

Notes by Barbara Yale-Read from Bookbinding Workshop taught by Monique Lallier @  
Cheerio <http://www.calligraphycentre.com>

Monday, September 24, 2001

Monique has a table organized with thread, methycellulose , PVA and wax. We will need containers for PVA and water (to put brush in). Brush can stay in pot of glue during the day. Mix methycellulose and pva in container. Sanding blocks, paring machine, 2 marbles with 3 spoke shaves ( you want the one with 2 screws- not with 1) you can buy at Lowe's. Blade is totally square when you buy it – you need to file the edges and round them. Also you need to have the opening made larger at a machine shop (1 mm larger on both sides) This is to keep the leather from getting caught. If it's too tight the flesh of the leather gets caught. You can't use a spoke shave on suede leather – you have to use a paring knife.

We will begin with the leather bound book. We need to have our signatures ready. Monique will show how to begin with a new book, later she will show how to start with an old book. In bookbinding, you are better with more small signatures rather than fewer thick signatures.

Sewing the signatures:

A station is where the thread will come out of your book and link to the other signatures. Each place where the thread goes in and out (2 holes). Remember: The space from the edge of the page to the first hole is greater at the bottom than at the top. (visually weighted)

bottom: tail

top: head

foreedge

front cover

spine

back cover

fly leaf

doublure (the piece of paper which covers the front of the fly leaf and the inside of the cover.

Always use pencil when working on a book.

Monique always uses millimeters when working on a book. Measure 4-5 mm from the edge of the tail. Decide how many stations you want, divide by 1 number larger than number of stations you want. If you want a decorative (ploughed) edge at the top, allow enough room to trim after sewing. You need 2 holes on each side of each mark you have made (See Diagram

1)

After measuring and marking the sewing stations, score the edges of the book. The score mark should not be too deep.

Sewing the signatures:

Use a pointed needle; sewing a thick signature will require a more pointed needles.

Thread: a general rule – one thread length of spine for each signature. Don't go over 5 lengths- it will get tangled. Wax with beeswax, making sure all the thread is covered. Remove excess with fingernails. Thread needle, go back in the middle of the thread to keep it from coming undone. Using #16 thread. Thread thickness: it not as crucial in the technique we are doing. You don't want a very thick thread – it will give too much swelling at the spine. Number 16, 20, 25 –good general size thread. The lower the number, the thicker the thread. Unbleached linen thread.

Book on left hand side. Head is on the left. Take the first signature and flip it upside down. Open the signature and use the needle to finish the hole. Put and underneath to support the pages.

1. Go in the kettlestitch of the tail. Don't pull all the way through – reenter into the next hole. Always pull parallel to the spine. In/out, then pull the thread.
2. Kettlestitch the end when you finish sewing the third signature.
3. 2 kettlestitches at the end, one around the beginning thread

(See diagram #2)

PVA:Jade 403

Monique uses half and half wheat and rice paste. Wheat paste is strong, rice is more supple. She mixes methylcellulose into PVA. 1/2 c. pva to 1 tbsp. Methylcellulose. To mix the methylcellulose, you put a teaspoon into 12 ounces of water. Thins down the PVA and takes longer to dry. PVA is used with paper and when you want the drying time to be short. If you need more time to work with something, you mix it with Methylcellulose. Molecules of paste and PVA don't work well.

### **Applying paste to the spine:**

Apply STRAIGHT PVA to the spine, making sure the book is lined up against the edge of the table. Stroke outward toward the ends of the book so as not to get it on the pages. When

you are sure that you have PVA everywhere, you rub it with your thumb. Allow it to dry to the touch.

Meanwhile, prepare the endpapers. Fold the paper along the grain; cut to just slightly larger than your book pages.

Rebinding an old book.

Cutting the boards for the book

1. Find the grain of the board
2. Using mat board – not always easy to find the grain. Mark board with parallel lines when you determine the grain.
3. Cut 2 edges and check to make sure they are square.
4. When you have one square corner, put your book on the edge
5. The part of the book outside the text block is called the SQUARE. It should be thin – about the thickness of a sheet of mat board.
6. Cut 2 identical boards. Mark the inside with an “X.”
7. Sand the inside spine edge. Monique used a scalpel to cut a bevel first, then sanded. 1/3 of the thickness of the board.
8. Turn the board over and sand the OUTSIDE of the other 3 edges. 1/3 of the thickness of the paring on the spine edge. (it’s a pretty sharp bevel – 45°)
9. If you can see the bevel on the outside edges, it’s too sharp and needs to be graded back an inch.

