DON'T ROCK THE CRADLE:
BOOKS IN EXHIBITION – MOUNTS, MATERIALS, AND ECONOMY

ABSTRACTS

Michaela Brand, Stiftung Deutsches Historisches Museum
“A Book That Is Shut Is But a Block”

Part one: Work flow structures, object lists, show case layouts etc. This half of the talk will introduce some of the work flow structures established at the museum to deal with an array of large and often simultaneous exhibitions, both permanent and temporary. The systematic input from a large team of museum employees consisting of curators, registrars, IT specialists, exhibition designers, technical staff and conservators will be illustrated with “curator’s letter”, object lists, show case layouts, etc.
Part two: Curiosities and extra challenging cases and displays. This half of the talk will present curiosities and examples of extra challenging cases such as displaying badly damaged loan patients or formats ranging from XXS to XXL.

Prof. Uwe Brückner, Atelier Brückner
“To Make a Book Talk – Access to Hidden or Secret Worlds”

Scenography creates form from content, endowing the latter with meaning and attitude; it re-contextualizes, makes things talk and imbues them with relevance for the presence. An example of how to give access to the hidden world of a book can be found in the exhibition at Schloss Dyck in Jüchen, Germany. This exhibition on horticulture shows the origins and development of the English landscaped garden at Schloss Dyck. The central exhibit is Prince Joseph’s book of plants which contains his botanical and architectural landscape gardening records from the 18th century. All parts of the book are accessible via a double page opened up for the reader with the book protected in a showcase as the centre of the installation as well as facsimiles of each page lining the walls, creating a narrative space and a reading level at the same time.

A very different example of how to exhibit books can be found at the State Museum of Textile and Industry in Augsburg, Germany. The museum’s valuable pattern book collection with its 1.3 million fabric patterns dating from 1780 until the late 20th century is set in scene in the middle building. In the “accessible pattern book archive”, the visitor is immersed in the variety of small-format motifs. Larger-than-life figurines then present them in the spatial setting. Different aspects of the textiles are illustrated in each case, namely the haptics, the printed pattern and the cut of the different fabrics. At a media station, the visitor can choose from a set of digitized patterns and design a dress for the Thalia figurine. The significance and function of the fabric patterns are thus made comprehensible.
**Don't Rock the Cradle: Books in Exhibition – Mounts, Materials, and Economy**

**Abstracts**

**Brenna Campbell & Bill Voss**, University of Iowa  
“Wundercradle: On-Site Construction of Custom Exhibit Mounts”

In October 2013, two members of the University of Iowa Libraries Conservation staff traveled to Grinnell College’s Faulconer Gallery, where they spent seven days installing the exhibition “From Wunderkammer to the Modern Museum, 1606-1884”. Ninety three items from the collection of Florence Fearrington were unpacked, checked for condition problems, and prepared for exhibition. Seventy-six custom book mounts were constructed on-site using Vivak®. The books ranged in size from less than three inches to huge elephant folios. Many of the books had elaborate foldout illustrations, which required additional support. Planning and executing installation of this exhibit required careful estimation of the materials, tools, and time required. Working on-site presented unique challenges, and inspired creative use of limited space and simple resources.

**Jim Canary**, Indiana University, Bloomington  
“Miniature Books on Display”

Through two acquisitions, the Lilly Library obtained over 16,000 miniature books. In 2001, an exhibition of more than 900 books was prepared to coincide with the Miniature Book Society's Conclave held in Indianapolis. Mounting this exhibit posed unique challenges due to the difficulty in displaying content in a book no larger than 3 cm. Preparing mounts and strapping books averaging 2 cm required an exploration of materials and techniques not previously used before. A variety of mounts were developed for this exhibition and then adapted for use in other types of exhibitions such as comic books.
Don't Rock the Cradle: Books in Exhibition – Mounts, Materials, and Economy

Abstracts

Kaare Chaffee and Lisa Moberg, Library of Congress
“Books on View”

Hundreds of books representing virtually all regions and time periods from the collections of the Library of Congress go on exhibition every year. Dedicated staff ensures that they are displayed safely. Kaare Chaffee and Lisa Moberg will discuss the basic functions of the exhibition program, how they evaluate and measure books for display, and the process of obtaining the various support systems used in the exhibition cases. They work closely with book conservators on staff to examine each candidate, identify individual issues that require accommodations, and communicate these needs to contractors designing and creating the cradles. They will discuss the pros and cons of the present system as well as share examples of solutions used in various situations.

