



Preservation and Conservation (PAC) Programme Frequently Asked Questions

Scientific research of books

Prepared by PAC Russia

Q: What kind of scientific research can be done on books and why do we need it?

A: The book is a complex object, which encompasses both aesthetic beauty and cultural significance, and also it has physical-chemical components. Based on this, theoretical study can be carried out related to its provenance, existence, cultural and historical aspects, and scientific research related to the materials that are used. Speaking about the physical-chemical components, one can investigate what materials the book is made of, what processes occur in it, the current state, and also its prospective future. The results of such studies are important both for understanding the origin of the book, its history, further storage, conservation, restoration and exhibition.

Q: What research can be conducted in your institution and what resources are needed for this?

A: First of all, it is necessary to conduct an examination of the physical state of a book and the conditions of its repository. This is a basic requirement, though the ability to conduct other studies strongly depends on the availability of funding, human resources and financial capabilities.

Bookbinding: role, construction and conservation

Q: What is the role of book binding?

A: The role of binding is both for decoration and for protection. The binding not only connects the pages within, but also protects them from physical damage.

Q: What types of book-bindings exist? What are the various types of construction, materials?

A: The typology of book-bindings is varied and extensive. Specialists from different countries, speaking different languages and working with different collections, create different taxonomies and, accordingly, the names differ. There are differences between systems depending on their

geographical, cultural and linguistic remoteness. Knowledge of various systems provides an advantage.

Depending on the time period and location, books were created using various materials. The most common types of coverings for bindings were leather and fabric, also wooden boards, paper, and other materials. Traditionally, the cover could be richly decorated in accordance with the style of the time, using expensive materials: precious metals, precious gems and others. However, there are exceptions of no less interest. Including, for example, re-using documents from other sources as binding materials.

Q: What types of damage are most common to book-bindings?

A: The main factors that cause damage to book-bindings are the natural aging of materials, improper storage conditions and bad handling. Proper storage conditions for books protect against physical-chemical and biological threats, as well as slow down the natural aging of materials, but it is impossible to stop it. Improper handling of the book, such as removing from the shelf by pulling the spine, improper opening of the book, contamination of the binding and others, are related to human factors and are addressed by raising people's awareness.

Q: What are some examples of the conservation of book-bindings?

A: One of the simplest ways to preserve book-bindings is to mechanically clean them from dust and dirt, as well as to make the protective enclosure to house them in. The need for more serious activities is determined individually. Depending on the intended use of the book, its uniqueness, and its condition prior to conservation, the conservators and curators decide together on the necessity of carrying out certain actions. In order to preserve the original binding, conservation intervention should be minimal.