

Condition Report:

Imitation Book spines on the False Library door at

**The Elms,
Fitzroy Park,
London,
N6 6HS**

This report is submitted by: Paul Kidson, Director of Ludlow Bookbinders Ltd.

The imitation book spines are affixed to the back of the false library door and comprise 7 shelves totaling 161 vertical spines, and 11 horizontal spines.

The construction of the spines is of a relatively soft wood, individually turned in the half round, with leather of differing colours affixed to the wood and with gold tooling subsequently applied to the leather spines.

This gold tooling consists of the titles of books, horizontal false band lines and decorative tooling which enhances the illusion of book filled shelves.

Pictures are of the door at 13/2/14



Top shelf (Shelf 1)

This shelf consists of 25 vertical spines of which 1 spine is missing.

18 spines have significant parts of the leather missing with the remaining material peeling from the wood, the leather is also brittle and mildewed.

The remaining 6 spines, while complete are discoloured, mildewed and have surface damage to various degrees.



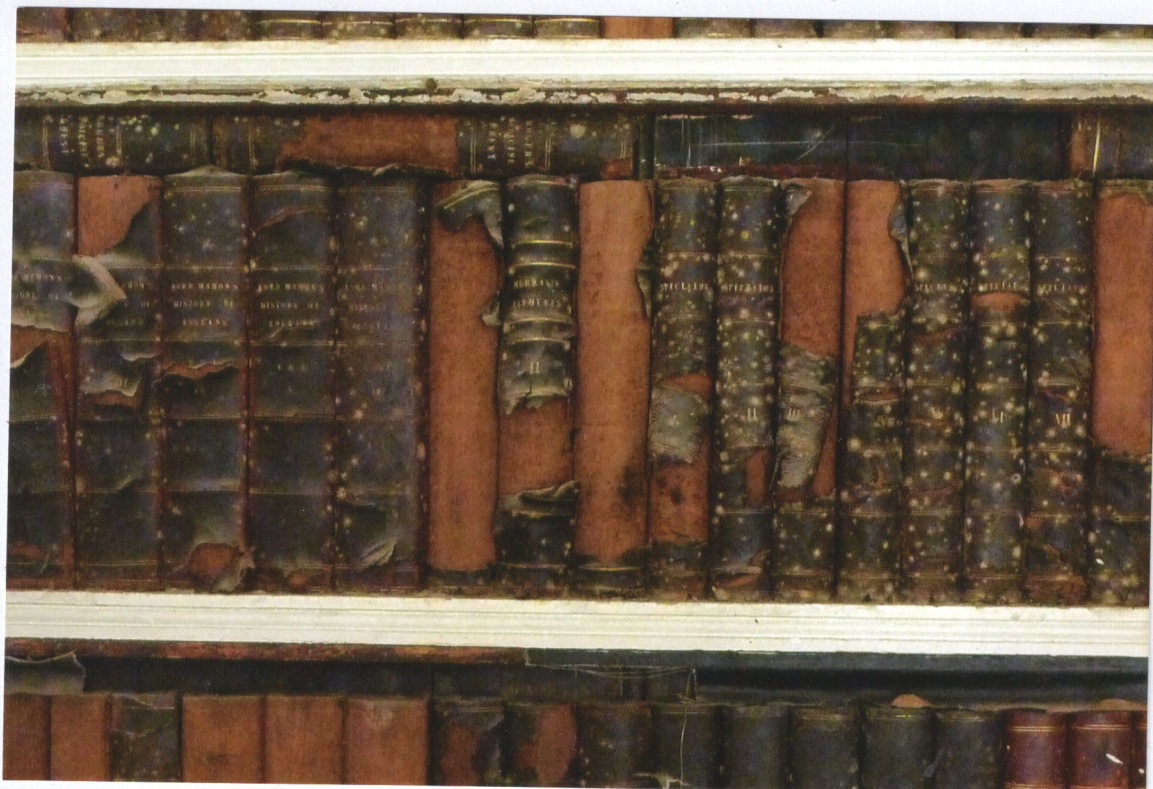
Shelf 2

This shelf consists of 22 vertical spines and 4 horizontal spines.

1 horizontal spine is missing and needs both new wood and leather.

1 spine has minimal surface damage.

Of the remaining spines, 3 of the horizontal spines and 21 of the vertical spines are peeling and have brittle leather or are missing the leather in its entirety, all suffer from midew.



Shelf 3

This shelf consists of 24 vertical spines.

1 spine is missing and requires new wood and leather.

10 have extensive peeling are brittle or are entirely missing the leather.

4 require new labels and restoration.