Lesa Dowd, Newberry Library
“The [R]evolving Display: Exhibitions at the Newberry Library “

As with many libraries and museums, the Newberry has dedicated exhibition space and hosts 2-3 exhibitions per year. Conservation staff works with curators and exhibition staff to design case layouts and determine angles of opening and display for books on exhibit. Responsibility for book cradle design and construction, matting, framing, and preparation of flat materials and artifacts lies with Conservation Services. Additionally, Conservation staff installs all books and collection materials, monitors the environment, and sets lights for each exhibition. This presentation will focus on the evolution of exhibitions and exhibit preparation at the Newberry Library leading up to current practices. Finally, the presentation will reveal how the Newberry Library prepares its books and other collections for exhibition on a limited budget, balancing the needs for aesthetic display with the priority of preserving the collections.
**Don’t Rock the Cradle: Books in Exhibition – Mounts, Materials, and Economy**

**Abstracts**

**Debra Evans**, Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco
“Making Books Stand Up and Stand Out”

In 2001, the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco opened the Logan Gallery at the Legion of Honor Museum for the display of illustrated books. In the past fourteen years conservators at the Legion of Honor have developed safe ways to display books in an upright position, per the original curator’s wishes, so that the cover and one or more page openings can be viewed simultaneously. Simple acrylic or low cost polyethylene terephthalate supports expand the safe and attractive options for book installations. This presentation describes their construction and shows examples of their use. It also shows methods, including the use of rare earth magnets, which enable books to be displayed with very little visible means of support. The talk will be illustrated with many examples of solutions for book display.

**Maria Fredericks**, Morgan Library & Museum
“Book Cradles for Exhibition – Access, Aesthetics and Preservation”

An active program of exhibitions and loans is the primary point of contact between the Morgan’s holdings and the public. Each year, several hundred printed books, bound manuscripts, and artists’ sketchbooks are displayed in five different in-house galleries, and many more are shown at external venues. The need to present bound materials in an intellectually stimulating, visually appealing, and fully accessible way sometimes challenges the preservation imperative. While all aspects of exhibition development address these combined mandates, it is the humble and often unnoticed book cradle that shoulders much of the load, both metaphorically and physically. This presentation will provide an overview of the Morgan’s exhibition preparation and design process, and the conservator’s role as part of the exhibition team. The interdependency of cradle costs, production time, space needs and design requirements will be discussed in the context of safe and sustainable exhibition practice.
Hanka Gerhold, Kupferstichkabinett
“From Function to Design – Requirements for Book Supports”
A basic introduction from the conservator’s point of view, starting from the differences of various book structures, its characteristic weak points, mechanical strength and opening characteristic to the construction of book supports and the variety of structural forms.

Hanka Gerhold, Kupferstichkabinett
“Well Presented and Secured: an Overview of Book Cradles in Exhibition Display”
An intensive graduate research enabled in 2012 the compilation of around 20 different models of book supports. The collection, which includes handmade as well as custom made book supports, is structured according to the different materials of which book supports are constructed, including cardboard, textiles, plastics, and metal.

Emily Jacobson, Smithsonian Museums, Sackler Gallery
“Cradles for Bound Japanese Books”

In 2013 the Sackler Gallery of Art held an exhibition on Japanese books from the Gerhard Pulverer collection. With over 125 books in the exhibition, most being shown open, the museum needed to find a way to construct book cradles that would give adequate support to the book yet could be produced fairly quickly. The Freer and Sackler Galleries are lucky to have a talented staff of mount-makers who undertook the task of making these Plexiglas cradles. Looking at the books together, the conservator and mount makers came up with three designated categories of books which would fit three different styles of Plexiglas cradles. The cradles will be shown and their strengths and weaknesses discussed.
Shan Linde, National Gallery of Art
“When All Else Fails – Back to the Basics”

This presentation will be a review of the book cradles used in exhibitions at the National Gallery of Art. These cradles are designed to both support the books and meet the desires of the exhibition designer, curator, and conservator. Additional considerations include creating supports for multi-page openings as well as single page supports using a variety of preservation and conversation materials such as Vivak. The use of HDPE as a base support for fabric or mat board and what type of adhesives work for this will also be considered.

