

The
Canadian
Bookbinders
and
Book Artists
Guild

Newsletter



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COVER

The cover images are from a series of enlargements supplied by Rudy Diesvelt and obtained in Amsterdam, where they were printed. The originals are 30 x 33 mm. The credits indicate that they were lithographed [*surely not!*] by Nanta & Haagen b.v., and printed by Blikman, Laporte, & Dosse b.v., all of Amsterdam. From upper right, and clockwise, they are: Goldbeater, Plateprinter, Parchment Maker or Cordwainer, and Papermaker.

The Canadian Bookbinders and Book Artists Guild (CBBAG) is an organization devoted to the book arts. Membership is open to any interested individual, institution, or organization. The present officers of CBBAG are:

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The Making of the Nuremberg Chronicle and Its Restoration 500 Years Later

FATHER CHARLES A.E. BRANDT (YDE)

A BOOK RESTORER is always delighted to view and handle early printed books, especially those from the incunabula period, that period that forms the cradle of movable-type printing, from c. 1448 to December 31, 1500, a somewhat artificial period. Books printed during that period have come to be called incunabula, and by librarians, incunables.

My usual work for special collections across Canada is the reattachment of boards. I do this simply by inserting a cloth hinge and attaching the board to this hinge. With this technique which I learned years ago at the Newberry Library in Chicago, the spine leather is left intact. I have examined books repaired in this manner 40 years ago which are still in excellent shape. The beauty of this type of restoration is that the original binding is left almost completely intact.

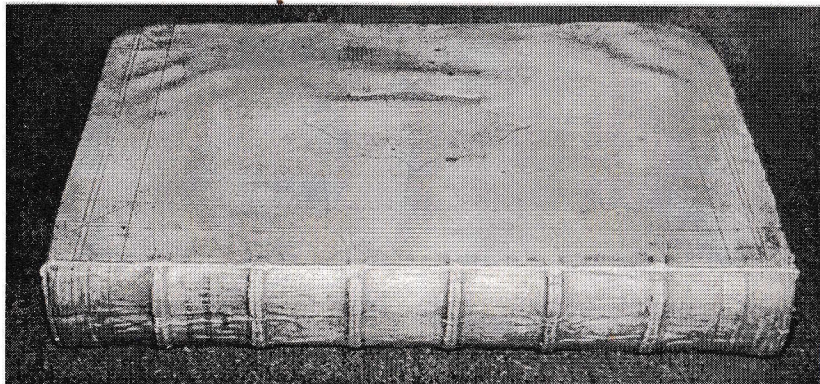
This type of rehinging is rather mundane work. So it was with considerable excitement that I approached a more challenging commission in the spring of 1994. I accepted with the deepest of pleasure a commission from the Bruce Peel Special Collection Library of the University of Alberta to restore their copy of the Latin edition of Hartmann Schedel's *Liber Chronicarum* (Nuremberg Chronicle) printed in 1493 in Nuremberg by the eminent printer Anton Koberger, and illustrated with woodcuts executed by Michael

Wolegemut and Wilhelm Pleydenwurff. (There is striking visual evidence of the involvement of Albrecht Durer who was an apprentice in the Wolegemut Art Workshop in Nuremberg during the production of the Chronicle woodcuts.)

In all, this first great 'picture book' for the bourgeoisie contains 1809 woodcut illustrations, printed from 645 blocks. One does not turn many pages before becoming aware that some of the same woodcuts were observed a few leaves previously. The woodblocks were made a standard thickness, which was the height of the type, so that everything could be locked up together for printing. The fifteenth century artists who drew the designs for the woodcuts did not do any of the cutting of the blocks. The actual cutting was done by skilled artisans, known as *formschneider*. Anton Koberger, the printer, was Durer's godfather. Two wealthy burghers, Schreyer and Kamermaister, merchants by profession and humanists by inclination, financed the project. So successful was it that their Chronicle still brings fame to its makers



Front cover, before.



Cover, after cleaning and repair.

and to the city of Nuremberg five centuries later. The project was a unique partnership coupled with the new art of printing, invented only 50 years previously. The scope of the book was sweeping, chronicling all of history, from the creation of the world to the date of publication. This was the golden age of Nuremberg at a time when it was welcoming the 'New Learning'.

