

Book Binding Repair

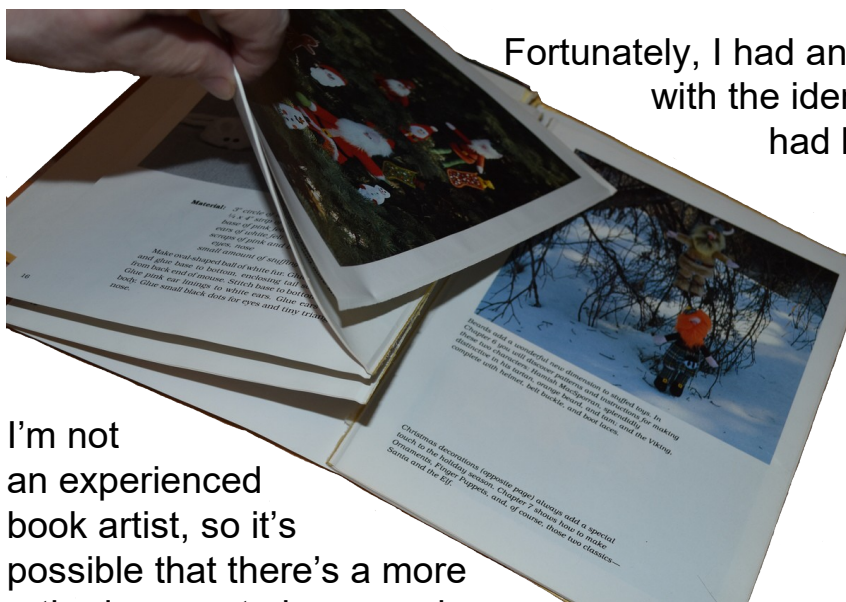
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Posted 2023 May 26

I recently repaired a vintage knitting book that I bought for my sister; it was originally cold-glue bound, and with time the glue had dried up and the pages were falling out. Rather than just re-glue it, I gave it a stitched binding, and now it's better than it was when it was new!



After I finished re-binding the book, it dawned on me that I should have taken pictures and written it up as a project for the site (!).



Fortunately, I had another book on hand with the identical issue: the glue had let go and the pages were falling out. I'd been meaning to rebind this one for ages, so this was the perfect opportunity to get it done.

I'm not an experienced book artist, so it's possible that there's a more orthodox way to have made this repair; I just did the best I could using tools and materials that I had on hand. On the plus side, I managed to rescue a couple of books that might otherwise have ended up in the recycle bin.

Here's how I went about it.

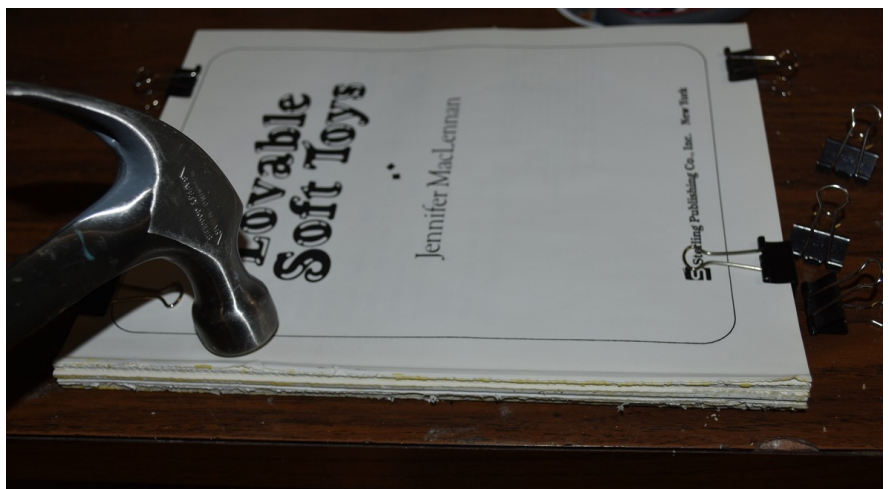
The first step was to gently detach the book block (pages) from the cover. As you can see, the block is in several chunks, and the glue is completely dried out.



