

RESTORATION OF BOOK BINDING AT THE KRISTIANSAND CATHEDRAL SCHOOL (NORWAY) LIBRARY

IEVA CESBERGA

Conservator-master of manuscripts, documents, books or other paper objects
ieva.cesberga@arhivi.gov.lv
The National Archives of Latvia, Department of the Preventive Preservation
Bezdeligu Street 1A, Riga, LV-1048

INTRODUCTION

The Department of the Preventive Preservation at the National Archives of Latvia commenced its decade-long collaboration with Norway's Kristiansand Cathedral School Library in late 2012. There has been a historical collection of books at the school library since 1775, a part of the cathedral school's history, though it has been seriously damaged several times. In 1947, a large part of the collection suffered significant fire and water damage through a fire at the school's basement, and this has still not been remedied right up until the present day. Even in subsequent years, storage conditions have not been optimal with excessive air humidity or the opposite, dryness which has caused shrinkage and brittleness in the leather binding (see Figure 1, photographer Marika Vanaga).

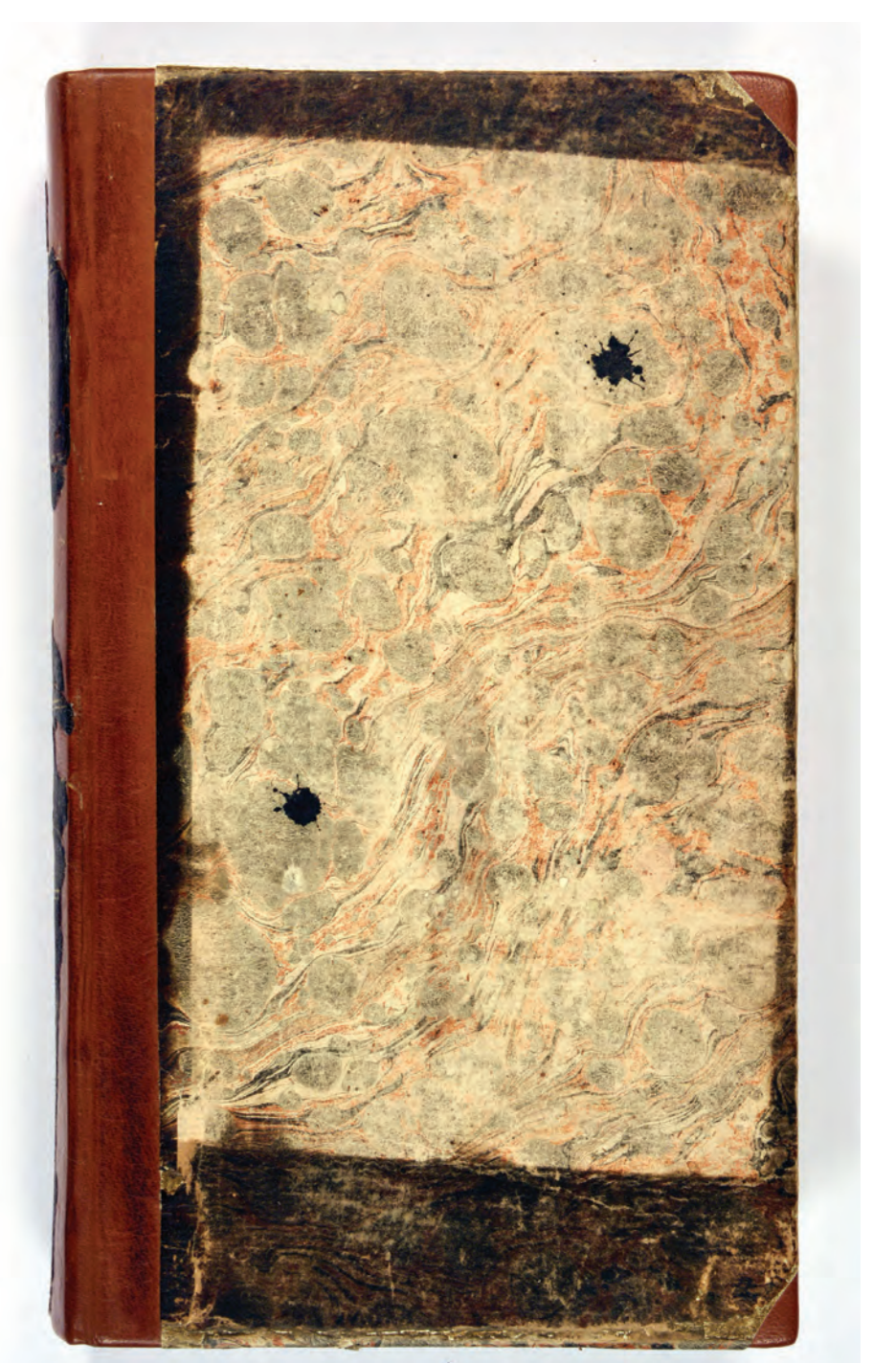
About 10,000 volumes have been accumulated during the period of existence of the Kristiansand Cathedral School Library, with the oldest of them dating back from the 16th century. Six books were initially brought from Norway to Latvia. Restorers Ruta Munce and Ieva Cesberga from the Department of Preventive Preservation of Documents' Restoration Section at the National Archives of Latvia took on the restoration of these items. Ruta Munce's professionalism and her extensive work experience in the restoration of parchment binding made it possible to accept this challenge. Whereas Ieva Cesberga's work experience permitted the commencement of work on the remaining items, which were diverse in format, as well as the style of binding and the materials used, namely paper, cardboard, wood and leather.