One would surmise that the Chronicle would be printed on paper from the Ulman Stromer paper mill, the first paper mill in Germany, established by Stromer in 1390. But this was not the case. (The buildings in the lower-right corner of the Chronicle double-spread view of Nuremberg, Folium C, are those of the Stromer mill.) The vast quantity of paper required for the Chronicle, about 400,000 sheets in all, probably could not be supplied by

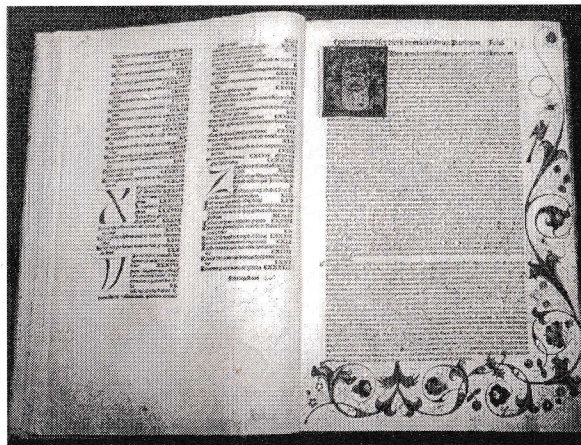
one mill. Five or six watermarks appear in any copy of either edition. Koberger, the printer, is reputed to have deplored the local product and no Stromer watermark appears in the Chronicle. The paper, apparently, came from upper Rhine sources.

In 1974, while studying book and paper restoration at the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich, I had the opportunity on several occasions to inspect Schedel's library housed at this state library. The provenance of this part of the Staatsbibliothek's collection can be clearly traced through Schedel's grandson selling his grandfather's library to John Jacob Fugger of Augsburg who, becoming bankrupt, sold the ample library along with his own to Duke Albert V of Bavaria in 1571, whose library became part of the Munich Staatsbibliothek. The collection contains about 370 manuscripts (codices) most of which Schedel himself copied,

and 600 printed works. The most splendid example of Schedel's bibliomania is the hand-coloured copy of his own *Liber Chronicarum* into which are inserted many extra pages, including nine broadsides. The binding is full white pigskin, blind stamped overall with rampant dragons, floral borders, and in the centre a variation of the pine and pome-



Spread showing woodcut frontispiece and 'In principio...'



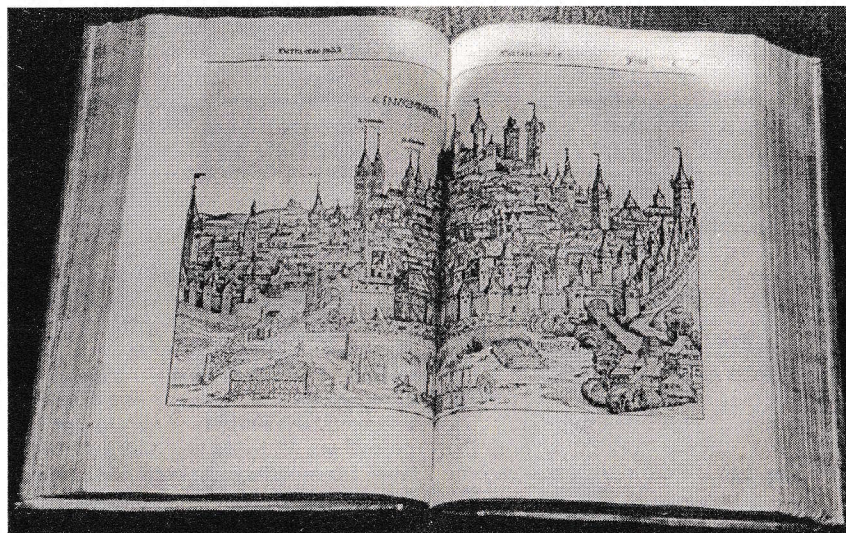
Another spread (Prologue) showing the richness of ornamentation.

granate pattern. The signatures are sewn on double cords which are laced into the beechwood boards.

