

The Stationers' Foundation  
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To the attention of the Trustees of the Stationers' Foundation.

I am Ana C. García Pérez, and I want to express my profound gratitude for the Major Award you honoured me with in May 2022. Thanks to your generous support, I have had the opportunity to pursue my master's degree in Conservation Studies of Books and other Library Materials at West Dean College of Arts and Conservation.

Having completed the Graduate Diploma in the same specialization and institution the previous academic year (2021-2022), I found myself unable to afford the fees for the MA programme and contemplated the possibility of indefinitely postponing my studies until I could gather the necessary funds. However, thanks to the Stationers' Foundation, I have been able to continue my educational journey and bring to an end six remarkable years of formal training in the field of conservation.

Despite the challenges posed by the shortage of tutors since the beginning of the academic year, I am pleased to share that I have made the most of the situation. I have taken the opportunity to further enhance my independent working skills, engage in captivating conservation projects, refine my expertise in bookbinding, and improve my skills in managing competing priorities while delivering high-quality work within established timelines.

Furthermore, as the master's programme involved a six-week work placement at an institution outside of West Dean College, I had the incredible opportunity to undertake mine in the conservation studios at the prestigious Cambridge University Library (CUL), where I could contribute to such significant projects as the Darwin Project and the Curious Cures Project.

This experience has been instrumental in shaping my professional development, providing me with valuable insights and skills that have significantly enhanced my expertise in the field of conservation. It has opened doors to new opportunities and expanded my knowledge base in the conservation of library and archive materials, allowing me to tackle more complex conservation projects with confidence.

I would like to provide you with an overview of the fascinating conservation projects that I have had the privilege to work on, the different models of historical bookbinding structures I have created throughout this academic year, and the research project I have undertaken as part of my MA thesis dissertation. These projects have not only deepened my understanding of library and archive material conservation but have also provided me with valuable insights into the manufacturing processes of different historical binding techniques.

- Conservation projects.

By pursuing my master's degree at West Dean College, I have had the opportunity to participate in a wide range of projects that have presented a level of complexity beyond what I encountered during my Graduate Diploma year. Here are three examples of the projects I have had the opportunity to work on. I hope they demonstrate the complexity of the master's degree I have completed and the level of proficiency I have achieved as an emerging conservator of books and other library materials in the United Kingdom.

This year, I had the privilege of working on a Portuguese hand fan that exhibited a fragile paper mount with numerous tears (Figure 1). Additionally, historical repairs were evident on the back, where plastic tape was used to mend certain sections of the paper, along with the use of an additional paper tape to reinforce another area (Figure 2). The main challenge of this project was not only repairing the paper tears but also addressing the adhesive residue and stains left on the back of the paper mount.



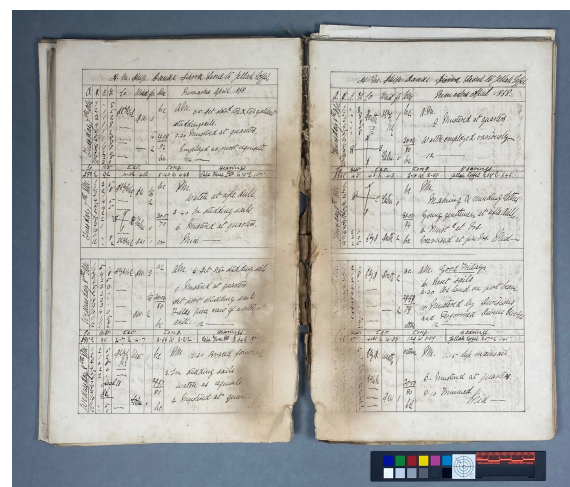
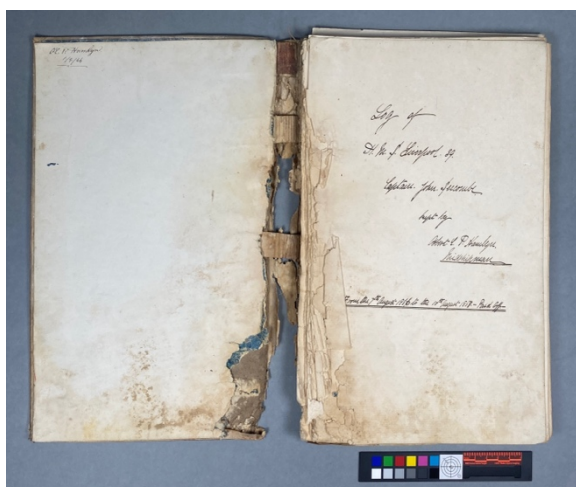
**Figures 1 and 2.** Front and back of the hand fan (initial condition).

