ABSTRACT

The article is a summary of the Archives Conservators Discussion Group at the 31st Annual Meeting of the American Institute for Conservation in Alexandria, Virginia, June 9, 2003. The general topic was flattening and drying of archival material on paper. The topic was a continuation of the previous year’s session on humidification and flattening. The session included presentations on karibari, techniques used in textile conservation, and research into the effects of humidification on letterpress copy inks. A short list of references is included.

The topic for the Archives Conservators Discussion Group session was a continuation of the previous year’s discussions on humidification and flattening. During that earlier session, participants expressed interest in different flattening and drying techniques. For this session, three participants gave prepared presentations. Three other participants could not attend, but sent information and samples for the session. Throughout the session and at the end of the prepared presentations, members of the audience asked questions and added comments of their own.

The first presentation was by Kathleen Kiefer, a textile conservator at the Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library. Ms Kiefer worked as an archives conservator early in her career. Her presentation explained how textile conservators treat objects that require humidification and flattening. Ms Kiefer spoke about some of the problems facing textile conservators during treatment. Many of the solutions have relevance to the humidification and flattening of paper documents. Localized humidification is often used to flatten objects. Overall flattening is not typically undertaken due to the dimensionality of textiles. Much like trying to retain plate marks on a print, retaining creases as evidence is important to textile conservators. Some of the tools Ms Kiefer uses are familiar to book and paper conservators. She spoke of using Gore-Tex, high-density polyethylene, blotter, weights, and at times a Preservation Pencil to create localized humidification. Large humidification chambers are used when treating an oversize object, though textile conservators treat large objects “in the round” rather than under a domed suction table. At times a garment steamer is used for intractable problems, although it was pointed out that use of a steamer is considered aggressive treatment. Ms Kiefer explained some wet cleaning techniques textile conservators undertake. One technique is to spread a drying cloth over a wet textile and blot the textile through the cloth with towels. Degradation products move from the object to the drying cloth in a controlled manner. The presentation provided an opportunity to gain insight into the topic of humidification and flattening through a different point of view, allowing book and paper conservators to re-evaluate and compare their own methods.

The second speaker was Yoshiyuki Nishio, director of the Nishio Conservation Studio. Mr. Nishio’s topic was a simplified way of making a karibari board. A traditional karibari has ten layers of Japanese papers adhered to a core usually made of white cedar. In the 1980s, Mr. Nishio began using a Gatorboard foam karibari. The Gatorboard is first prepared by sanding both sides to facilitate easy paper adhesion. Mr. Nishio recommends using a heavy Japanese paper. The edges of the Japanese paper to be used over the Gatorboard are feathered. The Japanese paper is adhered to the Gatorboard with a strong paste. Mr. Nishio uses a mix of wheat starch paste and Rhoplex AC33. Only
a couple of layers of Japanese paper are needed for the simplified method of karibari. After paper adhesion to the Gatorboard, the karibari is dried upright overnight and then sealed with an acrylic. The simplified karibari is more sensitive to moisture than the traditional form and can be more easily warped. In addition, there is a lack of airflow between the layers of Japanese paper and the Gatorboard. On the positive side, the easy karibari weighs two-thirds the total weight of a traditional one, costs less than the $600-800 needed to complete a traditional karibari, is easily transportable, and does not require up to two years for the color of the persimmon juice used in a traditional karibari to cure. Mr. Nishio uses the simplified karibari for adhering lining paper to objects. He recommends using methyl cellulose as an adhesive between lining paper and karibari to avoid loss of paper on the board after drying. He impaints on the simplified karibari. He points out that the application of weights is possible on the solid core Gatorboard.

Next Barbara Rhodes, conservator for the Department of Library Services, American Museum of Natural History, spoke about her research into letterpress copy inks. The use of copy press paper was popular for over one hundred years from the early 1800s to the early 1900s. A letterpress copy document was made by pressing a damp paper against the surface of slow drying ink. Some of the inks used were iron-gall copy ink, logwood bichromate ink, and aniline inks. Aniline inks are also found in copy pencils of the same time period. Ms. Rhodes's research is an effort to answer the question of how to humidify such slow drying inks. Potential problems for humidification include the solubility of the inks, the widespread use of humectants in the inks, and the fact that the iron-gall and logwood bichromate inks oxidize and seal. Ms. Rhodes passed around samples of synthetic, non-absorbent materials they have developed a modification of this system using synthetic materials in the place of the corrugated board and blotter paper. The new stack contains: non-woven polyester (Hollytex), polypropylene felts, polyethylene screens, polyethylene/polypropylene corrugated mats, and archival quality mat board. Advantages of synthetic materials include longer material reuse and decreased drying time of items in the stack. Contact information for Lee McDonald: P. O. Box 200264, Charlestown, Massachusetts 02129 (www.toolsforpaper.com).

The co-chairs would like to thank all of the participants and audience members who contributed to this session. The co-chairs would like to especially thank Frank Trujillo for taking notes during the session.

REFERENCES

Dwan. A. 1992. Use of Gore-Tex to dry smooth, calen-


Two centuries ago this spring—without a call to arms, with little advance. After several attempts to dissolve the lamination in acetone, the conservator tried a mixture of acetone and water; the lamination quickly dissolved. Wayne T. De Cesar is a reference archivist with the National Archives and Records Administration, Textual Services Division, where he works with the Treasury/Revenue/Finance cluster of Federal records. Drying and flattening under pressure, often pressed between two absorbent surfaces. Tensioning at the edges, where the parchment is constricted at the edges with weights or clips. This techniques most closely reflects parchment's original manufacturing process. Analysis under ultraviolet light allowed scientists and conservators to see text that was invisible to the naked eye. This new technology allows the document to be used for continued research purposes, despite the previous botched restoration. References. The flattening methods overviewed include air dry and double-screens, blotter and felt stacks, friction mounts, presses including heat, drying screens, Dutch strainer, and vacuum-suction table. A few procedures are illustrated with hand-drawn diagrams. This paper developed out of an informal presentation by the author given at the Archives Conservators Discussion Group (ACDG) session of the 30th Annual Meeting of the American Institute for Conservation (AIC) in Miami, Florida, in June 2002. Conservators and technicians decide two basic things when humidifying and flattening paper materials: (1) How to introduce moisture to relax the paper support and at what rate, and (2) How to remove the moisture from the item and at what rate.