I tamped the pages on a flat surface to align them, then clipped them together with binder clips. I used the blade of a scissors to scrape the dried glue from the spine. It's kind of a crude method, but it

did the trick: most of the dried-out glue came off without much trouble.

A book press would have come in handy here, since the pages were a bit swollen where the glue had been. I don't have a press, so with the clips still in place, I pounded the pages flat using my hammer.

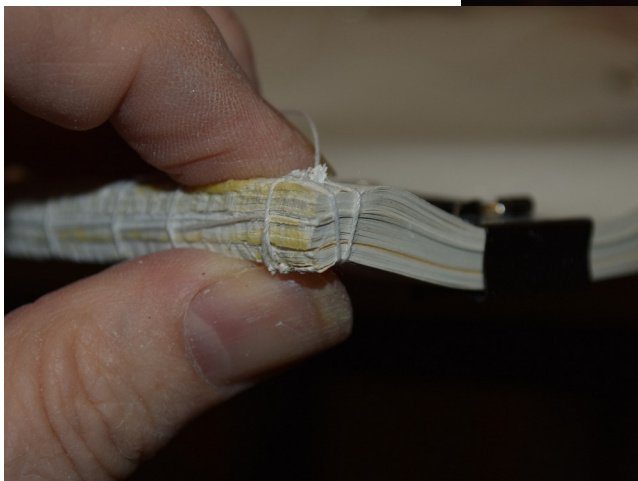


At this point I could have fanned the pages slightly and re-glued them, but instead I am opting to stitch them together to create what I think will be a more secure binding.

This is the most unorthodox step I took: with the binder clips still holding the pages together, and using a fine drill bit, I drilled holes at intervals of approximately 3/4", right through the book block close to the spine (about 1/8" from the edge).

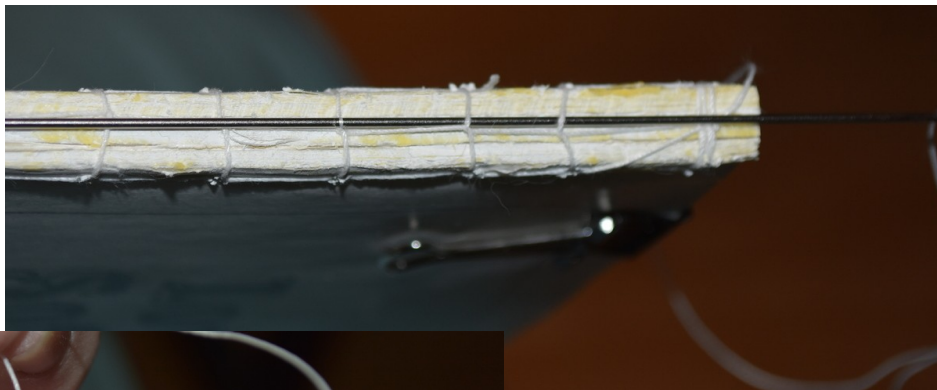


I used buttonhole twist and a long needle to sew the block together through the drilled holes, starting in the centre, where I tied a knot before proceeding to stitch the block using a kind of blanket stitch.

