**Scaleboard Bindings**

Scaleboard bindings are a culturally significant facet of bookbinding and publishing history, characterized by thinly planted (1–3 mm) wooden boards, around two hundred years after the popularization of paper-based boards in Western bookbinding. 127 scaleboard bindings were analyzed and recorded at the Boston Athenæum during a survey conducted in June 2022. Scaleboards were located through a systematic examination of the boards in every binding in targeted special collections shelves. Where the present or originality of any element was in doubt, it was recorded as “indiscernible.”

**TEXTBLOCK**

- **Dates**
  - Imprint dates range from 1636–1844. The average date of our sample is 1766, and the earliest American imprint is dated 1683.

- **Size**
  - Portrait-oriented scaleboards average 157 × 104 × 22 mm, while the 2 examples of landscape bindings average 122 × 212 × 23 mm. The largest scaleboard in the sample is 210 mm tall, and the smallest a tiny 105 mm.

- **Textblock composition**
  - Textblocks were 79% laid/laid antique laid paper and 20% wove paper, plus 1 indiscernible and 1 mixed-texture variety.

- **Endpapers**
  - The most common discernible endpaper structures are single folios (stabbed or sewn) and sewn double folios, in some cases with an adhering waste leaf used for board attachment. Where discernible, endpapers are plain, except for 2 marbled examples and 2 blue examples.

**COVERING**

- **Full leather (65%)**
  - Full leather is the most common covering, likely because this sample skewed early.

- **Quarter leather (28%)**
  - Quarter leather bindings have a median imprint date of 1806. Binding paper is blue (82%), decorated (15%), or plain (3%). This category includes 8 reversed-skin bindings, in 6 of which the skin could not be confidently identified as vegetable-tanned leather (see below).

**DECORATIVE TECHNIQUES**

- **Edge decoration, tooling, decorated papers**
  - The bindings frequently feature textblock edge decoration, tooling, leather staining, or decorated paper. 51% of the scaleboards have decorated edges—red- or blue-sprinkled are most common (72%), followed by blue-sprinkled (15%), full yellow (6%), marbled (3%), and a single example of solid red edges. Full leather bindings often feature stamping and blind-stamped decoration on the spine, boards, and board edges. Tooling on quarter-leather bindings and gold tooling are uncommon. In addition to the near-ubiquitous blue papers, this sample includes marbled (6), printed (4), and paste-decorated (1) covering papers.

**BOARDs & BOARD ATTACHMENT**

- **Leather attachment**
  - Leaves are connected by sewing through the textblock or by sewing over supports. No unsupported sewing structures were found in this sample.

**OWNER INTERVENTIONS**

- **Unidentified skin**
  - 6 bindings are quarter bound with unidentified skin of a suede texture, which is thin and greyish brown. The color, texture, and thickness are not similar to the examples of reverse vegetable-tanned skin. Thongs of this material are thin and grey.

**RESOURCES**

- **Scaleboard Bindings, The Book and Paper Group Annual, Vol. 32.**
- **Scaleboard Bindings’ , Vol. 32.**

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