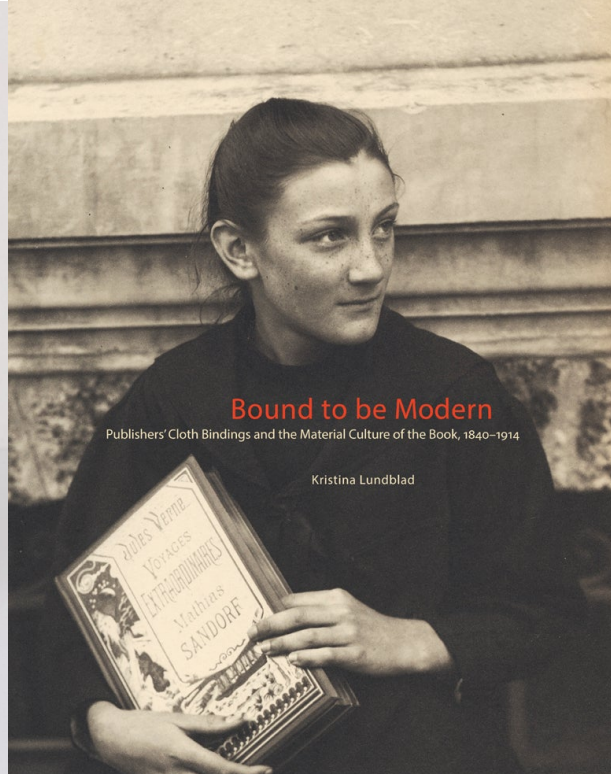
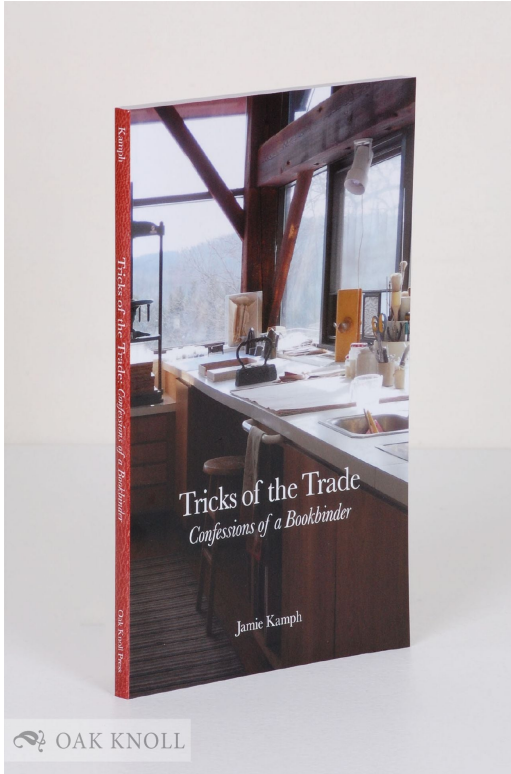


Jamie Kamph. *Tricks of the Trade: Confessions of a Bookbinder*. Kristina
and the Material



Jamie Kamph. *Tricks of the Trade: Confessions of a Bookbinder*. New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, 2015. viii, 136p., ill. ISBN 9781584563341. US \$24.95 (paperback).

Kristina Lundblad. *Bound to be Modern: Publishers' Cloth Bindings and the Material Culture of the Book, 1840-1914*. New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, 2015. 336p., ill. ISBN 9781584563136. US \$95 (hardback).

Two recent publications from Oak Knoll Press highlight some of the wide range of writing currently on offer about bookbinding. Jamie Kamph is a practicing bookbinder, and *Tricks of the Trade* consists of 27 personal essays that focus on technical information intended for bookbinders, as well as observations on book decoration and a bit of autobiography. Kristina Lundblad's *Bound to be Modern*, in contrast, is a wide-ranging academic overview of nineteenth-century Swedish publishers' bindings. Lundblad incorporates physical evidence from the books themselves, secondary sources about bookbinding history and archival information from the publishers, and examines books using the methodologies of art history and material culture. While Kamph provides an insider's view of the production of hand-bound, leather design bindings, Lundblad considers the consumption of books broadly and analyses the importance of their materials, structure, and decoration.

Kamph's book is aptly subtitled *Confessions of a Bookbinder*. She reveals, in a

conversational tone, outdated, irreversible, and damaging bookbinding treatments. These include: using thymol as a fungicide; applying fugitive Dr. Martin watercolour dyes to tone abrasions; sanding pages to improve appearance; applying potassium lactate and oil-based dressing to leather bindings; using Polyvinyl acetate to repair tears in paper; deacidifying paper in a calcium hydroxide solution at a dangerously high pH of ten; and spraying Krylon fixative onto plates to treat "mildew" (34). This is a concern, since it has the potential to mislead readers who may not be aware of currently accepted conservation practices.

