

Robert Strauss Interview Log

Time Code Content

- 00:00:00 **Introduction.** Robert (Bob) Strauss, formerly of the University of Minnesota bindery and the Performance Standards for Library Binding group, Library Binding Institute. Interviewed June 3, 2017, at the Roslyn Hotel, Roslyn, New York. Interviewed by Whitney Pape, librarian.
- 00:00:32 **Career:** 1978-9 hired by the University of Minnesota as head of their bindery, and acted as a liaison between their library and the bindery, which reported to Printing and Graphic Arts. Bob was hired to improve quality and turn-around time. Bob introduced automation to the bindery, with a stamping machine. Became interested in preservation issues relating to library binding (oversewing, cleat sewing), learning from preservation leaders at the Newberry Library in Chicago and British and Irish conservation leaders.
- 00:09:48 **Mentors:** Hans Wiesendanger at the University of California, Berkeley took Bob under his wing. Bob previously mentioned Andrea Hinding, Les Metz, Dick Smith, Paul Banks, Gary Frost, Merrily Smith, Barclay Ogden, John Dean, Christopher Clarkson, Tony Keynes, and Nicholas Pickwoad.
- 00:10:46 **Interesting Projects:** Bob refused to bind brittle books, which was standard practice at that time. Instead, he photocopied the book, bound it, and presented to the librarians, who loved it, developing preservation photocopying for the University of Minnesota in roughly 1980-1.
- 00:15:13 **Regrets:** No regrets in his work at the University of Minnesota bindery. It was a terrific launching pad. Experimented with limp paper bindings and became involved with doing work for special collections at U of M.
- 00:22:03 **Interesting Projects:** Bob had started a consulting business, the Preservation Management Institute, working with Barclay Ogden (on a part-time basis) and Janet Bridgland. Barclay was working on the NISO Library Binding Standard Committee to revise the Library Binding Standard, and the committee wanted a consultant to help change from a cookbook-style standard to a performance standard, things like adhesive stretch and abrasion-resistance of book cloth. They developed standard sample books for testing and proposing what qualified as acceptable performance. Barclay and Bob also received a grant from the Kress Foundation to investigate German bookbinding materials and processes, leading to a publication for LBI, "Polyvinyl Acetate Adhesives for Double-Fan Adhesive Binding: Report on a Review and Specification Study."
- 00:37:32 Strauss discusses Rounding and Backing vs. Flatback Binding. Flatback books met all the performance specifications. Bob requested sample books from ICI (Information Conservation, Inc.) in both the rounded and backed and the flatback style, and also requested both styles of binding from Campbell-Logan Bindery in Minneapolis, then tested them for performance. The rounded and backed book from ICI was the higher

performer for rounded and backed books and the flatback sample from Campbell-Logan was the higher performing flatback book. All of them met the standard.

00:41:10 **Greatest Accomplishment:** Although he was not necessarily welcomed with open arms at LBI when he represented a university bindery which was competing with the commercial binders, Bob is celebrating with those "competitors" who are now friends forty years later. Also pleased that his sample bindings that were unearthed at the University of Minnesota when they closed down the bindery in 2015 were still something in which he could take pride thirty-five years later.

00:43:50 **Mentors:** Bob mentioned once again that Les Metz was the best person he ever worked for. Bob took great satisfaction in working with Fritz James and other binders to innovate library binding. His father was also a good model of a strong work ethic.

00:46:44 **End of interview.**