

*The
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Library Scene





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LIBRARY BINDING IN TODAY'S "GLOBAL ECONOMY"!

THE CHALLENGES AND THE ADVANTAGES

by Jay Fairfield

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Every day we hear or read about global competition and the activities of multinational businesses. U.S. as well as foreign corporations now have blurred images and marketing campaigns; international branding is here to stay.

Equally as meaningful is the pace of change taking place in this new "world economy." Technological advancements affecting communication, production and distribution have nearly eliminated distance as an obstacle. No longer are there as many challenges to foreign companies (and governments) who want to compete in the United States economy. This trend, in motion for many years, is now accelerating. The ability to buy and sell from every corner of the world has presented opportunities as well as challenges to North American businesses.

What has happened in recent years to LBI's larger sister industries of printing and book manufacturing? Advancement in graphic and print technologies as well as the easy, rapid transfer of digital data and images have greatly expanded the competitive arena. Competition has sprouted from some of the emerging industrial economies, especially in South America, Asia and

Southeast Asia. With new technology and the advantage of startlingly low cost of operations (labor), these foreign printers and book manufacturers have turned a large portion of our domestic markets into a commodity purchase. When off-shore producers have significant labor cost advantages, and are able to produce comparable quality to US producers, other relationship and service oriented features like convenience, reliability, communication and turnaround time often take a back seat.

What about library binding? Is our market likely to be threatened by off-shore competition? Not in my view. Our service is relatively regional and library binders have become trusted vendors who know how to handle and treat library collections. The desire on the part of libraries to have material out of circulation or inaccessible for the minimum amount of time makes it difficult to transport these materials to



far away locations. As a core service, library binding appears to be protected from the off-shore threats that other graphic industries face, but it is not guaranteed.

That said, how does our industry remain viable and perform at high levels of service given the "internal" threats? What are our challenges as an industry and how do we meet them? How are we to ensure that global competitors do not enter our market and turn library binding into a commodity business?

A co-worker recently gave me a copy of an article that summarized Thomas Friedman's new book, *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century*. I was intrigued and got my hands on a copy for a quick review. The book details the major events over the past five years that accelerated our economic "globalization." Among a number of

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points made about why our world is shrinking from a competitive and trade standpoint, the one section I found most interesting was Friedman's take on the business characteristics necessary to survive in a global economy.

I've put a slight business spin on these four characteristics as compared to Friedman's focus on the individual business owner, but they are essentially the same. The four characteristics are as follows: 1) You or your personnel must be special. Not just ordinary special but all-star special—to your employees, customers, vendors and partners alike. 2) Your product or service must have an element of specialization. Not just anyone should be able to do what your business does. 3) Your business must have permanence. A product or service that survives technological change or is difficult to replace has an element of permanence. 4) Every sustainable business must be adaptable. Change is inevitable but resisting change is a certain path to irrelevance.

How does library binding measure up when looked at through those four characteristics? In short, it appears we stack up rather well.

First, library binding companies do have special people. The service we provide is so unique that it would be virtually impossible to maintain quality standards, follow instructions and procedures, or have consistent workflow organization without an experienced workforce. Good communication is also an essential factor in a relationship based service like library binding. Without knowledge and experience, this

customer service component can be difficult. Library binders also have staff that understand libraries, and have an appreciation for the trust libraries place in companies like ours to handle their important materials. Libraries have very few vendors they speak to as often or meaningfully as they do with library binders. It is the nature of the relationship. Yes, I think library binding passes the first test with flying colors.

Second, there is no question that library binding has special people and is a special service. The industry may be small but that isn't what keeps new binders from popping up all the time to try and compete. No, the nature of the work, the knowledge required to handle library materials, and the difficulty in finding adequate equipment to produce the work efficiently are all reasons why "not just anyone" is able to do what library binders do. Add to this the advantage of having customers (libraries) who often want their vendor as physically close as possible, and the end result is a specialized service!

Characteristic number three is permanence. No question about it, for the library binding industry, this characteristic is a challenging one. No one knows what libraries will be like 50 or 100 years from now, but for the foreseeable future, we have a glimpse. Increasing collections of electronic and digital format materials and greater emphasis on technological services, plus a growing financial need for non-traditional collections are pretty good indicators of future direction. We all now expect information to be widely accessible and available instantaneously. This does not mesh well with traditional

hard-copy library use. Journal publishing and scholarly research in particular are experiencing dramatic shifts in the way information is delivered. Will hard copy go away? It's not likely and in fact more books are printed every year. But the nature of libraries is changing and that change (decline in hard copy materials) has and will continue to affect library binders. Our industry has survived technological change to date – can it continue?

