Making Information on Bindings and Provenances Accessible to the Study of the History of the Book
a Presentation of the ProBok Project

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4B NEW METHODS FOR STUDYING BOOK BINDING
The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland

Chair: Parland–von Essen, Jessica (The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland)

Berggren, **Maria** (Uppsala University Library) & **Strömquist, Helena** (Lund University Library): *Making Information on Bindings and Provenances Accessible to the Study of the History of the Book : a Presentation of the ProBok Project*

In this speech, we would like to make a presentation of our work on the so-called ProBok project at the University libraries of Uppsala and Lund. The aim of the project is to develop two Swedish national databases for the documentation and describing of bindings and provenances of early printed books, and, consequently, to give researchers within the field of historical research access to information concerning the books as material objects. The long-term goal is to create a national material bibliographic database linked to the national OPAC LIBRIS and begin the cataloguing of the libraries' complete stock of early printed books.

Firstly, in our paper, we will discuss the tools required for establishing a scholarly documentation and description of historical bindings, that is a terminology and a protocol for the documentation. The contents of the protocol will be exemplified, such as information concerning types of binding, their colours, form, and material, the design (techniques, styles, and ornaments), the markings on the binding, the binder and geographic origin, the state of the binding, the age, and provenance (with a link to the provenance database). We will also demonstrate how pictures of each binding will supplement the written documentation in the database.

Secondly, we will examine different parameters that are to be included in the systematic description of provenances, such as 'internal' evidence in the form of bookplates, ex libris and ex dono inscriptions, signatures, stamps and armorial bindings; and also 'external' evidence, e.g. references in inventories and auction catalogues, and other sources. We will show how this information is to be linked to authority posts representing individuals and institutions, and analyse different kinds of relationships between types of data.

The creation of these two databases can be said to form part of a shift in the understanding of books as sources of historical information; the books will be presented not only as instances of literary works but also as historical artefacts. Making books available as historical and material sources of information opens up for new historical research on early printed books as material objects. The combination of text and picture will make it possible for researchers and the public to search for, and to compare books, bindings and provenances in a new way. The historical data will enable studies of individual books and bindings, but also make it possible to 'recreate' in the digital form collections of books that have belonged to individuals or institutions; it also invites statistical processing and studies of a more structural character on larger sections of early printed material.

Perälä, Anna (The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland): *Aspects on Publishers' Bindings in the Light of the Pousar Collection*

The presentation will focus on publishers' bindings, especially from the view of the Pousar collection of bookbindings in Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland (The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland). The collection includes about 2500 volumes, mainly from Europe, emphasizing publishers' binding from the 19th century.

In my presentation, my intention is to treat the evolution of publishers' bindings and their visual image, and their connection to the advance of literacy and education, and changes in social, technical and cultural development. Style changes on the cover decorations of cloth bindings will also be handled. The theme will be examined especially in the light of the historical development in Finland and on the basis of having analysed the Finnish material in the collection. These observations will be compared with the ones on corresponding material from some other countries.

The presentation will also give information about the Pousar database. The title pages, covers, decorative papers for end leaves and frontispieces in the Pousar collection's book have been digitalized and transferred to the database, including bibliographical information and descriptions of the bindings, as well as names and signatures of illustrators and engravers appearing in the books. The database will be accessible on the Internet in autumn 2010, providing material for further research in book history.

Pickwoad, Nicholas (University of the Arts London) & **Velios, Athanasios**: *Making Sense of Bookbindings*

For more than a century, the study of bookbinding has often been either little more than a study of a minor decorative art, concentrating on the tiny percentage of books which have been given elaborately decorated bindings, or a technical study aimed at practitioners of the craft of bookbinding. It is only in more recent years that bookbinding has begun to be studied as an intergral part of the booktrade. Even so, the role of the study of everyday bookbindings as a tool for the better understanding of the culture of the book is still in its infancy. It is, however, becoming increasingly clear that bindings can offer information about the users of books, about where and when they were used, and about how different editions were perceived by the booktrade and the book-buying public which may not be available elsewhere. One reason that the study of bookbindings has not been more widely taken up is, in addition to a continuing reluctance by many scholars to acknowledge the value of a book as an historic object as well as a carrier of text, is that the ability to understand and interpret bindings as a part of material culture is still very limited. An essential pre-requisite for developing such an understanding is a consistent vocabulary of terms with which to describe them.

The Ligatus Research Unit of the University of the Arts, London, has been working for the past 10 years on developing such a vocabulary in connection with work in the library of the monastery of Saint Catherine on Mount Sinai. More recently this glossary has been transformed into a hierarchical database in XML in which the hierarchies are based on the structure of the book. This allows the user to find terms for binding components which were previously unknown to them by following the hierarchies within which they are located -- an advantage not available in an alphabetical list. With the use of an interface which will allow the glossary terms to be used within an electronic record form to describe individual bindings, we will be able to offer users a consistent, guided process for the description of bindings. This will allow a very detailed description of a

binding, down to a level that most users may not feel is necessary for them, but the hierarchical structure will also allow users to go only so far into a description of a binding as their needs and expertise allow, whilst still allowing the possibility of a more complete description to be added within the same descriptive framework, should that ever become relevant. In addition, whatever information is recorded can be added to a larger, fully searchable, database of binding descriptions. An funding application is to be made in 2010 to translate the database into a variety of European languages, which will allow entries made in one language to be read in another, thus offering a common descriptive format in all the contributing languages.