for the spine and sides were the same. It was observed that this method gave the opportunity for the spine and the sides to be covered using different materials or different colours. One could also make use of several skins for large books without scarf or butt joints. Blocking could be completed off the book, as in cased bindings. The beauty of the system for us was that it allowed a kind of quarter binding with the full rectangle of the boards unbroken, so that the boards seemed to be hinging on a narrow strip of material. Fig. 57 in *New Directions in Bookbinding* shows the method adopted by Peter Waters, who leaves a small part of the turn-in near the hinge free until the board is glued to the spine covering strip. The binding style may be made up as a kind of case binding, or seen as providing a book with different materials for the three components of the cover, or as a full binding with leather spine and

leather sides. When making up a binding for a heavier book I developed the pre-tongue-and-slot style (Fig. 56 *New Directions in Bookbinding*) similar to that used on my student copy of *El Greco* shown by Bryan Maggs at the Autumn Meeting 1992 at Paul Getty's Wormsley Library. This was made by covering the book as for a quarter-leather binding, recessing the spine covering leather into the half thickness board where it is brought on to the board surface and turn-ins; another board was covered, turned in at the hinge edge, glued down with an exact fit to the first board and the turn-ins made over the laminate of the two boards.

The drawback with this make-up of board was that it created difficulties at the board edges in fitting the two laminars. It seemed more sensible to re-think the whole idea and to make a completely finished board off the book. By leaving a slot in the back edge of a board into which the tongue from the spine is fitted (Fig. 65a *New Directions in Bookbinding*), this would not only be a strong method of attaching a board to the book, but it would make it more easily reversible. The tongue was made up with the spine covering, sewing supports, linen reinforcements and leather joints also completed on the boardless text-block. This is known as the Tongue-in-Slot style and it has been adopted by binders world wide; both these styles are illustrated in *New Directions in Bookbinding*. As far as I can discover from my records the first tongue-in-slot was on my binding of *The Loom of Art* begun in 1962. There is further information about these hingeing methods in *Designer Bookbinders Review* No. 14 (Autumn 1979). The so-called simplified binding is a kind of cut-price version of the above earlier developments.

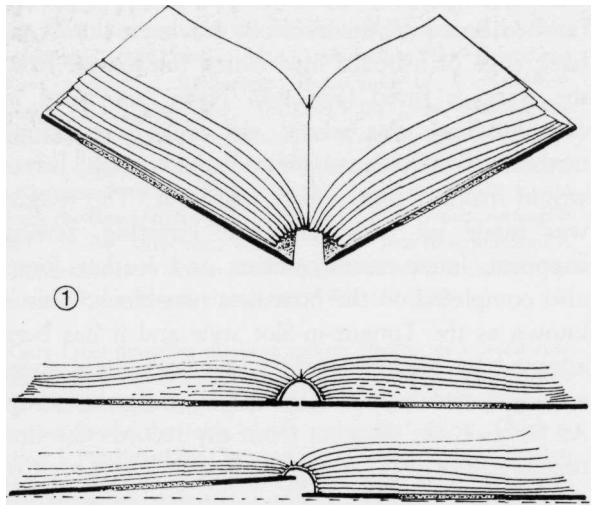
Further variations on this style have been developed such as in the binding with yokes (*The New Bookbinder* 10 p. 85). As in most of these simpler alternative binding structures where the text-block is not backed, the boards are thinned or rebated at the hinge edges, to compensate for the swell of the sewing and/or the guards in the flat back and rounded modes. The structure for a book is selected

by taking into account the size of the book, the relative thickness of the paper and sections (whether the book will open satisfactorily without a struggle), grain direction, strength, durability, reversibility, maintenance and action of the book and binding. The use of external (and possibly unprotected) sewing has to be justified by reasoning. It could be counter-productive to use such a structure purely for reasons of aesthetics or fashion.

**The Lap-Back Structure (Patent Pending No 9312009-5)**

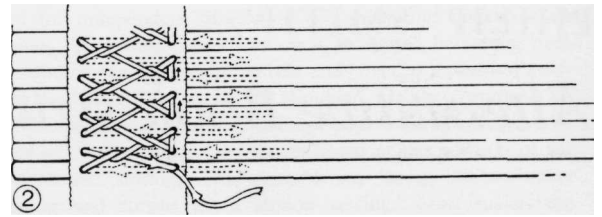
The following is a description of a further development being explored which employs the pre-covered board which may dispense entirely with spine linings or spine covering. Unlined spines make for easier reversibility of the binding. Having no other materials (other than paper guards) in contact with the sewing and sections prevents acid migration into the back. This is a vulnerability with linings, especially flexible (direct) leather coverings.