Lastly, are library binders "adaptable"? On one hand, there are few businesses more traditional and slow to change in their approach than library binders. In some ways and with certain technology, library binders are still performing in ways that are no different than 30 or 40 years ago. On the other hand, our industry is a case study in owners and businesses finding ways to improve upon an already reliable service through the use of new technology, in order to enhance the service and lower costs. Library binders have also shown resiliency and yes, adaptability by diversifying into related and sometimes not-so-related fields. Diversification may be a necessity for binders given the declining demand for our core business, but it would be hard to view our industry and declare our adaptability anything but a success.

In short, library binders are fortunate that we do not face the kind of new, international competition that printers and trade binders face. In addition, it seems we meet three of Friedman's four characteristics for long-term survival in a global economy. We have special people, we are a special service and we are adaptable. There are challenges ahead as there are for most industries and businesses. Our "core" service may continue to decline and our industry as defined in a traditional way may decline as well. There will be more consolidation in our future as supply continues to adjust to demand. But library binding will not go away entirely and our members, who have not only taken advantage of our unique niche trade but also adapted to change, are likely to thrive for many years to come.

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HEADBANDS =

Decoration or Reinforcement?

Bookbinders often get the following questions:

What are those little, colorful headbands on the top and bottom of the spine?

Do they offer strength to a binding or are their functions simply a matter of aesthetics?

What motivated bookbinders to use headbands in the first place? Are they necessary for library binding?

In order to satisfy these valid questions, one must look back at the history of bookbinding.

In the fourth to fifth centuries, as soon as the techniques of folded sheets were adapted, most of the books bound were sewn through the fold. In order to fasten the folded sections together with thread, leather and parchment strips were used. After sewing around these strips, the ends, called "thongs," were then laced through the wooden boards.

As time moved on, binders began to sew onto raised cords and soon found that if a cord or a strip of leather was used, or other materials at the head and tail, the binding would actually be reinforced. This appeared to be a more efficient method of book sewing since this technique required no kettle stitch.

Keep in mind that in earlier times, book blocks were not trimmed. Even when bookbinders started trimming, they maintained this method of sewing around the head and tail bands. A small portion of the corners in the bind fold were cut away so as not to damage the sewing by trimming off the head and tail bands. This procedure protected the functional and ornamental bands. In days gone by, bookbinders used to refer to "headbands" and "tail-bands." These days, they are called "headbands" even though they are used on the head and tail of a book block.

By the fifteenth century, few bookbinders began to tie down



Bookbinders often compete with shaping the headcaps over sewn headbands

A Hand Bookbinders Sewn-On Headbands

Some time ago, while visiting the Gutenberg Museum in Mainz, Germany, I saw a show case of hand-sewn or laced headbands. It looked as though every master bookbinder tried to outdo the other as there were more than one-hundred different styles of sewn or laced headbands. Like collecting stamps, there are people who love unusual challenges!

This was a simply fascinating experience. Single rolls covered with multiple, complimentary colors of silk threads included one, two or more smaller beads that enhanced the top or bottom of the primary headband. Rolls, flexible sticks of wood, or flat strips for special effects were used for the core. As in any trade that requires advanced skills, one could look for a variety of sewing technique examples. No doubt, there must be a huge variety of button hole stitch techniques that have similarities to sewn-on headbands.

During my employment as a young bookbinding apprentice in Zurich, Switzerland, the bindery had an unusual order - 250 volumes were to be bound into parchment. My task was to sew, by hand, 500 headbands with blue and white silk thread. This turned out to be a great learning experience as it took about twenty minutes to finish a single book. Upon completion, I was trained for life!

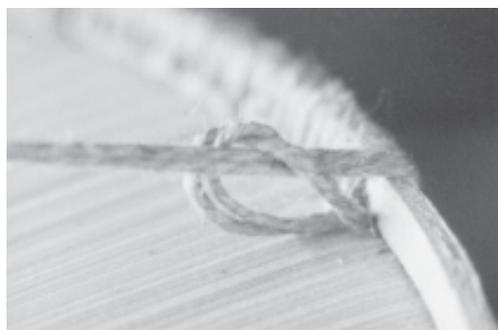
Needless to say, there are a variety of techniques for sewing headbands. This information can be found in virtually every advanced book on hand

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headbands at every section. A good indication of this is a facsimile binding of a Gutenberg Bible (1000 copies, Idion Verlag, Munich) where everything was done as close as possible to the original. Binders simply laced a thread around a strip. The strips were tied down at the first and last sewn sections and then only every 1/4 to 1/2 inches. Later, bookbinders began using colorful, silk threads which made the headbands more ornamental rather than being a functional part of a binding.