### **Preparing the Leather**

James Brockman Paring Machine (available at Bookbinder’s)

When you don't have the paring machine, you use a marble cutting surface and a scalpel.

### **Spine, Headbands and the corners**

Spine: cut piece 1/2" wide on each side beyond the width of the spine (spine plus 1") Put the leather through the paring machine, adjusting the machine to slice away the thickness of the leather.

Headbands: 3" x 3/4

Corners: 1/2" wide – very small pieces of leather. These are just for protection on the corners.

Paring leather corners. Monique uses marble, but you can use glass (not good for tools) Paring stone from burgundy – you can sharpen your tools on the stone.

Paring knife (for books) or scalpel. Monique sharpens the paring knife on a piece of leather with crème. She then carefully cuts the spine leather very thin along the edges, so that it will blend in with the book.

Spine is thickest, corners are medium, headbands are thinnest.

### **Making the headbands**

You need thin cording. Wrap a piece of leather around a piece of cord (can be same or contrasting color). Monique forgot to bring the proper cording, so she used a piece of leather/ 2 strand of thread.

Mix PVA and methylcellulose. Roll cord in glue, round it . wrap leather around cord and press. Cut to fit; do not cover first and last signature of book. The cord needs to sit on the book, right on the top of the pages.

#### Covering the corners

After paring the leather, you feather the edges using a scalpel. Begin by gluing the leather to the inside of the corner of the book. Bring the leather over the corner and trim out a triangle of leather, fit it carefully; don't overlap the leather. Make leather to be folded to the outside the thickness of the board plus 1 mm.

## **Putting Leather on the book**

Leather on the spine is not glued to the spine.

1. Measure the spine (straight visual line of the spine) Use a piece of paper to make the measurement
2. Using card stock or manila folder. Arches paper – 2 pieces laminated together will work. You can also use Bible board
3. Cut card stock at the height of the boards and measured width.
4. Sand the edge of the spine reinforcement piece
5. Place reinforcement strip in the middle of the prepared leather. Use a ballpoint pen to mark position.
6. Apply paste to reinforcement strip
7. Attach strip to leather. It doesn't matter which side the bevel is on.
8. Fold leather over to be slightly higher than the book.
9. Glue the ends, wait for paste to penetrate (wheat and rice paste mixed) Gives you more time to work with the ends. Shape into arc with your fingers, making it slightly higher than the reinforcement in the center, and lower on the sides. It feels like there is some cord in it. When Monique folds it over, there is extra leather from pushing the sides down further than the center. She eases the extra leather in with a bone folder. The paste mix is necessary because it takes time to work with the leather.

## **Covering the Boards with paper**

1. Make a window the size of the book boards, to see what the design will look like.
2. You need to allow for turn-ins on all 4 sides. Monique cuts the spine very narrowly so as to allow for the design to continue from the front to the back after the spine.
3. Apply paste to the paper after marking the position of the board
4. Put the board in place
5. Miter the corners (see diagram #3)
6. Finish turning the paper over the board
7. Trim the extra paper from the inside of the board, always pulling from inside to outside.

## **Lining the boards**

1. Check square of liner. Using manila card stock
2. Lining will fit inside the turn-ins.
3. Cut liner
4. apply paste to liner (should be same mixture as you used for the outside of the board)
5. Apply liner
6. Put cover into press

**Finishing the book** (we did this Wednesday afternoon)

Attaching the spine to the book:

You don't glue the spine – you just glue the leather. Use a cover sheet and apply glue to one of the flaps on the leather. Place on the book, making sure that the card is lined up carefully on the edge of the spine. Make sure that the top and bottom edge are even with the endpaper. Use a mix of methylcellulose and PVA. Hold the book upright and glue the other side.

Attaching the boards to the book:

Put paste on the back of the endpaper, but not up to the edge of the leather. Put paste along the spine edge of the wrong side of the board. After putting the board in place, hold book at an angle (cover open, but not too far) to attach the board to the book. Rub along the inside of the book to attach. If the endpaper stretches, trim carefully using a scalpel or x-acto knife. This must be done right away. It will be impossible to remove the paper if it dries. If you have a very fragile paper, you may want to put removable tape on the fore-edge where you want the paper to stop before gluing the endpaper to the book board.

