

## **The Oxford Hollow**

The oxford hollow is a tight tube of strong paper glued directly to the spine of the book. The covering material is glued directly to the outside of the hollow, causing it to open away ("throw off") from the book when in use. The method was in general use in England from about 1820, but it was somewhat misused for the next hundred years causing it to be severely criticized by Cobden-Sanderson, and later Douglas Cockerell. Used correctly, the method can provide a strong, flexible spine lining which permits the book to fully open, while providing more support for the binding, especially of stiff, unyielding paper; binding repair; restoration. There are many variations on the basic method, most concerned with minor differences in folding procedures. The method described here is straightforward and structurally superior to most others. The hollow consists of four thicknesses of paper (this may be increased for heavy books), the so-called "two-on, two-off", referring to two paper thicknesses glued directly to the spine and two thicknesses glued together "off" the spine.

### **Equipment and Materials**

Hand tools only are required, consisting of: a flat-bladed knife; a bone folder; a pair of scissors; a glue brush. Materials consist merely of a quick-setting P.V.A. adhesive and a sheet of stout paper, preferably acid-free kraft wrapping paper. If available, a laying press or similar should be used for books that are boarded.

### **Processes**

The spine should be cleaned completely of all old lining materials, and as much of the original adhesive layer as possible. If a new artificial headband is to be applied, it is glued on at this stage. If the book is to be completely rebound, the spine should be lined with a suitable lining cloth wrapped onto the sides approximately 2.5 centimeters. If the book is to be bound library style (split boards, non-case binding), the lining cloth should be sandwiched into the split along with the sewing tapes.

1. A piece of paper is cut the exact width of the spine and slightly longer than the height of the book, the grain running along its length (see guide 25 for the finding of "grain" direction).
2. The spine is evenly glued, and the paper strip laid onto it and well rubbed down with a bone folder.
3. A piece of paper is slightly wider than three times the width of the spine, and slightly longer than the height of the book, is cut with the grain running along the length.

4. The paper is folded down one edge in the same direction as the grain, approximately .2 centimeters less than the width of the spine (see figure 1).
5. The spine is again evenly glued and the paper laid onto it, the fold level with the front joint edge and the flat side down (see figure 2) and well rubbed down with a bone folder.
6. A second fold is now made at the other joint edge (see figure 3).
7. The upper portion after the first fold (marked "A" on figure 3) is held flat against the spine and evenly glued, taking care not to permit glue getting between the underside of the portion and the spine.
8. Holding the glued portion "A" against the spine with the fingertips the second fold portion "B" is smoothed over it and well rubbed down.
9. Any excess overhand from "B" is folded back at the joint and trimmed off with the flat-bladed knife. Any excess at head and tail is trimmed off with the scissors. It is important to note that head and tail is made level with the board squares when the binding is library style.
10. When the linings are dry, the book is opened slightly to make sure that the hollow functions properly, and, in the case of library binding, to enable slits to be made at the joint end-edges of the hollow to permit the covering material to be turned in (see figure 4). If a cloth case is to be glued directly to the hollow, the slits need not be made. If the book is to have a library binding, the slits are made and the outer layer of the hollow peeled back to enable the inner layer to be trimmed flush with the book edge with the scissors (this is to allow the covering material to be turned in over the outer layer only).

After the hollow is made, the appropriate steps are taken to complete the work. In the case of the library binding, the whole book is covered in buckram and turned in. In the case of the use of a cloth case made separate from the book, this is simply glued directly onto the hollow then pasted down. In the case of a spine repair or restoration, the new cloth spine is glued and laid into position on the hollow, and turned in over the original boards through short slits made at each end of the joints. When the hollow is used in conjunction with a basic cloth case repair, this should be done after overcasting. The hollow, in this case, should not be slit, and should be trimmed flush to the head and tail with scissors.

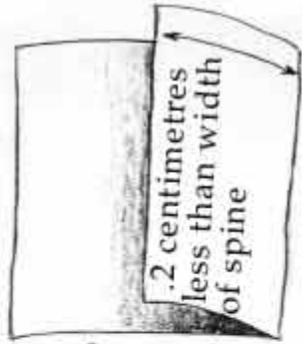


Figure 1.

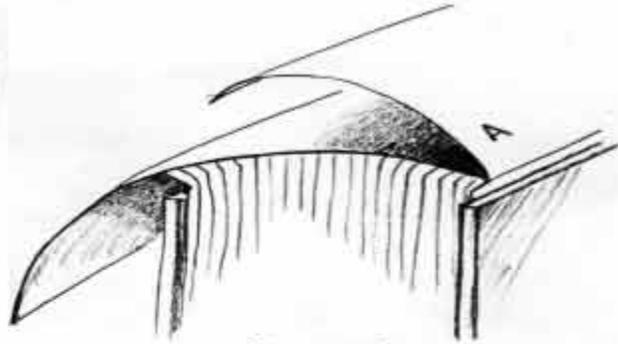


Figure 2.

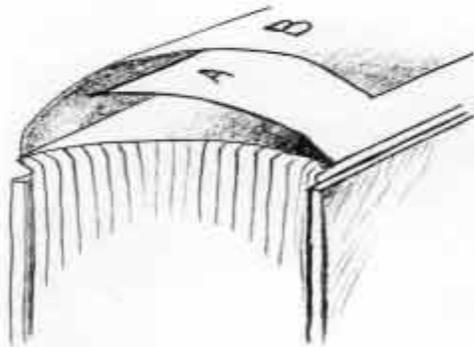


Figure 3.

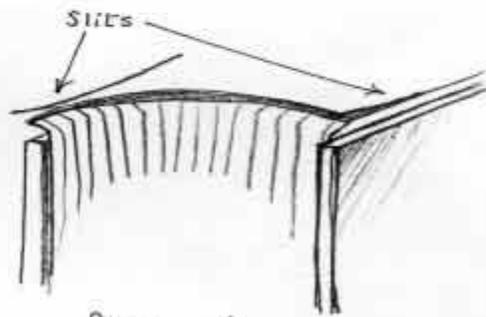


Figure 4.

\*Updated 2008