Glued-on headbands became popular in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Look through your collection and you may see some headbands made out of old shirts! Blue and white and red and white stripes were the most popular. Since commercial headbands were not available, the binder simply cut strips approx. 1 1/2 inch wide, applied glue or paste, and wrapped the strip around a cord. Glued onto the spine and cut to the appropriate width, this did the job.

When I once instructed a bookbinding class on this and pointed to one of the participant's red and white striped shirts, the student took off his shirt, shredded it, and asked me to show the class how it is done. Needless to say, this brought about quite a few good laughs and we had enough cloth for handmade headband demos for a decade!



Hand sewing/lacing a Gutenberg Facsimile binding



*Celebrating
70 years*

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To maintain and encourage support for the highest quality standards for Certified Library Binders and to promote their benefits to libraries.

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To develop a spirit of mutual collaboration and cooperation among those engaged in library binding by encouraging and directing activities leading to constructive cooperation between our members, our customers, our suppliers and others related to our industry.

To champion our standards representing the best craftsmanship, quality and service for prolonging the useful life of printed library materials.

To improve the methods of the industry through research and testing, the exchange of experience among members and through educational programming.

To cooperate with and support libraries' efforts to promote preservation of library materials.

To engage in any other activity which the LBI Board of Directors decides would benefit the industry.

The Changing World of Library Binding

Bruce Jacobsen

Have you spent time recently in your local public library, just hanging around watching what people are taking home with them? Music CDs, movies on DVD or Videotape, Nintendo, X-Box and Playstation games, framed prints, toys, and, oh yes, almost as an afterthought, a few books. Have you looked around to see what people are doing while they visit the library? They are using the computerized catalog, which gives them access to listings of holdings of all types of materials in not only the local library, but also state and regional library networks, and colleges and universities. They are using the Internet to get the information they want, and they are printing it out. The stacks get very little use in comparison; only the shelves holding multiple copies of the hottest new titles are regularly perused, and of course the latest Harry Potter novel. Very few of the books on these shelves will ever be sent to be rebound; most are destined to be weeded, discarded and sold at book sales to raise money for library resources that will be more widely used.

What has happened in the corporate and medical libraries that at one time provided a large and steady volume of periodical volumes to be bound? Both have shifted to mainly on-line versions of their staple research titles, because it provides them with immediate and constant access to the latest research (with no two to four week loss of use to the bindery). There are a few holdouts that still bind periodical volumes, but their numbers are dwindling rapidly, and we can expect them to disappear in the near future.

Have you visited a college or university library recently and watched the patrons? Many use the study carrels as a quiet escape from the commotion in their dorms or apartments; others stand in line to use the ever-increasing number of computer stations that can provide them with access to on-line information databases, digital periodicals, and the Internet; only a few still find their way into the stacks to consult printed reference materials, take down bound periodical volumes, and photocopy articles from them. On some campuses, all subscriptions to print versions of periodical volumes have been canceled in favor of the digital version, a trend that will probably accelerate.

The changes in libraries have not been driven by the libraries and librarians themselves, but by their users. Libraries are no longer simply repositories of printed materials. They are increasingly access points into the world of information, both analog and digital. Consequently, librarians – our customers – have had to revise their perception of their profession. When public libraries see their circulation statistics swollen not by books, but by borrowed DVDs and Nintendo disks, they are going to respond by providing more of these materials. When college, university and research libraries are prodded by professors and researchers who want to access institutional periodical collections through computer stations located on their desktops rather than make a trip across campus (or even down the hall) to the library, they are going to respond by changing their acquisition and collection management practices to cater to these users. When Google makes headlines with its digitization efforts at five major libraries as part of its efforts to “organize all the world’s information,” libraries feel pressure to provide more digital access to information themselves.

As vendors to the changing library community, library binders can no longer view themselves simply as packagers of printed information. They have to see themselves as a link in an increasingly complex information chain. As the above mentioned trends become even more widespread, they threaten to change libraries as we have known them even more rapidly, and consequently change the library binding industry.