Put the book in a press, putting a barrier between the cover and the book. Check after 10 minutes to make sure everything is ok. You can use weights or books on top. Before putting the book in the press, Monique put a blotter into the spine, then pressed down onto weights, applying pressure to the spine edge. Alternative: Always put a book in the middle of the press. Put 2 boards on the edge of the spine, with the spine outside the boards, then put into a nipping press.

Wednesday, September 26, 2001

## **Pamphlet**

Use about 12 pages/6 folios

Colored/decorative pages – need 2, face to face at outside of signature. If back of paper is unattractive, it can be tipped to the first plain page.

Mark sewing stations – head is always closer than tail. Mark the head, then mark the tail, then find the center. Poke hole through using an awl.

No wax on thread, 2 lengths of thread. See diagram for sewing the pamphlet

## **Cutting out the Leather**

It is more and more difficult to find leather that doesn't have any scars or marks. You look for an unblemished surface. If the spine is good, you can put the spine of the book on the spine of the leather. Look for blemishes and avoid them. Put book on top of skin and mark with bone folder. Cut out with scissors. It will be recut (be sure to cut it a little bigger than the book.

Gluing:

1. Apply glue to edge of spine, attach book to inside of cover. Wait for glue to dry.
2. Using PVA glue, apply glue to front of first page. Spread cover from spine over the page; burnish with bone folder on inside.
3. Glue the other side the same way.
4. Put Saran Wrap between the glued page and the next page on the front and back to keep moisture from penetrating to other pages. Monique actually wraps the text block.
5. Let it dry, than trim. You can add an edging or any kind of trim.

## **The pamphlet with several signatures:**

1. Apply glue to spine, round SLIGHTLY.
2. Cut out leather
3. Cut out endpapers

4. Tip endpapers to front and back of booklet
5. Use PVA, you can use mix of methylcellulose. Apply glue to spine “about the only time you work with the book in the air...” If the knot is too big, you can take the scalpel and scrape it down after the glue is dry. Always use PVA on the spine. She doesn't shave all of the knot – just what is sticking up. The spine is glued, so it won't come apart. Put book down in place and check to see if there is enough leather. Rub the spine on the outside using a bone or Teflon folder.
6. Apply paste to the back of the first end page (the front of the book). This will form the lining for the cover. Carefully pull the suede over the cover and press into place with your fingers. Burnish the inside with the bone folder. Use saran wrap to swap the book block. Allow to dry before trimming the suede. Put between two pieces of cardboard and place a small amount of weight on top. It doesn't have boards, so it doesn't need a weight.

### Trimming the Book

Place the ruler on the endpaper with the book block on top. Using a scalpel, trim in relation to the text block. Just a hair larger than the text block. When you cut, put all the pressure on the ruler. If you have a good blade, it will do all the work. Then do the other fore-edge. Next do the head, stopping just short of the spine. Finish with the scissors, leaving a little rounded edge at the top of the spine.

Book with Paste Board (board on which paste paper has been done)

Thursday, September 27, 2001

### **Case-bound Book**    Jade 403

Using Bible board – a fairly thin, flexible material. Can use mat board or Davey board, but it needs to be sanded on the edges. You can choose to sand the spine on the wrong side, but not as much as for the leather bound book.

1. Make your signatures, add endpapers, add a piece of mull which extends at least an inch beyond the spine on both sides. Use straight PVA on the spine. Don't glue the mull to the endpaper until you are ready to put the book into the case.

Sumi paper, Kozo – to back cloth Put your cloth face down on a large piece of bookboard. Put paste on your backing paper and put down onto the back of your cloth. The paper will extend beyond all sides of your fabric. Allow the board to dry overnight, sitting upright, not flat. The board will pull taut and it will be easy

Endpapers: do the flexi edge with the fly leaf, leave extra paper on the side which will be attached to the binding in case it will be needed.

2. Bible board – cut boards and spine. Spine should be measured as you look at it straight on. Never go over the edge of the spine. Line where the light hits the spine. Better too narrow than too wide.

Bookcloth – has grain – usually parallel to the selvedge. Bible board also has grain.

3. Take the measure of the spine with a piece of paper – following the round contour of the spine, including the Bible board. If you are using a thicker board, you should include it in the measurement. Add about 1/8”

4. Cut bookcloth, roughly 1” larger than needed.

5. Mark spine on back of bookcloth.

6. Bevel edges of spine

7. Draw outline of board on paper, using spine measurement to separate 2 boards.

8. Apply paste either to bookcloth or to boards and attach to one side. Make sure everything is still lined up. Attach board to other side. Then attach spine strip.

