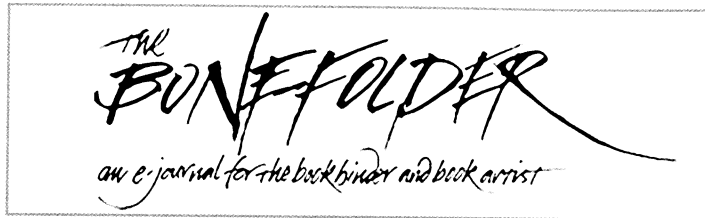


A NEW MECHANISM FOR OUR TIME (TWO)



masthead design by Don Rash

The avant-garde among us will already know the Philobiblon website and the many roles of Peter Verheyen, its creator. If any of us doubts that computer networks have a significant role to play in our bookbinders society's future (and at least three do), then I urge you to look at this new facility:

www.philobiblon.com/bonefolder/index.html

To quote from its front page:

"Welcome to the Bonefolder, a new peer-reviewed "open-access" e-journal for bookbinding and the book arts... will serve a global audience and contribute to the body of knowledge in the book arts...a medium for the publication of articles on a variety of book arts topics. These include hand bookbinding, teaching, business practice, the history of the book, general tips & tricks, exhibitions, "how-to" technical articles, and reviews...We would also like to pay homage to the excellent journals published by Designer Bookbinders, the Society of Bookbinders, and the Guild of Book Workers, who with their proven history of excellence in publishing and the promotion of the book arts have set the bar high..."

we will take advantage of the benefits of online publishing to bring you an e-journal which will complement...other publications. There is a tremendous amount of knowledge waiting to be shared, and we would like to do our part to foster the continued development...of the book arts. [my emphasis - Ed.]

In other words, and on a much grander scale, *Bonefolder* is "The New Mechanism For Our Time" that I am constantly wittering on about. Created by people who wish to add support to The Ancient Craft, not erode it, mostly on the simple premise that increasing the access to a greater library of information for a larger number of interested subscribers must be beneficial: and who could argue otherwise?

Enthused by *The Bonefolder*, even in its nascent state, I emailed its Publisher/Editor/Reviewer, Peter Verheyen, whose own view is:

"The Bonefolder grew out of my interest in alternative publishing means and the "open access" movement for scholarly communication that is a hot topic in academic libraries where I am employed. There was also a sense among some of us, that there were a many articles worthy of publication that were simply not being published for whatever reason. In regards to the "open access" movement which seeks to set knowledge free, I also just wanted to prove it could be done. In many libraries and at the university there is a great deal of talk, but much of that revolves around complaining about how much work is involved. So far, I have to say that it has been no worse than any other organization I have been involved in (I'm currently Exhibitions Chair for the Guild of Book Workers - again).

Both (Book Arts Web and Bonefolder) were created to facilitate discussion and the exchange of information amongst peers first, and indirectly to increase public awareness. The "new defense against a fading craft" expression is something I hear often, usually just expressed as "fading craft" in various organizations I am involved with -- mostly MDE and ARA. Based on what I have experienced with Book_Arts-L [precursor to Book Arts Web] I think the craft is hardly "fading," quite the contrary, but it is changing as more people are entering the field with different expectations.

The expression of the craft is also changing, away from traditional binding and to other "alternative" forms of structure. I'm not sure it is all bad, but it is forcing the "traditional" organizations (GBW, CBBAC, DB, MDE, SoB, ...) to scramble in an attempt to ward off an identity crisis. What we are trying to do with the Bonefolder is focus the traditional aspects of the craft (including business aspects, technique, tools, education) while at the same time generating interest amongst the "newbies" to the field. We are also trying to proactively and confidently let those that purchase/commission work (librarians...) know that the craft is not dying, that we are still relevant, and seeking dialog proactively without appearing desperate.

As a craft/profession we can't afford to throw up a wall around ourselves and try to keep change out. I used to think that we could/should but have since come around, without selling out. [my emphasis Ed] *What I have noticed though on this side of the pond and elsewhere is that traditional binders (including very well known ones) are starting to experiment and showing that the traditional craft aspects are more relevant than ever if one wants to create quality work. While cursed in some ways (lack of traditional training opportunities) we are blessed in that we have always had a process of assimilating traditions and techniques to develop them further... It hasn't always been smooth, but it's there..."*

Peter Verheyen, email response to Editor December 2004

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## BOB THE BINDER progress

As you see from our cover I remain fascinated by the eponymous binder of the 1950s. With the help of Mary Bartlett and David Lanning we can say with some confidence that "Bob" was based upon the real-life binder John Mason, who taught at Leicester College of Art, not a million miles from The Grange Fibre Co. in Leicester whose bookcloth products "Bob" sold so heartily.

Although John Mason does not figure in the Binders' Pantheon of the time, he fascinates Mary Bartlett who seeks any and all details of his life and works. Researching 70 years of the press and bindery at Dartington, Mary finds John Mason part of that story. His father was J.H.Mason (1875-1951), well-known typographer, and John is mentioned as binder at the Gregynog Press, as well as author of many books on papermaking, printing, machine ruling and bookcraft. He founded the Twelve by Eight press while at Leicester.

In the Grange Fibre Co. book celebrating the success of their advertising campaign featuring *Bob the Binder*, early representations of him as cartoons are later replaced by photographs of a real-life bowler hatted, mustachioed gentleman identical to the engraved version. Did John Mason play himself? If you have information about John Mason, please tell Mary Bartlett.

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