There are no simple answers. Immediate availability, perceived or otherwise, of information is the key condition that has to be met by all links in the information chain. The competition library binderies face is not each other, but rather the various methods and means of storing, accessing and preserving information. How we respond to this challenge will determine our future in the changing digital world.

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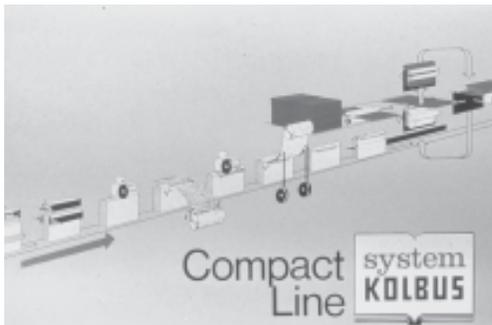
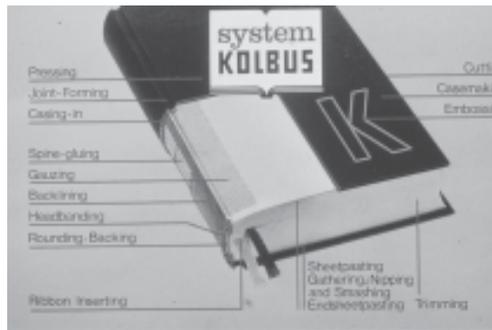
(“Headbands,” continued from page 3)

bookbinding. Having had the task of sewing 500 headbands, I used a relatively simple technique that combined sewing and lacing using two needles and, if desired, two different colored silk threads at an appropriate length—ends tied together. One threaded needle was inserted through the center of the very first section which was often, for fancy hand bound bindings, a multiple leaf end paper construction. Using the hole of the kettle stitch, approximately 12 to 15mm from the top, the needle would be reinserted from the spine which left the ends and knot on the spine. The trimmed, often gilded book block was then placed into a finishing press. For a support or core, leather scraps varying in thickness were used. A piece of parchment was mounted onto the leather allowing for a solid, yet flexible material around which the threads could be laced. Depending on the size of the book to be bound, determined by the edges of the covers, 2, 3 or 4 mm wide strips were cut. While the first thread was attached to the first section, the strip was placed into position and the headband lacing began. A pin stuck into the book vertically held the strip in place and the two threads were then moved back and forth, crossing each other. The trick was to maintain even tension to form an even bead. Every 1/4 to 3/8 inch, the needle was moved down into the spine. This was done to tie the headband down onto the book block. When finished, the remaining core material was cut off, the headband received a small amount of PVA glue and then set in place.

As I previously stated, there are many techniques. My father, a master bookbinder, used a piece of cord covered with shirting that extended down the spine. After gluing it to the spine, he sewed every stitch going through the shirting, then brought the thread around. One advantage of this was that the core stayed in place, but this procedure took more time than lacing.

Protecting the Headcaps

I have attended many preservation workshops in the United States and Canada. During these workshops, preservation librarians repeatedly demonstrated how to extract a book



Top: Terminology of an Edition Bound Hardcover Book.

Bottom: Schematic of an Edition Hardcover Binding Line, the center showing application of headbands from rolls.

from a tightly packed book shelf. The instructions included pushing the books remaining on the shelf to the side and grabbing the book to be removed in the center. Unfortunately, this is not always done and disastrous results have taken place in rare book libraries as a result. Most often, a student/reader will use his or her index finger, place it on top of the spine and pull. If the leather is already brittle, the spine will collapse and the leather will pull down the spine. The guilty person may then move the book to another place and the rare book library is stuck with another expensive repair job.

This is why some dedicated preservation bookbinders, when rebinding or restoring a valuable book, insist on a sewn-on headband, at least on the top. A sewn-on headband offers protection against such unfortunate “spine-pull” incidents. A book published by the Library of Congress in 1982, *Bookbinding and the Conservation of Books*, describes such incidents on page 130: “When the headband is an integral part of the book, it serves the practical purpose of taking up much of the strain from the spine covering when the book is pulled from the shelf in an *usual* manner.”

Commercial Headbands

Edition bound hardcover books usually feature decorative headbands. Although not an absolute necessity, the decorative headbands add to the appearance of a book, giving it a tailored finish. These headbands serve a purpose. The back-lining materials used, such as gauze and reinforcing papers, create a slight build-up. If no headbands are used, the head and tail on the spine will show a gap of approx. 1/16 inch. Other than this, they have no function other than to enhance the aesthetics of a hard cover binding.