However, exposed or unglued sewing structures are also vulnerable to abrasion. The book in [1] shows how the sewing and section backs may be protected from all these hazards. My first model has



1 Aspects of the book at different openings.

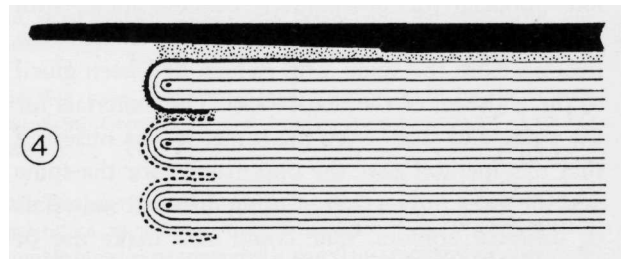
the boards projecting beyond the conventional hinge edge. The hinges are hidden and there is no exposed shoulder. Various sewing styles have been tried. One is to use heavy webbing tapes, sewn through rather than around at head and tail; sewing through both tapes and section backs locks these together preventing the sections sliding against each other [2]. The other sewing stations have unsupported link-stitching. Another sewing structure has raised cords with extra packing threads. Both the



2 The sewing through the webbing tapes (this could be a flexible vellum/leather laminate). These may be accompanied at other stations by unsupported link stitching, by raised cords with extra packing threads, or by other desired supports aiding a rounded concavity to the openings and minimizing torque.

reinforced webbing tapes and the packed raised cords produce a gentler, rounded concavity at the spine when the book is opened. [One of the versions has a strip of vellum (the cut edges blunted with sandpaper) inserted inside the sewing and hidden between the tape and section backs; this makes for a more rounded concavity when opening the book]. The back-lap boards protect the sewing and the folds of the sections from any contact or abrasion. The back edges of the overlapping boards may be straight, or shaped to a great variety of profiles to make physical and visual interlock when the book is opened at the centre section for display. This can present a more or less unbroken or continuous flat surface for any art work [3, page 42]. The appearance is of a hinge-less cover.

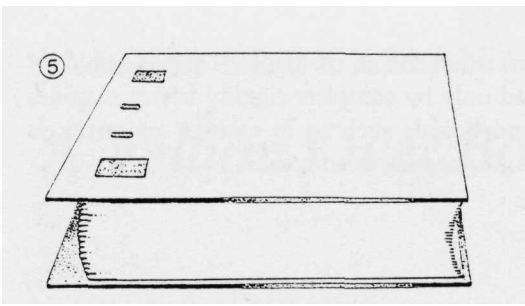
The end sections of the models have been provided with a fabric guard glued around the back fold [4]. The less stiff the guard material here the easier will the board articulate on the end leaf and



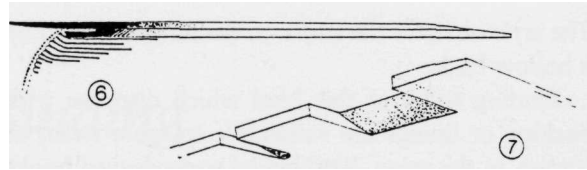
4 Profile showing reinforced end section with board glued in position, and concertina guards to sections.

the less drag there will be on the end sections. Fine linen or even a polyester paper such as Tyvek give strength to the attachment of text-block and boards. The pre-covered boards are glued down to this fabric strip and to the whole of the endleaf.

There are various ways of dealing with the ends of tape or cord slips. They may be cut off flush with the last sections where the glue-sealed ends are trapped against the inside of the boards where these project. They may be laced through the boards from



5 Basic structure showing tapes and or cords laced through the uncovered boards.

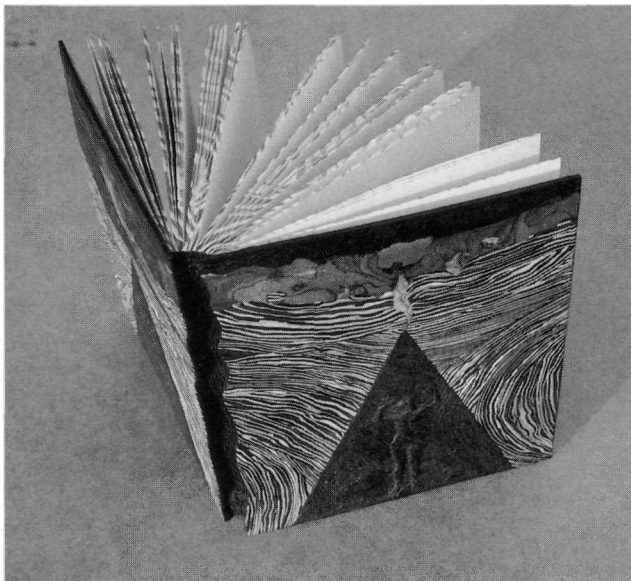


6 Conventional board and tape laid in recess, with back-lap glued above. (Rounded and backed but optionally unlined spine.)

7 Alternative back edge of board with angled rebates straddling ends of cords or tapes; view of inside of board.



8 Book closed showing painted spine-fold guards and tapes, with back-lap boards.



9 Book part open, showing protective back-laps.

the inside to the outside and glued into a recess [5]. They may be taken as a feature through and across the boards. The cord slips may be laced through likewise or feathered and glued to the fabric joint prior to gluing down the boards to the endleaves.