RESTORATION

The restorers undertook the disinfection of the items, the mechanical cleaning of the items, as well as the supplementation of areas of leather loss and other restoration work. In 2015 and 2017, packages containing an additional two items were delivered for restoration, while the final items for restoration arrived in Latvia in 2018. Restoration has currently been undertaken on 21 items in total - leather, part-leather or parchment binding.



Thormod Torfæus: Historizærum Norvegicarum, II, København 1701



The restoration work was a huge challenge as each item for restoration was unique, as was their damage, with each requiring an individual approach (see Figure 2, photographer Marika Vanaga). Fire damage to the leather binding of books is very hazardous and difficult to repair. The flyleaf paper in places is markedly fragile from the damage which took place. The leather is brittle, which is why it requires slow and gradual moisturizing and cleaning; leather, which corresponds in tone and thickness, must be found to replace losses. A glue of natural origin and corresponding composition must be used in the restoration process, so that the brittle and hard fragments of leather and edges can be fixed. Items with metal (brass) fasteners or other decorative elements required the assistance of a metal restorer (Edvins Šteingolds) to be brought in.

For example:



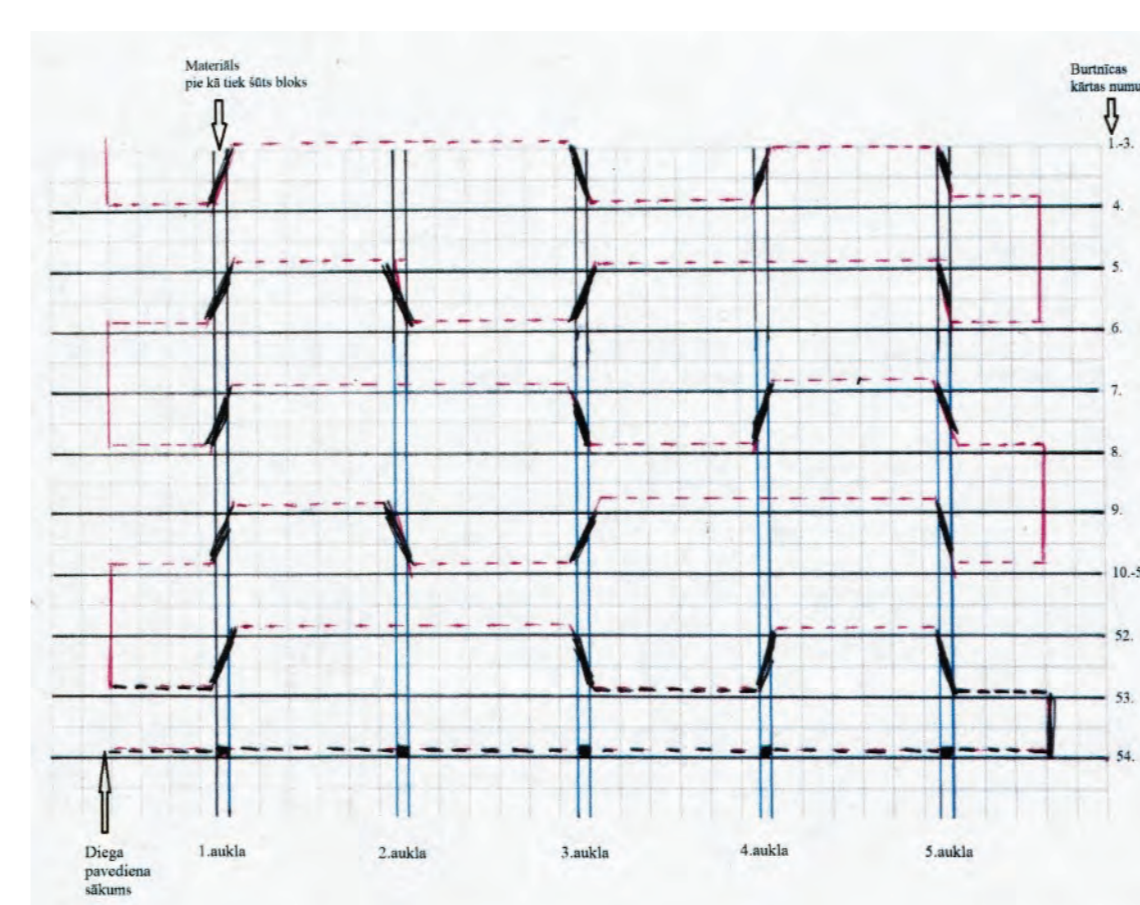
1. Die ganze Heilige Schrift Martin Luters, 2bind, Jena 1564

A dry cleaning of the cover and block, fly-leaf restoration, cover restoration (leather cleaning, supplementation, softening and the application of a covering), and restoration of decorative elements was undertaken.



2. Jens Worm: Forsøg til et Lexicon over danske, norske og islandske lærde Mænd, Tredie Deel, København 1784

Restoration of the front side of the item. Disinfection was undertaken, as was mechanical cleaning of the cover and block, the restoration of pages, the preparation of new fly-leaves, renewal of the block stitching, and restoration of the cover whilst preserving fragments of the old bound cover's binding material. The front side of the item after restoration (see Figure 3, photographer Marika Vanaga).



3. Christiani Stockii, „Novum Testamentum ad probatissimos codices accurate revisum, summaris singula capita dividitibus, copiosis locis parallelis, et praecipuis variantibus lectionibus, instructum, observationibus philologicis, criticis et exegeticis illustratum, et in memoriam jubilaevi II. Aug. confessionis in lucem editum cura et studio. (Altgriechisch und latein)“ 1731

Similar activities were also undertaken with other items for restoration, mainly the cleaning off of layers of soot and securing brittle and fragile fragments of leather and parchment. The work on these Norwegian items for restoration was interesting and enlightening, as these types of items, with this kind of fire damage, are rarely encountered in the collections of Latvian libraries or archives.