Commercially made headbands are purchased in large rolls which are relatively stiff cotton tapes approximately 5/8 inch wide. One side features a silk-like, decorative border, that could be white, red and gold or any other color or combinations of color. The headbands are stiff so that they can be transferred successfully by mechanical devices on a commercial lining-up machine.

These days, commercial edition bookbinding machines are capable of processing approximately sixty books a minute. After trimming three sides, rounding and backing or leaving the spine flat, the book block first receives a coat of adhesive over the entire spine. Thereafter, gauze is mounted over the spine and extended onto the end papers. This will connect the book block with the covers. If headbands are desired, a roll of a special lining paper is slit to the height of the trimmed book block. Thereafter, the head and tail headbands are mounted onto the lining paper in a continuous web. In the lining-up process, the spine, after gauze application, receives a second coat of adhesive. The web of lining paper with the headbands mounted onto the ends is cut to the appropriate width of the spine and mounted onto the book block. The decorative part of the headbands is placed on top of the trimmed edges, head and tail. After an in-line rub down, the book blocks are mounted into the hardcover cases. Joint creasing and pressing follows. The final product is a well bound book with the headband colors giving it a finished touch while hiding the usual gap that would show if no headbands were used. Unfortunately, some publishing production managers eliminate the use of headbands to save money. Worse, some elect to have a

(continued next page)

headband mounted only on the top, causing bookbinders many headaches since this changes the radius of the spine. The final results are often problems with casing-in, which means having uneven or crooked squares.

Library Binding and Headbands

Most library bindings have no headbands. In the past, library binders used other methods to hide the gap on the head and tail. When cases for library bound books were made by hand, a cord was inserted on the top and bottom of the inlay which is the flexible board used on the spine. This created a headcap, which hid the unfortunate gap caused by the heavy duty back lining materials. Some binders claimed that such an inserted cord reinforced their library bindings. The specified cloth, Grade F buckram, passes all spine pull tests. With the invention of case-making machines for library binding, the insertion of cords was no longer a valid

option. Automation is the key to lower prices and with some exceptions, cords are no longer used on cases made for library binding. However, there are libraries that insist on glued-on headbands. As each book is different in size and thickness, this can be a difficult, labor intensive, and therefore relatively expensive task. To “close the gap,” a major machinery supplier for library binding, Mekatronics, came forward with a new machine for headband applications that eliminated the costly operation of manually applying headbands one by one. A self-adjusting, semi-automatic machine for applying headbands to book blocks of different sizes and thickness requires no make-ready or set-up. The machine automatically measures the thickness, and mounts and cuts a headband with ultimate precision - ideal for library or on-demand binding.

To finalize our discussion and answer the question, “Do headbands reinforce

bindings”? The answer is **yes** if a headband is sewn onto the book block and **no** if a headband is glued on.

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See yourself in print...

The New Library Scene (TNLS) is published by the Library Binding Institute. Its purpose is to communicate thoughtful reflection on practice or research related to the library binding industry. The target audience includes library binders, librarians, conservators, publishers, and printers. Contributions are encouraged. Please contact the LBI office to obtain a copy of author's guidelines.



APPLICATION FOR INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERSHIP

When the Library Binding Institute (LBI) was formed nearly seventy years ago, adherence to the highest possible standard in library binding was one of the organization's founding principles. Upholding and advocating high standards continue to be an essential component of LBI's mission.

The importance of preserving the written word cannot be underestimated. Increasing awareness about the value of library binding is critical as is educating library professionals on the long-term care, preservation, and maintenance of their book and serial collections. As the premier resource on library binding information and education, the Library Binding Institute exists to support librarians in this endeavor.

Institutional membership in LBI consists of institutions which have in-house library binderies, but who use outside commercial binders for substantial amounts of their binding needs. This type of membership also includes binders, librarians, and other individuals who are interested in the science and art of prolonging the useful life of library materials. Institutional members are entitled to participate in all programs and services of the Library Binding Institute.

Dues for this category of membership are \$100. Please complete the application and return with payment to: The Library Binding Institute, 14 Bay Tree Lane, Tequesta, FL, 33469. Phone: (561)745-6821, Fax: (561)745-6813, E-Mail: dnolan@lbibinders.org. Checks should be made payable to the Library Binding Institute. To join by credit card, please contact Debra Nolan at (561)745-6821.

Application for Institutional Membership

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