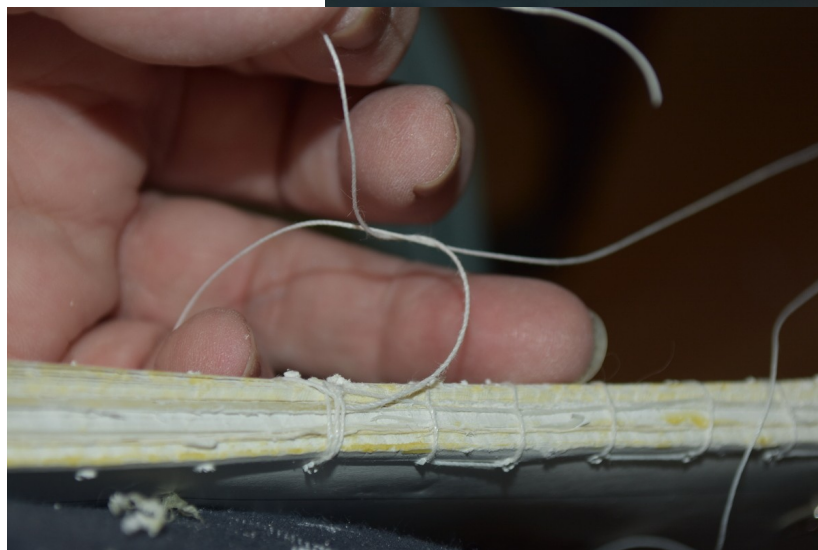


When I reached the one end, I looped the thread over the end of the block to help keep the pages together when the book is opened.

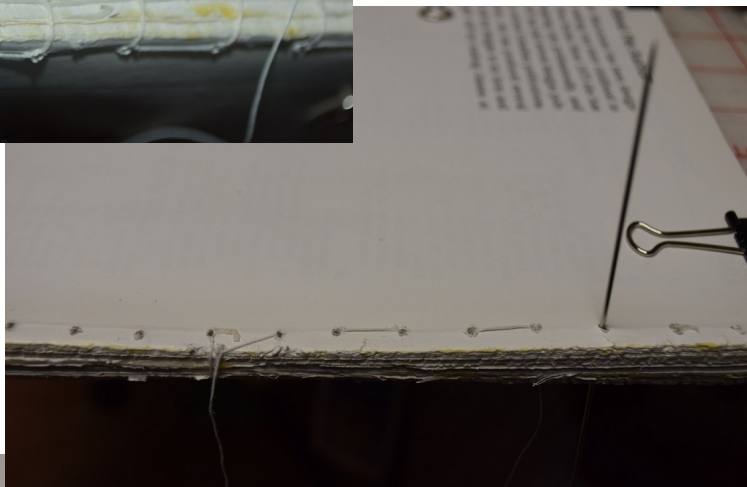
To return the thread to the centre, I ran the needle under the stitching, then tied a knot with the thread tail.



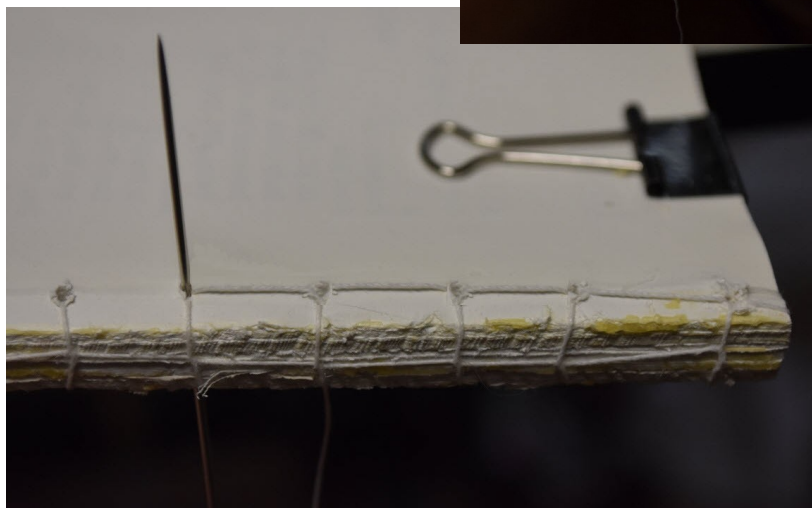
That done, I repeated the process to sew the block from the centre to the other end, then returned the needle again and knotted off without