9. Miter corners of bookcloth. Allow for thickness of cloth. Glue the fore edge. Cover the foreedge, and push the corners in toward the center of the book.

10. Glue the back edge, then the top and bottom.

**NEVER USE DAVEY BOARD ON THE SPINE!!**

11. If you have a thick book, you make a triple fold strip the length of the spine. You can use Arches, a text wove. You leave it hollow and glue it to the mull before binding. You should

also put headbands. When you attach the case, you glue the hollow to the spine of the case, then you glue the endpapers.

This is called a “casebook” because the case is put together separately from the book

12. The endpaper is kept longer because it may need extra paper to make the shoulder. You often need more paper on the fore edge. The pastedown is trimmed to be slightly longer than the flyleaf. You can make headbands out of matching paper at this point. If you want to put a bookmark, make it a couple of inches longer and paste to the spine before gluing the headband in place.

“tranche file” tranche - a trench or a ditch, file = thread

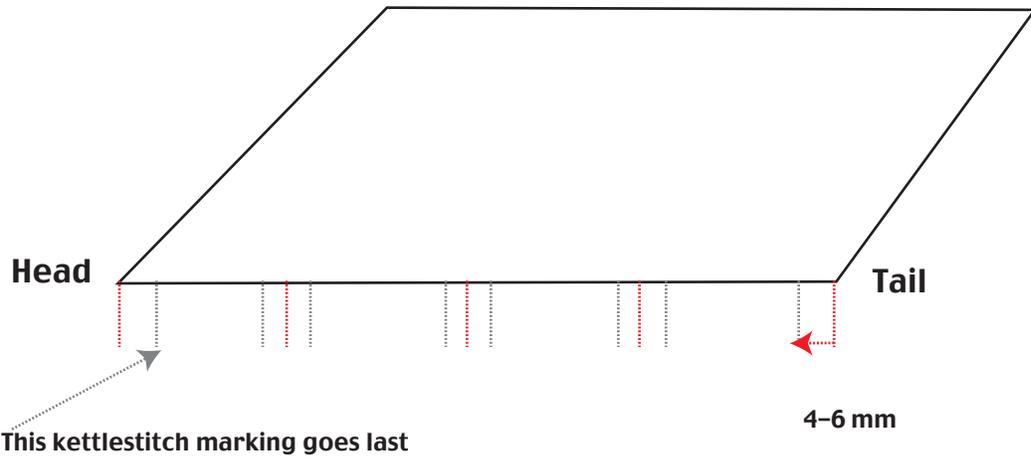
13. Apply glue to the back of the paste down, then to the mull. Put bone folder into book (between the 2 endpapers) to maneuver it into place and paste cover to book. **DON'T OPEN BOOK AT THIS POINT-IT WILL STRETCH THE PAPER AND THERE WILL BE A CREASE.** Trim any excess paper away from edge of inside of book. If you see that the paper stretches, you can trim away the paper before gluing. Glue the other side of the book into place. Put Saran Wrap over the pages, blotter paper under cover, and put it under weight (it doesn't have to go in the press. Always put the book under weight until it's totally dry.

E-mail Addresses

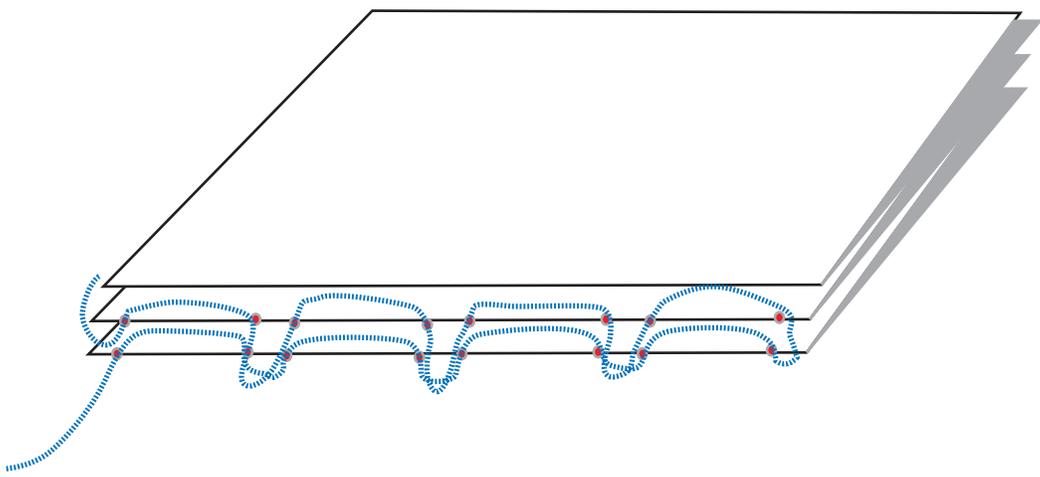
[folium@triad.rr.com](mailto:folium@triad.rr.com) Monique Lallier

