GLOSSARY OF BOOKBINDING TERMS

This first glossary is an alphabetical listing of general and historical bookbinding terms used within the trade and in bookbinding literature. More advanced scholars will find many entries that are not strictly binding terms. I have included them for the benefit of the serious book collector because they are often found in dealer’s catalogues. The reader will also find that I have created a separate glossary for “Binding Structures.” and “Binders, Designers and Styles of Decoration.” These two headings have their own separate section.

To save this glossary from drowning in a sea of alternate terms, all such synonyms are cross-referenced in the index. It is hoped that this glossary will be a step towards the standardizing of many binding descriptions. Since any terms used in describing bindings are themselves entries in the glossary, it did not seem necessary to cross-reference them by italicization. However, terms that add information to other terms are italicized.

The London bindery of Westley & Clark, 1842
“The Bookbinder”
Old German engraving
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accentuated kettle stitches A strip of leather or cord stuck over the kettle stitches, producing a false raised band near head and tail of the spine. Popular in France in the 16th century.

accordion fold A piece of paper or several pieces of paper pasted edge-to-edge, folded first forward and then back. Also called a concertina or zig-zag fold.

acid migration The transfer of acid from a material containing it to one with less or no acid. Also called acid transfer.

adhesive binding Individual leaves held together with adhesive rather than sewing. Some form of adhesive binding has occasionally been used since the 17th century. Adhesive binding as we know it today dates back to the 1840's. Also called cutback, double fanned, flex, unsewn, perfect or slitback binding. See also caoutchouc binding.

adhesives Any of several substances—paste, animal or fish glues, and various synthetic adhesives—used to bond materials together.

album A blank book designed to contain pasted-in items, usually stubbed to allow for the thickness of added material. Also called a scrapbook. See also stub.

Also a book of envelopes for phonograph records called a record album.

Aldine tools Of Near Eastern origin, probably due to the Greek binders employed by Aldus.
**all along sewing** The thread goes all along inside the folds of the sections from kettle stitch to kettle stitch passing over or around the sewing supports. Also called bench (obsolete), all across, all on, one on, one sheet on and flexible sewing.

![Diagram of all along sewing binding]

**alla rustica binding** A plain, sturdy type of paper binding, sewn on supports laced into paper covers with wide turn-ins. Used in Italy and Spain from the 17th to 19th century on remaindered books. See also *paper binding* pp. 112-113.

![Diagram of alla rustica binding]

**alligator leather** Leather from the skin of any member of the reptilian order. Called crocodile leather in England.

![Alligator leather image]

**almanac** A book containing calendrical and other information. Usually an annual publication, often in a daintily decorated binding.

![Almanac book image]

**aluminum binding** A boxlike binding with a hinged cover available from stationery stores.

![Aluminum binding image]

**aluminum leaf** Leaf or foil used instead of silver in blocking edition binding. It tarnishes more slowly than silver.

**alum tawed** A skin, usually goat or pig skin, prepared with alum and salt. It is always referred to as "skin" and not "leather," since technically, it is not. Also called whittawed.
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**animal glue** An adhesive made from hides or bones. Hide glue is superior to bone glue.

**annuals** Intentionally ephemeral books such as almanacs or collections of miscellaneous information often bound in watered silk, velvet, papier mâché, and such. Popular in the 19th century and frequently intended as gift books. See also *almanac*.

**annular dot** A dot within a ring.

**anthemion** A flat radiating cluster.

**antique** Aspects of a binding such as edges or tooling which simulate an earlier period. Both the term and the practice are mostly obsolete.

**antique gold edges** Edges gilt with two colors of gold.

**arabesque** Stylized foliage connected by spiraling or undulating stems. It is of Islamic origin and has been popular since the 16th century.

**Armenian binding.** See pp. 86-87.

**Armenian bole** A powdered red clay used as a coloring material or as a base for gold leaf in edge gilding.

**artist's book** A book designed, produced, or illustrated by an artist. Also an idiosyncratic one-of-a-kind book or a very limited edition.

**azured** Filled with horizontal parallel lines which represent blue in heraldic engraving. The term has now largely become obsolete in favor of hatched.

**back cornered** Small triangular sections of the boards cut away at the head and tail of their spine edges to bring those edges down to the level of the headbands and to give a little extra play to the turned-in leather.
**back cornered**, cont. The spine of the whole bookblock can also be cut back to allow the headbands to rest below the edge. This is found in some early bindings with flush boards.

**backing** The process of fanning out the binding edges of sewn sections to distribute the swelling caused by the sewing threads and the spine folds, and to provide a shoulder against which the boards of the cover can lie. Not common before 1500.

**backplate** A metal plate in back of a clasp. It holds the clasp and strap together.

**band** A sewing support to which sections are sewn. The bumps seen on the spine are usually referred to as raised bands. See also *false bands*.

Also refers to reinforcing material extending across the spine and onto the sides of stationery bindings.

**band nipper** A pinching tool used to press leather around a band.

**band pallet** A tool that can stamp a whole panel of the spine at one time. Also called butterstamp.

**barrier sheet** A loose or tipped-in sheet of very thin paper, usually tissue paper, inserted to protect a plate, called a tissued plate. A heavier sheet may be used to prevent migration of harmful conditions, such as acidity, from one part of a book to another.
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basil Heavily glazed sheepskin, usually a dull red, of poor quality but sometimes artificially grained to simulate better quality leather.

basket weave A method of embroidering long stitches on a spine. See also long stitch binding.

bead A protrusion on a headband formed by one thread crossing another. Also an old American term for headband.

beating Up until about the 1820's the folded sections of books were flattened with a hammer before sewing. The spine was sometimes beaten harder than the rest of the book, often causing the fore edge to gape.

bellyband A narrow strip of paper containing advertising matter, wrapped around the cover of a book, outside the dust jacket. Also called wraparound band.

bent edges The edges of covers bent away from the plane of the sides. See circuit and Yapp edges.

bibelot A very small, elegant book.

bifolium (plural bifolia) A sheet of papyrus, parchment or paper folded in half to form two leaves or four pages. Also called bifolio.

binder's board Any board used by binders in the covers of books. Present day binder's board is a manufactured paper pulp product.

Binders, Designers and Styles of Decoration. See pp. 119-151
**binder's stamp** A small stamp blind tooled, gold tooled or inked identifying the binder or bindery. See *signed bindings*.

**binder's ticket** A small label giving the name, and sometimes the address, of the binder. “Binder’s ticket of ...” is often more accurate than “Bound by ...” as the tickets of noted binders were often put in inferior bindings to increase the price, particularly in France. In use from the early 18th century to ca. 1825. Not often used in England until about 1780.

**binder's title** A title on the cover different from the one on the title page.

**binding edge** The edge of a bookblock that is sewn or adhered.

**Binding structures**. See pp. 77-117.

**black step** Heavy lines showing on the backs of folded sections. If a step is out of order, it obviously means that a section is misplaced. This has mostly replaced the signature as a collating mark. Also called black mark, collating mark or quad mark.

**blank book** A type of stationery binding meant to be written in. It should open flat for ease of writing.

**bleed** A printed image which runs off the trimmed page. Bleed is both a noun and a verb.

**blind tooling** Impressing a design in damp leather or vellum with cool or heated tools. Also called antique, blank, dumb or dead tooling (obsolete).