9 require restoration 6 of which require partial replacement leather due to brittle or missing leather.



Shelf 4

This shelf consists of 24 vertical spines.

4 spines are missing and require complete replacement.

3 require the leather spines completely replacing.

17 suffer from varying degrees of brittle peeling leather, surface damage and mildew and require both restoration and replacement sections.



Shelf 5

This shelf consists of 21 vertical spines.

5 horizontal spines are missing and require complete replacement.

7 of the spines have extensive peeling, missing and brittle leather

The remaining 9 suffer from varying degrees of brittle peeling leather surface damage and mildew.

Additionally shelf 5 has been damaged by the fitting of a door lock, which has been removed at some juncture. We would suggest complete replacement of this section.

[See the second photograph]



Shelf 6

This shelf consists of 25 vertical spines and 3 horizontal spines:

Of these 2 horizontal and 8 vertical suffer from varying degrees of brittle peeling leather surface damage and mildew.

One horizontal and 17 vertical spines have extensive brittle, peeling and missing leather.



Shelf 7

This shelf consists of 20 vertical spines and there should be 4 horizontal spines.

4 replacement vertical and 2 horizontal wooden spines and leather are required as they are missing completely

11 of the remaining spines have extensive peeling, missing and brittle leather.

7 spines suffer from varying degrees of brittle peeling leather surface damage and mildew.

GENERAL METHOD STATEMENT TO RESTORE THE BOOK SPINES:

1. Logging and photographing each spine individually prior to transportation will be required with detailed notes to ensure as much as possible of both the original material and the design are incorporated in the restoration.
2. The Door will then need to be removed and transported to a dust free warm environment with relatively stable humidity to be worked on.
3. The current environment, while dry, is dusty and experiences varying levels of humidity. It is clear that the door has deteriorated between our two visits and that the proportion of material that could be salvaged is diminishing.
4. The first part of the restoration will comprise of carefully feeding and stabilizing the leather in situ on the door. The brittle pieces that will inevitably break off will be retained and logged to ensure every possibility that they can be reused on the correct spine.
5. A plan will be made of the position of each title, the false bands and the decorative motifs. Some of the missing information can be gleaned from the markings on the bare wood spines.
6. The door itself will need to be stripped or sanded down [tbc] and an undercoat applied [minimum two coats]
7. The replacement wooden spines then would need recreating.
8. It is most likely that the original spines were made in sections of four or five, covered in leather, tooled and then affixed to the door. If the existing spines can be removed without damage the best route to restoration is to recreate that process. This will create the most stable possible platform for the spines.
9. Similarly, one option would be to remove all the existing leather from their spines so that original and replacement material can be best matched and then replaced together using the same glues, this we feel would achieve the best possible outcome.
10. However we propose to leave the existing salvable material in position, to retain as much of the original as possible.
11. The correct leather will need sourcing, thinning down and dyeing for each set of replacement spines and also the sections that need replacing.
12. The gold tooling will then be applied and gold decoration using tools from the original period in the traditional manner. Our access to a Master Bookbinder able to use these traditional methods will be essential to achieving the correct look.
13. On completion the door would need to be shipped back and rehung, but only once the interior is heated and has a relatively stable humidity.

Recommendation:

A. The peeling leather is extensive and very brittle. The door and book spines are presently in a state of major works. It would only require a small accident to happen for extensive loss of titles and tooling templates. At present with care the vast majority of the original titles can be ascertained, saved and restored.

B. It is recommended the first part of the process outlined above is undertaken as soon as possible. I.E: The photographing, logging and removal of the door from site into a stable working environment.

C. It is our opinion that it would be wholly impractical to attempt the restoration process on site. The restoration needs to be undertaken in an environment, which is virtually dust free, with good light, stable humidity and temperature.

D. Ludlow Bookbinders would not be able to propose the works anywhere but Shropshire as the availability of skill, knowledge, machinery and tooling required to make the restoration successful are not transferable for an extended period of time.

Other Matters:

i) The issue of the door locking system would need to be resolved prior to restoration.

ii) With the 18 missing spines use, we propose to use our best judgment in conjunction other parties, if required, to select colour and titles and tooling of spine where record exists of what was there. Traditionally the craftsmen would include reference to their patron in their work and we suggest that this be considered for the missing titles.

iii) It is proposed to photograph and log the restoration process throughout.

Timescale:

In work of this nature extensive periods are required for stabilization between the different processes.

In addition we envisage two or three stages for sign off of the process, including a post planning stage and final agreed specification as well as the approval of a sample section.

We would wish allow 6 months for the above.