Yet as a bookbinder, Kamph does not have an ethical duty to preserve the material information inherent in books: after all, a bookbinder simply (re)binds books. A bookbinding is, for her, an opportunity to express an artistic vision of the book's contents. This differs markedly from the perspective of a book conservator, who follows a code of ethics designed to document, preserve and interpret the artefacts with which he/she is entrusted. Curiously, Kamph sometimes rephrases common concepts from the field of conservation, perhaps as an attempt to claim them as her own. She states, for example, "Don't Do Anything You Can't Undo" (3), which is just a variation of the fundamental concept in conservation known as reversibility. She also takes credit for discovering leather spine linings "a well-known binding technique in continuous use since at least 1774 when it was documented in a Roger Payne bill (reproduced in Joseph Cundall's *On Ornamental Art*, 1848). Book conservators themselves should bear some of the blame for not adequately informing the public as to the differences between bookbinders, book restorers, and book conservators.

The unintended value of this book lies in the detailed listing of materials and techniques which are not likely confined to Kamph's studio: for the reader engaged in the field of conservation, these represent a time capsule of antiquated and ill-advised late twentieth-century book treatments. Considered through an even larger lens, this book is also of interest in detailing what late twentieth-century collectors wanted from their books: attractive, full-leather designer bindings with little thought or care as to the permanence. The volume does contain some useful information, especially concerning gold tooling "a difficult skill to acquire, yet one at which Kamph appears reasonably adept. Many of her design bindings are in fact quite accomplished, though the thumbnail-sized images make them difficult to appreciate.

Kristina Lundblad's *Bound to be Modern* shares a preoccupation with the appearance of books, but rather than viewing them as artistic expressions, considers them as examples of nineteenth-century material culture. One of the most exciting aspects of book history in the nineteenth century is the landslide of information concerning the manufacture of books, and Lundblad taps in to many of these resources.

Book historians may take issue with a central tenant of this book: Lundblad's broad view considers bookbindings as "common to the Western world" with "more to do with the historical course of modernity than with limited local events" (27). For example, she lumps together English-, American- and German-made tools and machinery when examining the basic structure of a case binding. Writing as someone immersed on a daily basis in these details, this is a critical failing on Lundblad's part. If this book is used as an introductory text for book history students or for reference, it can only result in a compromised understanding of how and when these books were made, and how the machinery, materials and tools spread around the world during this time. These are not minor aspects of the material book: these are, on the contrary, key reasons we need to continue to collect, preserve and document how books were made and what materials were used to make them. Nineteenth-century

bindings are not well documented or understood; small material differences can lead to larger insights concerning their dissemination.

Almost sixty pages are devoted to two extensive appendices, the first of which lists the machinery in Herzog's bindery (1889–1918). There is little explication as to what these machines did, and most of the manufacturers' names suggest German origin, rather than the English sources Lundblad relies on in the text to discuss manufacturing techniques. Fifty tables in Appendix B correlate binding styles with the subject matter of the books. These tables, and the numerous diagrams within the text, represent a mountain of data, yet the analysis is underdeveloped. The reader is left with the sense that different books were decorated differently at different times, but not much more. The information may be of use to subject specialists, though. Lundblad's interpretation of nineteenth-century bookbinding is correct in realising the importance of machinery, and she cites the impact of the blocking press. However, three other machines – the rolling press, board shear and guillotine – were all as (or more) important, as was the roughly contemporaneous introduction of machine-made paper which made it possible to standardise the total thickness of sewn book blocks. Without these machines, it is likely that case bindings never would have succeeded as an efficient method suited for mass production.

The strength of this book lies in its combination of the granular details of binding with a recognition of the importance of bookbinding machinery, overlaid with large-scale patterns of consumption. No other single volume devoted to nineteenth-century bookbinding interprets the book so broadly. Chapter five, which considers the relationship of cloth bindings to consumer society, is a fine example of this symbiosis. Lundblad interprets visual evidence of how the books were used in the home, arriving at meaningful intersections between the haptic and optic spheres.

Throughout the volume, Lundblad develops an insightful overview of nineteenth-century publishers' bindings, avoiding the common approach of concentrating solely on the development of book cloth patterns and gold stamping. Yet she also manages to bring a new perspective to this topic. A short section comparing the visual interpretation of illustrations blocked in gold on the cover versus those printed within the text of a book is both illuminating and original. By considering the relationship between bookbinding and other commodities, Lundblad helps to pry open book history and to make it accessible – and hopefully meaningful – to other disciplines.

More broadly, both volumes contain seeds of what I feel is a step forward towards establishing a material understanding of bookbindings, which may prove to be quite distinct from the texts they contain. In this regard Kamph's book is cautionary. It is to be hoped that the field of book history will embrace, or at very least incorporate, this new paradigm.

Jeffrey S. Peachey
Independent book conservator, New York City

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