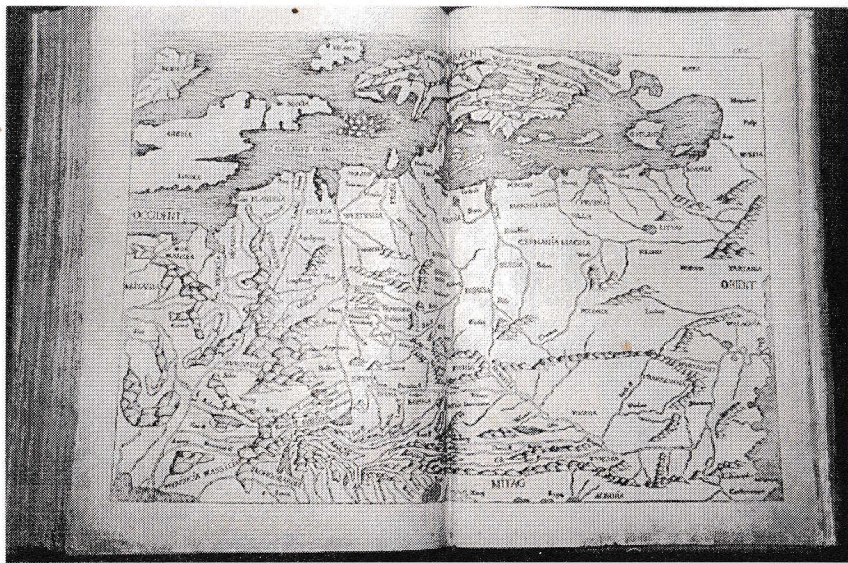
There is no attempt here to compare the Bruce Peel Chronicle with Schedel's personal copy. The Bruce Peel Chronicle is bound in full vellum and splendid in its own right. It measures 47.5 x 34.5 x 8.25 cms (19 x 13.5 x 3.25 inches). Tooled simply with blind lines along all four

its entirety, although the cords were intact. Several smaller splits were in evidence on the back board as well. John Charles, head of the Bruce Peel Special Collections, U of Alberta, specifically requested that I repair these splits, and as well, mend several of the leaves which had been weakened and partially lost by mould/water damage sometime in the past. Otherwise the leaves (folios: each leaf has a folio number) were in surprisingly good shape, only slightly acidic. Amazingly permanent and durable after 500 years.

Engraving of the city of Nuremberg showing, in the lower right corner (outside the town walls), the papermill of Ulman Stromer.



board edges, it is embellished with a large blind stamp on the dorsal board. The bookblock edges have been dyed a light brown. The volume is sewn on six sets of double cords. The title is inscribed on the 2nd spine panel, 'Chronicon Nurembergense, 1493'. When I received the volume at my hermitage bindery, the vellum covering was soiled, the board corners bent and scuffed. The dorsal hinge area was split in



The earliest printed map of Europe.

Before mending the hinge areas and folio corners, I wrote up the usual condition/treatment report, which included (before) photography, testing for ink and colour solubility, measuring the pH of the paper, etc. All colours were insoluble; the pH was in the area of 6, slightly acidic.

My rule of thumb when working on such a precious document is 'How little needs to be done, not how much.' My main objective was to repair the vellum hinge areas.

I prepared two vellum strips each 3/4" wide and the length of the volume. I skived (pared) all four edges of each strip, using small pieces of freshly broken glass for this purpose. The strips when completed were less-than-paper thin on all four edges. I covered both sides of the strips with a thick coating of wheat starch paste and let them soak for a good hour.

Meanwhile, the vellum along the hinge areas and the spine vellum closest to the hinge was lifted the same 3/4" as the prepared strips. Using a mixture of wheat starch paste and a reversible adhesive (No. A-1023 from Carr-McLean), I applied this to the lifted spine and board area. After an hour's time, both the new strip and the old vellum had become

quite soft and malleable. At this time the front strip was put in place under the lifted vellum along with another application of adhesive. The back board hinge was treated in the same manner.