After completing all the necessary treatments, I am pleased to inform you that the hand fan is now fully functional, and it can be safely stored in a customized protection box I personally made, ensuring its preservation for years to come (Figures 3 and 4).



Figures 3 and 4. Front and back of the hand fan (final condition).

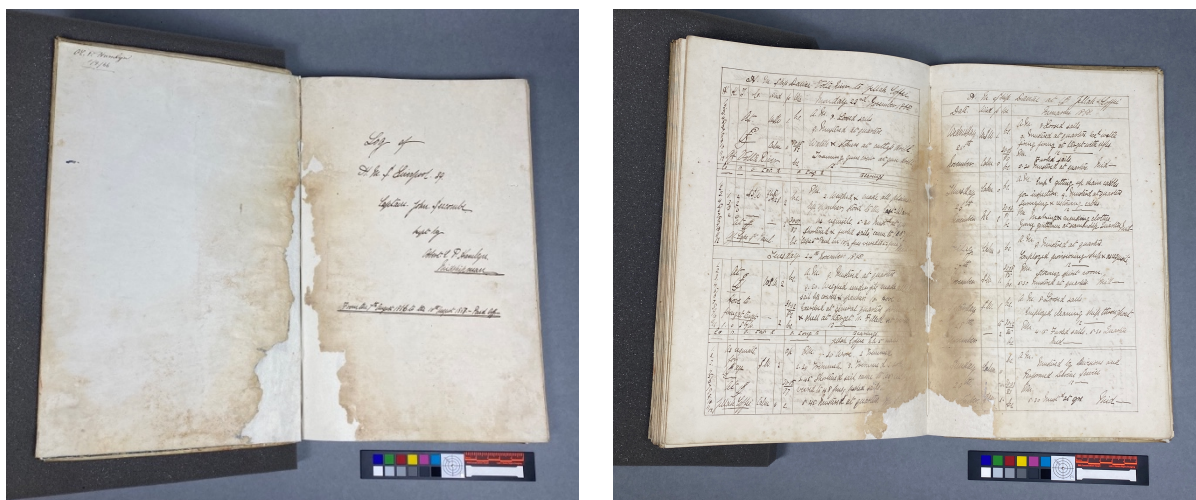
Additionally, I am very proud to share that I had the opportunity to work on and successfully complete the conservation project of a Log of H.M.S. Liverpool 39 from the 1867 to 1868 from the Royal Naval Museum in Portsmouth. This book had experienced water damage and developed mould, particularly on the spine area, leading to the complete deterioration of the book's sewing and pages (Figure 5 and 6).



Figures 5 and 6. View of the initial condition of two pages.



After finishing the necessary surface cleaning of the entire book, filling in the lost areas with new paper, strengthening the weak and brittle sections, and resewing the entire book, the Log of H.M.S. Liverpool 39 is now fully accessible and usable again as its functionality and stability have been successfully restored (Figures 7 and 8).



**Figures 7 and 8.** View of the final condition of two pages.

Lastly, I wish to present *Mary's Album* as the final conservation sample for discussion. This book, which dates back to the nineteenth century, possesses a distinctive parallelogram shape. Its boards became entirely detached from the pages, rusty staples served as the sole means of holding the pages together, and the spine was entirely lost (Figures 9 and 10).



