

Home Study

by Cameron Garland



Paper covers with cloth spine, Bookbinding I

I was asked to share my experience with the Home Study Program: *Bookbinding I*, *Bookbinding II*, *Bookbinding III*, *Endpapers* and *Introduction to Leather*. I'm pleased to do so. I hope sharing my experience will benefit others looking for instruction in hand bookbinding.

For several years I'd been interested in hand bookbinding. I've explored and enjoyed papermaking, origami and calligraphy but nothing has satisfied me like creating a fine book from a stack of paper, a bit of thread, paste and an

animal skin. Binding the most beautiful books possible is now my passion and goal.

I am currently a member of several book arts and discussion groups and the Rocky Mountain chapter of the Guild of BookWorkers. These local affiliations provide access to a wide variety of weekend workshops on various aspects of the book arts. I've also read many books on hand bookbinding, from the glossy make-your-own-in-an-afternoon, to the more scholarly books, which assume previous experience in bookbinding.

However, neither of these avenues gave me the ‘whole picture’ or the comprehensive foundation I was seeking.

I began searching for options in bookbinding instruction. An internet search returned a wealth of classes, mostly week-long intensives offered in other parts of the country. Most of the curricula looked thorough and several offered more advanced intensives that took students past the basics to full leather binding. Unfortunately, my vacation time is limited and the cost of travel, lodging and tuition was prohibitive.

The only other alternative I could think of was an apprenticeship or one-on-one instruction but these were not practical either.

Some time ago I read an ad in the Guild of BookWorker’s newsletter about home study courses offered by the Canadian Bookbinders and Book Artists Guild. I went to the website and looked closely at the courses offered and realized this is what I was looking for – a comprehensive and affordable way to get a solid and thorough foundation in hand bookbinding.

Briefly, the CBBAG home study program takes a student from the very basics (how to fold and cut paper) to a completed full leather bind-

ing with decorated edges, sewn end bands, leather hinges and simple bone folder tooling.

The entire program is presented in three sections, *Bookbinding I, II* and *III*. Each section consists of four or five videos and an accompanying workbook. I won’t go over the entire curriculum

because the CBBAG web site covers it in detail. There are also two additional topics covered by separate videos, endpapers and leather.

The enrollee is given the chance to choose between the monitoring stream or the resource stream, the difference being that for an additional cost, students can send their completed projects to the Guild for review and critique. In retrospect, I would have chosen the monitoring stream as there was the danger of acquiring bad habits or misinterpreting

the material presented. As it happened, at the very end I sent some of my projects in for critique. Constructive and relevant feedback was provided quickly.

The material is logically and methodically presented. Betsy Palmer-Eldridge, the instructor, is a wealth of information and experience. Rationales and illustrations are given for each step. The objectives of each section are clearly stated and met.



Full leather on cords, Bookbinding III

A tremendous feature of the program are the workbooks and I still refer to them. They are cross-referenced to the tapes in a way that one can refer to a section in the book and then find the exact location on the tape.

Especially wonderful was the information in *Bookbinding III* on the various types of endbands. When I received the *Bookbinding III* package and browsed the workbook, I was skeptical that these could be presented in an easy-to-understand way. It was. After watching the videos and referring to the workbook, I was able to make an admirable attempt at each of the examples. The co-ordina-

tion I lacked during sewing I made up for in enthusiasm.

Since I completed the program last year, I still haven't found anything that compares in terms of thoroughness and value. In short, I can't say enough good things about the program. I would recommend the home study program for anyone looking for a rock-solid foundation in hand bookbinding. ~

Editor's note: Cameron Garland, although delayed in Denver by a snowstorm, came to Toronto this spring for Betsy Palmer Eldridge's finishing course. The leather covers will no doubt be tooled and decorated the next time we hear from him.



Half binding with cloth and marbled paper covers, Bookbinding II