

Leather

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For centuries leather had been an important covering material for books. Z Z]•š}Œ Ç }(v P o]•Z bookbinding technique (3rd ed., 1988), Bernard Middleton suggested that leather had in fact been in μ•]v v P o v •]v šZ ^ Æ}v Ÿ u • X



This purple Ç P} š•]v]• Œ o ŸÀ oÇ •u oo Z] X

The type of leather to grace the covers of these books was not well documented. However, later volumes of the 12th and 13th centuries did appear to be bound in goatskins. Most likely, the binders

•]v Ÿ u • X ed for a book. À v šZ μv v }(Œ]v v P o v [• Z μv Ÿ v P it was likely that deer skin was used to some extent.

It had become a popular choice for coverings not long, its smooth, dark brown colour, once tanned, lending itself

to the majority of the l }(šZ }| v •u oo %}Œ Ÿ}v }(]š• •] • v }Œ v Œ• Á Œ }À Œ Á]šZ the boards covered with paper.

The most appropriate binding style and leather for a book was quite a responsibility for the

] Œ Ÿ}v Z š} P]À v š} šZ If it was to receive constant use, it would make a suitable covering; if it was likely to sit on the shelf unopened for extended }(Ÿ u U À oo μ }Œ Z % The binder also needed to understand whether had been treated before they selected it as a covering material. Leather usually consisted of two processes: tawing or tanning. A tawed skin was treated with potassium sulphate and salt/š % Œ} μ G Æ] o ÁZ]š o šZ Œ ÁZ] Z Á • Æš v•]À oÇ μ• (v P μv Ÿ o šZ u] o }(šZ íñšZ v š μ Œ Œ Á skin. In tanning Œ• Á]š Z š} Œ o o Ç Œ }(šZ v]u o •]v U]v}Áv • šZ Œ u]•U Á • šŒ š .Œ•š Á]šZ o

This was done by immersion in one or more tanning agents or tannins, usually made of ground oak bark and water. It was then scraped with a sharp knife and oiled, dyed or polished to form what we now know as leather. It was then necessary, depending on the type of leather and its treatment, for a binder to adjust the way they prepared it for covering. Some leathers were certainly more challenging to pare than others...

Vellum

Although it is the skin of the animal, vellum, technically speaking, is not leather because it has not undergone the process of tanning or rawing. Although it is the skin of the animal, vellum, technically speaking, is not leather because it has not undergone the process of tanning or rawing.