**Figures 9 and 10.** View of the initial condition of *Mary's Album*.



This little book required the design of a new spine, the replacement of its corrosive staples with a more durable and stable sewing system using linen thread –which had been causing the deterioration of the paper in those areas–, and multiple paper tear and leather cover repairs.

Now, the current condition of the book has noticeably improved compared to its state at the beginning of the project (Figures 11 and 12). It has been fully restored to a functional state, and now it is possible to consult and enjoy its internal annotations.



**Figures 11 and 12.** View of the final condition of *Mary's Album*.

○ Models of historical bookbinding structures.

This academic year, I had the opportunity to learn from brilliant professionals who taught me how to create three models of different historical bookbinding structures: Coptic binding (2nd–11th century) (Figures 13 and 14), Gothic binding (14th–16th century) (Figures 15 and 16), and English Stationery binding (18th – 20th century) (Figures 17 and 18); and two additional models of the preservation binding structures designed by Christopher Clarkson and Robert Espinosa, known as Limp Vellum bindings (Figures 19 and 20).



**Figures 13 and 14.** Model of a Coptic binding.



**Figures 15 and 16.** Model of a Gothic binding.



**Figures 17 and 18.** Model of an English Stationery binding.



**Figure 19.** Model of a Limp Vellum binding following Christopher Clarkson's original structure.



**Figure 20.** Model of an Espinosa Limp Vellum binding following Robert Espinosa's modified structure.

- Research project for MA thesis dissertation.

My MA thesis dissertation, titled *An investigation of the history, manufacture, and damage patterns of Andalusí Bindings for future research and conservation treatments*, aimed to provide valuable insights into the cultural significance of Andalusí bindings and inform best practices for their preservation.

Considering the time of production of this type of manuscripts, the cultural influences of this era, and the definitions of "Manuscript" as "A book, document, etc., written by hand" from the Oxford English Dictionary, and "Andalusí" as "Belonging or related to Al-Andalus or Muslim Spain" from the Dictionary of the Spanish Language of the Real Academia de la Lengua, this type of binding has decisively been identified as "Any text, document, or book that was handwritten in Al-Andalus during the period between 711 and 1492, regardless of its Muslim, Jewish, or Christian origin".

This research project sought to deepen conservators' understanding of this type of binding by conducting an analysis of its manufacturing process, composition materials, and damage patterns caused by factors related to the ineffectiveness of the design of Andalusí bindings. The findings of this research were intended to contribute to the conservation field by helping other researchers and book conservators approach Andalusí bindings with greater knowledge and expertise.



I hope this report adequately reflects my dedication, commitment, and growth throughout this academic year, and showcases my expertise and skill as an emerging conservator of books, paper, and other library materials in the United Kingdom.

I also wanted to express how much of a pleasure it was to host Dr. Ruth Frendo during her visit to West Dean College on January 30th, as part of our Funders Day. I felt both pleased and grateful that she could take the time to see my work and the projects I had the opportunity to contribute to during my MA year. It was a delightful opportunity to meet her and gain valuable insights into her perspective on historical items as an archivist.

Furthermore, I would like to take a moment to extend my heartfelt appreciation to my mentor, Philippa Räder. Her unwavering support and encouragement have been instrumental in my academic growth over the past year. I am truly grateful for our monthly meetings and the opportunity to visit her private workshop, the Dragon Press Bindery, nestled in an enchanting and distinctive area of southern Wales.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to the Stationers' Foundation for their invaluable and remarkable support throughout this academic year. Their assistance has played a significant role in shaping my educational journey and preparing me for the next phase of my career.

Thanks to the Stationers' Foundation's generosity, I have been able to achieve such significant qualification and gain essential professional independence and skills. Your contribution has made a lasting impact on my academic and professional journey, and I am truly grateful for your unwavering support.

Yours faithfully,

**Ana Cristina García Pérez**

Conservator of books, paper, and other library materials.

Major Award 2022 – The Stationers' Foundation.

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