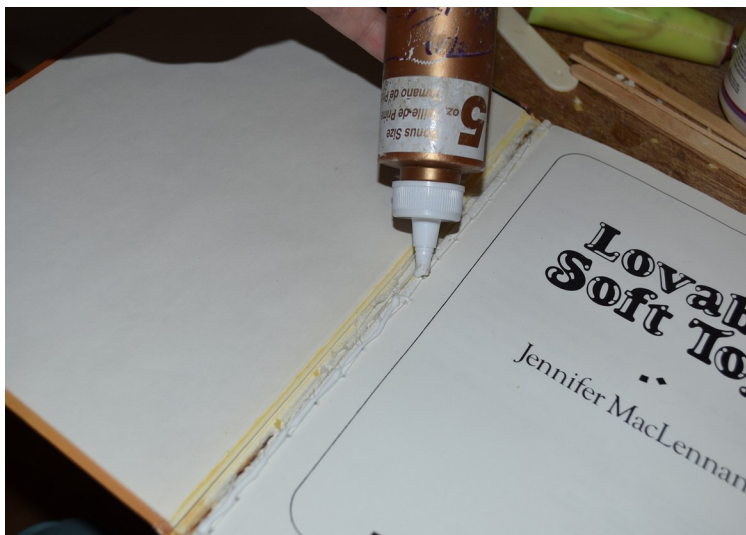
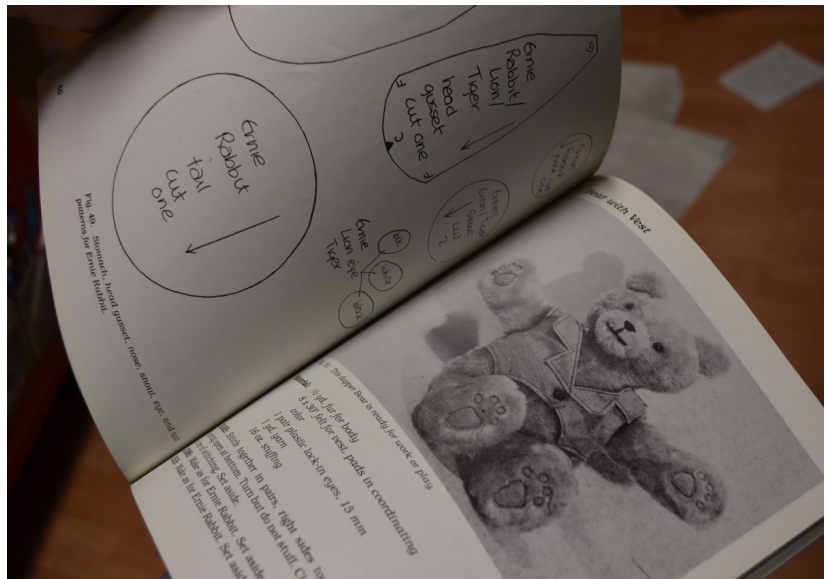
cutting the thread. Next, I ran the needle up and down through every second hole to the end, looped it around the top again, then returned to



the centre through the remaining holes, forming a solid line of stitching. At the centre, I knotted the thread once more, then repeated the process for the other end, finishing with a knot in centre.



The finished book block, held securely together by the stitching. In place of the buttonhole twist, I could have opted for crochet cotton or even dental floss.



I dry-fitted the book block into the cover, then applied glue along the stitched edge of the block, both front and back. I'm using tacky glue, but 3-in-1 or Multi-tac would also have been good. Then I folded the cover to enclose the glued edge.



Once the book block was glued into the cover, I clamped the whole thing in place with binding clips while the glue dried. I left it overnight just to be sure.

The cover is solidly glued in place, but if I feel that it needs additional reinforcement, I can add a strip of white paper tape along this seam.



Inside, the pages are now held securely and won't come loose. I must say I'm tickled pink with how well these repairs turned out:

Both books have been restored to readability, and they don't look half bad!

Book binding has always intrigued me, and this project gave me a chance to try my hand, even if in a modest way.

In the process, learned a few things, and had a lot of fun. In fact, I've already begun making plans for the next binding project!