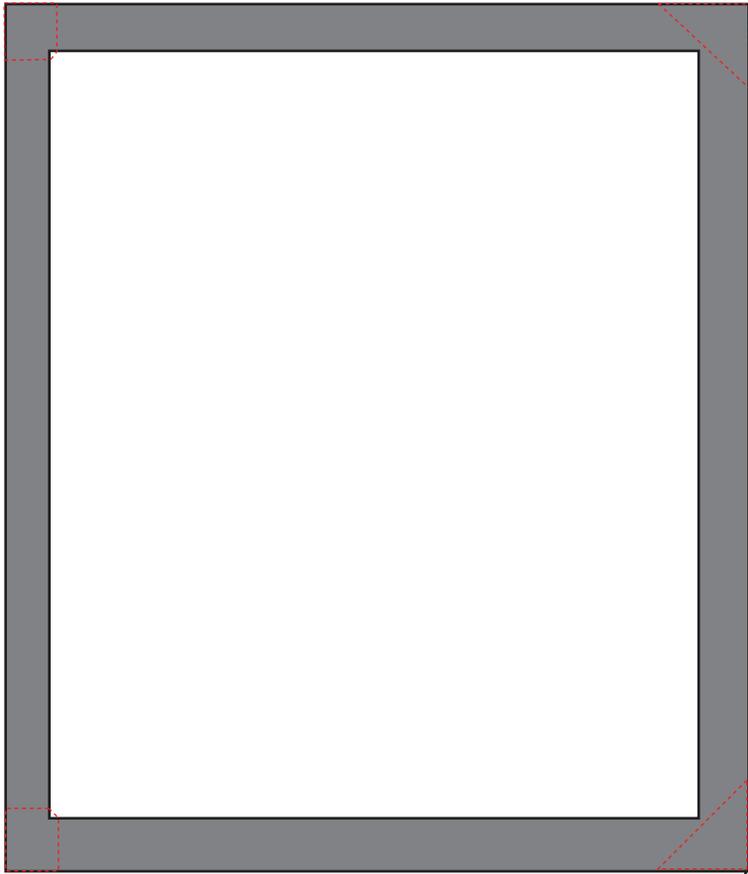
Monique website: <http://www.moniquelallier.com>

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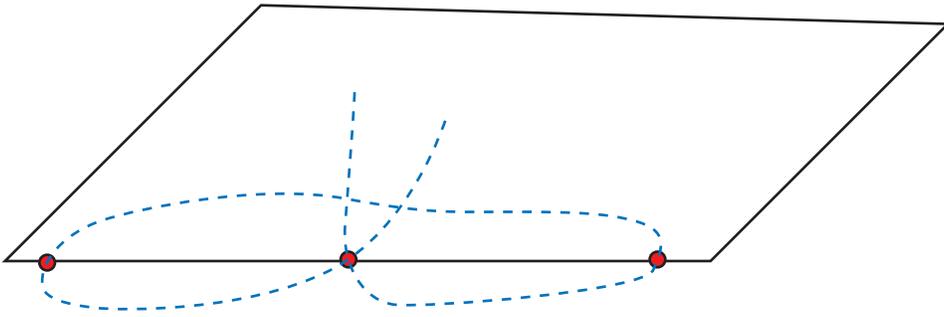


1. Measure distance from 4mm indentation (bottom kettlestitch) to head of book.
2. Divide by 1 number larger than number of stations you want.
3. mark with pencil
4. Mark each side of stations. (5mm each side)
6. Mark head kettle stitch 5 mm from top of book





**Red dotted lines indicate areas to be cut away**



**Sewing the pamphlet: thread gets knotted over long center thread ©B.Yale-Read**