The photographs in [8 and 9] show a version of the structure with the webbing tapes and section backs hand-painted with acrylic colours. (This book is sewn on a zig-zag guard with all four edges painted). By varying the design of the board make-up it is possible to use this back-lap style in rounded and backed books [6], rounded books, or flat-back books. The boards may be flush or with squares. My models have rounded spines and narrow squares. The main thing to look for is to prevent obstruction to opening near the end sections [7].

The style obviates the stress on the hinges created by a hollow back.

Binding styles of this kind which dispense with backing or linings are vulnerable to more twist, or torque, in the spine. Bindings of paper-leaved books must always consist of compromises: either easier opening and more torque or rigid opening and less torque. It would require very limp and loose binding<sup>1</sup> indeed to reach the point where abrasion of the surfaces of leaves would be a serious consideration. Sewing holes would become very much enlarged by the movement and friction of the thread, which would probably break down long before print or

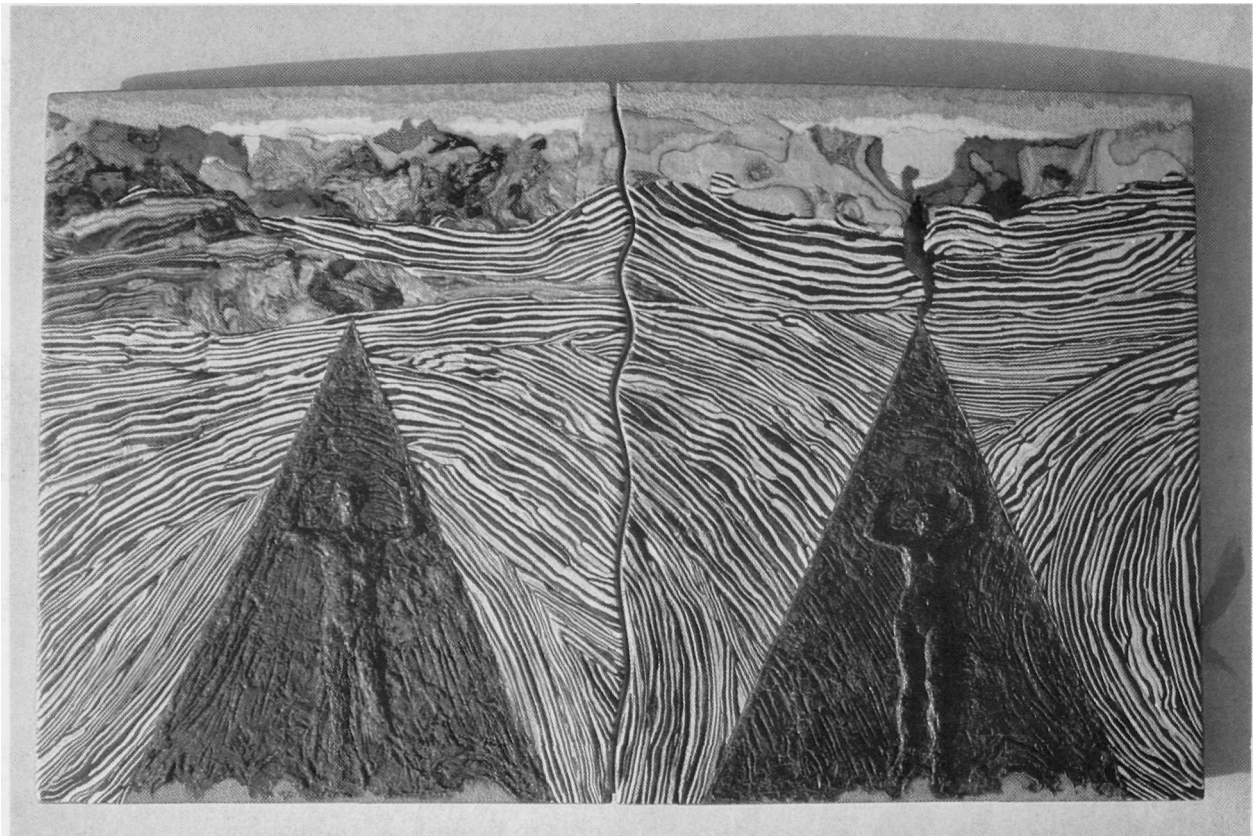
image was rubbed from the pages. Torque would be eliminated only by complete rigidity between spine, hinges and boards such as in casings<sup>2</sup> of metal or plastics, or in heavily lined spines.

#### Notes

1 *Binding* here means any system of holding together multiples of leaves.

2 *Casing* here means any kind of protective outer covering (not necessarily a case binding).

© Design Copyright Philip Smith 1992



3 Hingeless binding 1992. Showing the more or less unbroken flat surface for any art work 17.8 x 14.5 cm (closed).