Bookmaking Workshop Part II: Book covers

(from *Cover to Cover* by Shereen LaPlantz, Lark Books, 1995)

Materials

Davey board
polyvinyl acetate glue (PVA glue)
scissors
exacto knife or box cutter
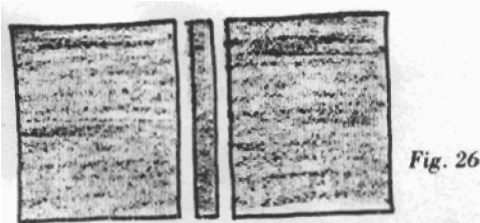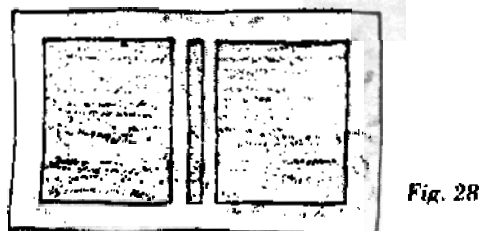decorative paper or cloth
pencil
wax paper
ruler

Fig. 26

Fig. 27

Fig. 28

Process

(1)   Dab a light application of glue on the spine and stitches -- don't let it run between the signatures.

(2)   Measure and cut two cover boards, each 1/8 inch wider than the text pages and ¼ inch longer (this will give a 1/8 inch overhang on the top, bottom, and left side of the book cover edges). Cut a third piece of board for the spine: cut it the exact same length as the back and front cover boards. To measure the width, place the stitched spine-side of the codex, stitching side down, and mark the spine width. Cut the spine board.

(3)   Cut the decorative paper or cloth that will cover the board so that its width is equal to the total width of the spring, spine and back cover boards PLUS 2 ¼ inches. The height of the paper should be 2 inches greater than the height of the book covers.

(4)   Lay out the three pieces of board (fig. 26). These will be the front, spine and back cover. The decorative covering (paper or cloth) will hold the cover boards together. Before applying any glue to the covering paper, measure up about 1 inch from the bottom edge and draw a light, straight line across the bottom (inside) of the decorative paper/cloth (fig. 27).

(5) After spreading a thin, even coat of glue to the entire surface of the paper, carefully place the boards on the guideline, spacing them 1/8 inch apart (fig. 28). *The spacing is critical – if you fudge and make the space too narrow, the book won't close properly. If the space is too wide, the hinge may become wobbly.*

(6) For *Universal corners*, fold the corners (fig. 29) as neatly and evenly as possible. Make sure the paper's edge is tight against the board. (for an alternative, mitered corner, see below*)
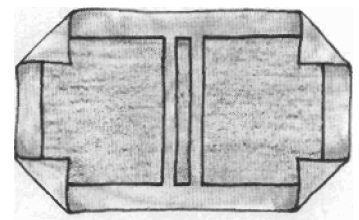

Fig. 29

(7) Apply a bit more glue to these corners and fold the edges over (fig. 30), working from one corner to the next. Again making sure the paper is tight against the board (fig. 31).
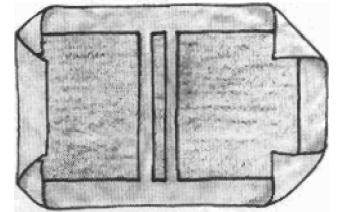
(8) Wrap the cover in wax paper and let it dry flat under weight (about 20 - 30 minutes).

Fig. 30

(9) *Attachment Option 1* Attach the stitched codex to the cover by gluing the first page to the front inside cover and the last page to the inside back cover (fig. 34). *It's important for the text block spine to line up with the rear edge of the front cover's board. If they're 'off' then the text block won't be aligned properly inside the cover.*
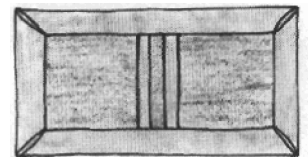
Attachment Option 2 To attach the codex to the cover with end papers, carefully cut two pieces of decorative paper (or other paper) into shapes that are similar to folded folios. Glue one side of the folded end paper to the inside front cover and the other side to the first page of the codex. Repeat this process to attach the back page to the back cover.
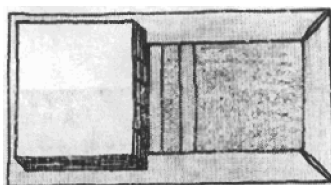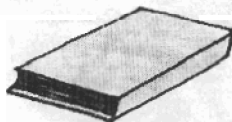

Fig. 31

Fig. 34

(10) When the cover has been glued to the text block, check the book's structure by opening and closing it. Wrap the bookcover and closed book in wax paper. Allow the book to dry flat, under light weight (about 30 – 45 minutes or more – fig. 35)

Fig. 35

Alternative corner: *Mitered Corners
Mitered corners are best for stiffer, thicker covering materials. Once the boards have been glued to the cover material (step 5 above), cut the cover material in the following manner: (1) cut straight up and straight down from the outer edges of the board. (2) before mitering, cut straight out from the board *a distance equal to the thickness of the board material.* Then make a 45 degree cut (figs. 36 & 37) (3) glue the top and bottom edges, snug against the board material (fig. 38). Let dry 15 minutes. (4) paste the left and right edges, holding the cover material tight and even across the board (fig 39).
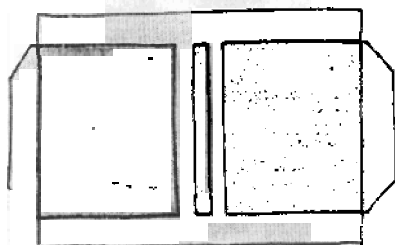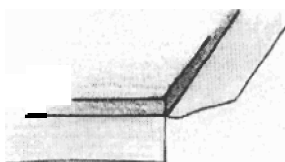

Fig. 36

Fig. 37

Assignment: Bind all three sample books in hard covers.