Then, protecting the spine with a sheet of waxed paper, I proceeded to 'tie up' the spine, using a length of cotton twill carpet tape, 4 cm wide. I begin this process by inserting one end of the tape on the inside of the front board, then wrapping the tape around the headband area of the spine and then around the foredge, continuing this wrapping until the endband area at the tail is reached. This tape pulls the spine vellum into place and closes the gap in the hinge area. Leverage is gained as the tape is wrapped around the boards and then back onto the spine. After six hours the tape and wax paper were removed and the book was allowed to dry overnight.

The weakened foredge lower leaf corners were mended using a very thin Japanese tissue on the front surface of the corners, applied with wheat starch paste. These were allowed to dry between pure unflecked felts under a slight weight. The amount of mending at any one time is limited by the number of felts in one's possession. Allowing one hour's drying time, the mending can continue throughout the day while other work is taking place. After the front surface was mended and dried, I applied Kozo feathered

mends (to approximate the thickness of the folios) to the back of each corner being mended. When completely dry, two corners were trimmed to the appropriate size.

The bent and scuffed board corners were stiffened and straightened using the same reversible adhesive (No. A-1023) applied by means of a syringe, and allowed to dry under a fairly good weight.

In cleaning the vellum covering I utilized a technique I learned from Stella Patri who worked at the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale in Florence after the River Arno's flooding in 1966. First I applied Magic Mend erasers to remove some of the grime. Then I used a cleaning solution consisting only of warm milk applied with a wad of cotton. The cleaning effect is marvelous.

Following the printing of the Latin edition which numbered approximately 1500 copies came the translation into German. Dr Peter Zahn feels there were only 1000 German copies printed. Ellen Shaffer in her *Nuremberg Chronicle* gives us some idea of the original cost of this work. It was offered for sale at two prices; unbound and uncoloured it could be obtained for a third of the price of bound and coloured copies. Since printers then had no mechanical means for colouring pictures in their books, the colour had to be put in by hand. The price of unbound, uncoloured copies was two Rhenish gulden (Flemish guilders), those that were bound and coloured cost six gulden – approximately \$26 and \$78 in 1950 US dollars. Today, auction prices vary from about 20,000 to 60,000 dollars, with an average price in the range of \$35,000.

But \$26 and \$78 in Koberger's time was a fabulous sum to spend on a book. On the other hand some of Nuremberg's wealthy citizens were likewise fabulous, and apparently they did not hesitate over the price. Leona Rostenberg remarks that 'generally books were less expensive than the necessities of the patrician's daily life, his beer, his poultry, his spices.'

For a discussion on the use of manuscript-layouts, or Exemplars used in creating these cradle-printed books, I refer you to Adrian Wilson's masterful work, *The Making of the Nuremberg Chronicle*, in which he discusses Exemplars in depth. Exemplars were what the printer used to set up his type on the pages and allow space for the woodcuts. The Exemplars for the Latin and German editions, which are manuscript layouts and bound into books, are still extant in the Staatsbibliothek, Nuremberg. They were one of a kind, the same size as the later published *Chronicle*, and models which determined the size and subjects of the woodcuts and the amount of text that would accompany them. They identified the blocks, established their positions on each page, and supplied the ms text from which the printers set the type. In short, they were both the book design or layout, and the printer's copy. The amazing thing is that they still exist in the city of Nuremberg and some of these codicil leaves have retained the smudged fingerprints of the great printer, Anton Koberger.

Hermitage, Black Creek, BC.

Educational Opportunities

Edmonton's Indigo Print and Paperworks offers a number of paper and papermaking classes. Contact: Evelyn David, Indigo Print and Paperworks, 12214 Jasper Avenue, Edmonton, AB T5N 3K3; (403) 452-2208, fax 425-4310.

Also in Edmonton is SubText at 10137 104 Street which offers equipment/space rentals for papermaking among others. Contact: Sue at (403) 486-0829.

Those interested in something a little more exotic might consider one of the annual Japanese papermaking workshops with Yoichi Fujimori each summer at Fuji Paper Mills Cooperative, CPO Box 114, Tokushima 770, Japan; 0886-52-2772.

Or how about papermaking courses with Hava Pressburger at the Uncle Bob Lelie Paper Mill, POB 164, Omer, Israel; (011-972-7) 4695598.