

Glossary of Bookbinding Terms

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adhesive binding, unsewn binding, perfect binding

A binding made of single sheets stuck together at the back with glue or paste. See also sewn binding.

back, backbone

The edge of a book along which the leaves or sections are fastened together in binding. See also spine.

Wedge-shaped boards, usually of beech. They are angled at the wide ends to assist in making the joint on the spine when backing.

bands

The cords or thongs on which the sections of a book are sewn. If the cords are laid into grooves so that they lie flush with or slightly below the surface of the back, they are referred to as recessed cords. If the cords or thongs are not recessed, they form ridges across the backbone of the book and are referred to as raised bands. See also flexible binding.

binding

A bookcover, in any style.

bled

Image extended to the edge of a page.

bookcloth

Book-covering material made from woven cotton.

collate

To check a book thoroughly to ensure that it is complete and in the right order.

codex (pl. codices)

Structure comprising covers and writing material fastened at one side to open like a book, as opposed to scrolls.

colophon

1. In old books, an inscription at the beginning or end of a book, often including the printer's name and details of production. 2. In modern books, the publisher's device.

deckle edge

The conspicuous broken edge on handmade paper, caused by the fibres creeping between the deckle frame and the sieve during manufacture.

endbands

Collective term used to describe headbands and tailbands. See also headband, tailband,

endpapers

The sheets of paper (two or more) which come between the cover and the sewn sections. Part of the binding construction, they comprise, at their most basic, a board paper, also referred to as a pastedown (which is usually coloured and which serves to counteract the warp of the boards caused by the covering material) and a free fly leaf, which protects the first or last pages of text.

foreedge

The front edge of a book, opposite the spine. So called because this edge originally faced outward from the shelves and the title was painted, inked or scorched on the edges of the leaves.

French groove

In the library style, the groove down the edge of the spine, between the joint and the board. Its function is to enable the thick leather used in this binding style to fold more easily at the hinge.

French sewing

The sewing together of two or more sections without tapes. Each section is linked to the rest by catching up the loops of thread of the preceding section.

gathering

Collecting the sections or sheets together in the correct sequence to make up a complete book.

grain (direction), machine direction

The orientation of the fibres in paper and board, or of the warp thread in cloth. The grain must always run from head to tail of the book.

gsm

Grams per square metre. The standard measurement used for weighing paper and board.

guard book

A type of binding, e.g. a photograph album, in which the spine is bulked out by the addition of narrow strips or folds of paper so that it is the right size when photographs or other inserts are added.

guards, guarding

1. Strips of paper or cloth pasted or glued to the back folds of sections, or to single diagrams or maps, for their repair or reinforcement. 2. Narrow folds or strips of paper or card used in guard books.

head

The top edge of a binding or page.

headband

A true headband consists of coloured threads entwined tightly round a core of vellum backed with leather, and is sewn through the sections, filling the gap at the spine between the top or bottom of the section and the edges of the boards. It thus helps to prevent the sections collapsing through the effect of gravity, and also serves to lessen the damage done when the book is pulled off the shelf by its headcap. Imitation headbands, which are purely decorative, are merely stuck to the back folds of the sections. The band at the tail of the book is sometimes called the tailband, and both head and tailbands are collectively referred to as endbands.

imposition

The method of arranging the pages of the book so that they are in the correct sequence when the sheet is printed and folded.

inner joint

The inside hinge of the cover, made of the fold of the endpapers and sometimes cloth or leather. See also joint.

insert

Additional matter placed within a book or pamphlet without being permanently fixed (e.g. a diagram in a pocket at the end of a book).

kettle stitch, catch stitch
A catch stitch or knot made at the end of each section to join it to the preceding one. (From the German word ketteln, 'to pick up stitches'.)

knock up (US: jog)
To tap the sections or sheets at the spine and head so that they lie evenly and squarely. It is an important part of many binding operations, especially before cutting the edges.

leaf
The front and back of a page. A sheet.

loose-leaf binding
A binding made up of single sheets of paper or other material, with or without holes punched or slots cut in the back margins, and held together by thongs, cords, posts, rings, wire spirals, plastic combs, bars or spring mechanisms.

marbled paper
Paper with a decorative, marble-like appearance, obtained by laying it onto a viscous liquid so that it picks up colours floating on the surface.

mull, super
An open-weave cotton cloth stiffened with starch to facilitate handling. It is used as the first lining on the spine.

pacing
The modulation of time in a book. Cadence.

pagination
Leaf flow. Process of turning pages in a direct line from beginning to the end of a book.

parchment
Sheep or goatskin (with the hair removed) that has been split, soaked, limed and dried under tension, not tanned like leather.

pastedown
See endpapers.

perfect binding
See adhesive binding.

recto
The right-hand page of a book, usually with an odd page number.

(direct) referral
A relationship between pictures by the bookmaker.

(random) referral
Undirected movement by free association made by the viewer in any unit.

sections
A group of folded sheets, usually comprising 4, 8, 12, 16 or 32 pages, which together make up a complete book.

sewn binding
A binding made up of sections sewn together. See also adhesive binding.

spine
The part of the cover which wraps over the back of the book.

stab stitching, stabbing
Securing a large number of single sheets together by driving metal staples more than half way through the back margins, from both sides.

super
See mull.

swell
The additional thickness in the sewn folds of the sections, caused by the sewing thread and any repair paper.

tail
The bottom of a binding or page.

tailband
A true headband consists of coloured threads entwined tightly round a core of vellum backed with leather, and is sewn through the sections, filling the gap at the spine between the bottom of the section and the edges of the boards. It thus helps to prevent the sections collapsing through the effect of gravity, and also serves to lessen the damage done when the book is pulled off the shelf by its headcap. Imitation headbands, which are purely decorative, are merely stuck to the back folds of the sections. The band at the tail of the book is sometimes called the tailband, and both head and tailbands are collectively referred to as endbands.

text block
The sections, sewn or unsewn, that make up the text of the book. See also sewn block.

title page
The recto of the third or fourth leaf of a book, on which is printed the complete title of the book, with other information such as author, volume number, date, patron, publisher's name, and place and date of publication.

turn-in, turnover, overlap
The part of the covering material which is turned in over the edges of the boards to protect them. It is a characteristic of all books.

vellum
Calfskin (with the hair removed) that has been soaked, limed and dried under tension, not tanned like leather.

verso
A left-hand page of a book, usually with an even page number.

weaver's knot
A secure knot for joining thread together.

whole binding, full binding
A binding that is covered entirely in the same material.

wove (paper)
Paper without a pattern of wires, normally visible when held to the light.

wrappers
The covers of a binding that has no boards. They can be paper or vellum.