

Digitisation and preservation of original documents in the French National Library : the progressive development of a strategy

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Schedule

- Preservation of heritage collections cannot be compromised by digitisation
- BnF experience, the development of its strategy
- For a shared culture of respect for the document : a specific training
- Dedicated workshops for a physical preparation before scanning (printed books and brochures / newspapers)
- Digitisation as a future for restoration ?

Preservation cannot be compromised by digitization

- Most original documents digitised by BnF are of heritage value
- They must be kept for long-term preservation and remain available to public as often as possible
- Scanning must not bring any damages on documents
- Documents must be carefully selected and prepared
- conservation concerns are always more important than scanning speed
- Despite technical improvements, digitisation remains a delicate trial for heritage documents

BnF experience, the development of its strategy

- Initial bad experiences : damaging scanning can jeopardize whole digitisation programmes
- Digitisation of microforms and its limits
- The advantages of on-site workshops and digitisation
- Preservation concerns in digitisation contracts , workflow and training :
 - survey of physical conditions before and after scanning
 - increasing demands on digitisation conditions and equipments
 - penalties for each damaged item
 - Specific and common training
 - dedicated workshops for documents preparation and restoration

For a shared culture of respect for the document : a specific training

- Set up in 2011 by restorers for the current mass-digitisation programme
- Aiming at giving abilities to decide if and how a document can be scanned and for an accurate handling
- Given systematically to all teams (BnF and private providers)
- Gives a common culture of preservation
- Helps to improve relations and to work together
- Must be frequently given again (turn-over)

Physical preparation in dedicated workshops/1

- To minimize damages on brittle documents
- To allow to digitise very brittle and damaged documents
- To reduce the time used for selection of documents and the number of those which cannot be scanned
- To reassure curators and improve relations and atmosphere

Physical preparation in dedicated workshops : 2/ the books and brochures preparation workshop

- Created 2011 for the current printed books mass-digitisation programme
- Dedicated , but set up in a pre-existing restoration workshop
- 2 half-time working people, one of them is a skilled restorer
- Quick treatments, only to prepare brittle items for scanning
- 2012 : 5% of the digitised documents have been prepared

2/the books and brochures preparation workshop

Brochures before...



...and after strengthening of the spines with japanese paper

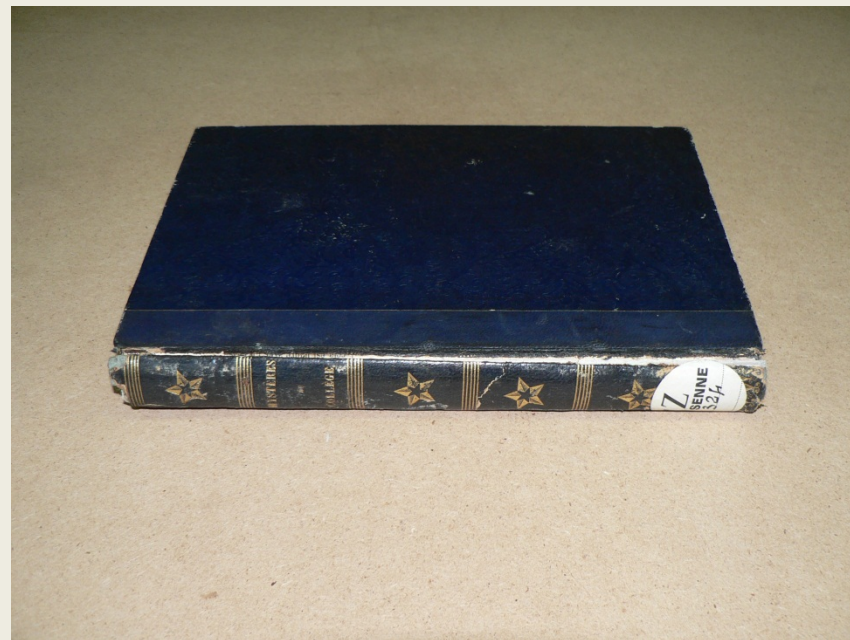


2/the books and brochures preparation workshop

A loose spine...



... refixed with japanese paper



2/the books and brochures preparation workshop

A damaged hinge...



...repared with japanese paper



2/the books and brochures preparation workshop

A loose sheet...



...tied up again



3/ The newspapers preparation workshop

- Created several years ago for microfilming preparation
- Staff increased to treat more and more damaged newspapers
- 3 full-time qualified people (but no restorer)
- Close to digitisation and microfilming workshops
- Minimal paper treatment, only to allow good quality scanning (preparation, not restoration) : flattening, slight repairs
- But sometimes more extensive treatments : full-lining, removing of covers
- Inescapable because of the bad conditions of newspaper collections
- Staff sufficient only for middle-size programmes
- Increase the cost of digitisation of about 30 %

3/the newspapers preparation workshop

The most frequent treatment : flattening with electric iron



Removing of cover of newspaper volumes



3/the newspapers preparation workshop

Complete lining of a very brittle sheet

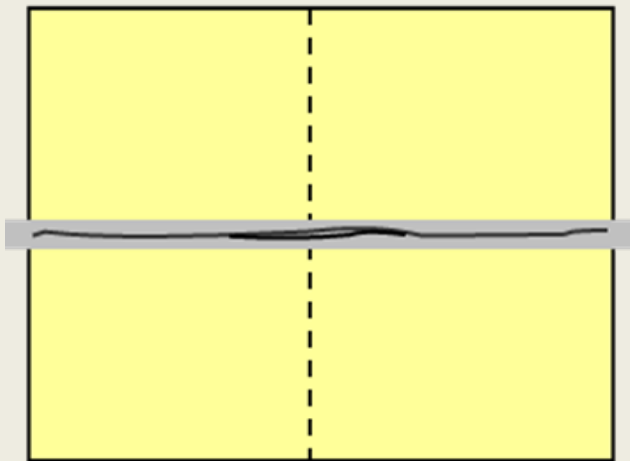


Partial repair with stripes of Filmoplast ®

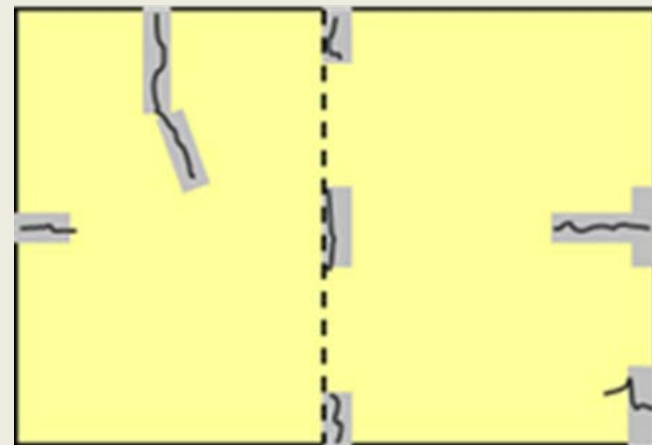


3/the newspapers preparation workshop

Places of the most frequent repairs : original folds...



...and edges, more often handled



Digitisation as a future for restoration ?

- Restorers are taking on an increasingly significant roles in digitisation programmes :
 - Advice and staff training (documents handling and choice)
 - Survey of physical conditions before and after scanning
 - Preparation and/or reparation of documents (even if often carried out by library assistants)
- Digitisation leads paradoxally to emphasize the significance of physical conservation
- It can provide restorers with new opportunities and prospects

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