Nora Lockshin & Sarah Stauderman, Smithsonian Institution Archives
“Opposites Attract: Magnets in Mounts”

The Smithsonian Institution Archives holds many physical types of archival record, including many bound and unbound (in binder's terms) pamphlet and ephemeral styles, which have presented challenges when requested for digitization or exhibition. Sarah Stauderman and Nora Lockshin will present some of their challenges, imaginative solutions and improvements they have offered to curators, designers and imaging services recently, including integration of magnets for display openings.
Renate Mesmer, Folger Shakespeare Library
“It’s All about That Base: a Decade of Mounting Books at the Folger in Review”

Over the past ten years, exhibit installation at the Folger has gone through multiple modifications. Changes in how to support bound artifacts, exhibition design, aesthetic preferences, and case options and appearances has required flexibility and reinvention on the part of the Folger Conservation staff. Additional concerns of reusability and cost have also played their role in the eventual concept of the bases and mounts currently utilized. This talk will give a general overview of the previous mounting efforts of Folger Conservation staff; discuss why the changes came about the way they did, touch on the renovation of the exhibition space including the replacement of the windows and reintroducing daylight, light budgeting and detail the current philosophy and construction of the Folger book mount.

Kerri Sancomb & Christine McCarthy, Yale University
“Mounts and More: a Systematic Approach to the Care and Display of Book in Library Exhibitions “

Yale University Library conservation and exhibit services produces 14 to 20 exhibits annually in 5 venues containing 1200 to 2000 objects. Over time, an efficient mounting system was developed that is low maintenance and generally reusable. Our mount production model is simple and developed to meet 80% of book mount needs with two simple book supports. A standard M mount and a flat bottomed M mount constructed from Vivak and 4 ply mat board. This moderately customizable system allows us to create book mounts for the majority of the objects in little time, allowing us more time to focus on customized mount needs. Conservation is thus able to accommodate the broad needs of a large exhibit program while not compromising our baseline of care. In our talk we will go into detail about the history behind our current system and the tools that we use to accomplish our goals.
Nicole Schmidt, Stiftung Flucht, Vertreibung, Versöhnung
“Challenges of a Registrar”

This talk from the registrar’s point of view will present an inside glimpse of the preparation of complex museum objects exhibitions and might add a new perspective to pure book exhibitions. This talk will present insight into the challenges a registrar faces when looking at a wide array of issues such as loan contract negotiations, diplomacy, insurance, art handlers, logistics, customs and more.

Nancy Turner, J. Paul Getty Museum
“Displaying Medieval Manuscripts at the Getty Museum: Conservation Concerns, Practicalities, and Cradle Designs for Permanent Collection Rotations and Temporary Loan Exhibitions”

This presentation will describe the creation of custom-fit book mounts for medieval illuminated manuscripts exhibited at the J. Paul Getty Museum, both for the permanent gallery devoted to rotating displays of manuscripts from the Museum’s collection and for special temporary loan exhibitions. In collaboration with exhibition designers at the Museum, two types of cradles were developed to accommodate these different requirements: a painted Plexiglas cradle for the permanent collection (contracted out), and a pieced cradle of different but visually similar materials for use in loan exhibitions whose flexible design allows for last minute changes if necessary (made in-house). With the safe display of illuminated manuscripts on parchment of paramount concern, the issues of design, cost, materials, off-gassing and testing, along with re-use and recyclability will be discussed. Moreover, the process of communicating with and eliciting accurate information from outside lenders for the construction of cradles for in-coming loans will be addressed.