1. The yellow acidic endpapers are removed from the textblock using wheat paste and a curved scalpel.
2. After the textblock is free from the endpapers, a scalpel is used to remove the textblock from the case.
3. Wheat paste and a curved scalpel are used to remove material on the spine (canvas, linen, excess adhesive, old leather, etc.). The spine is sanded to even out any remaining adhesive.
4. Japanese tissue is used to repair paper tears and deteriorated areas on the pages. Document cleaning powder is used to remove superficial dirt from the pages.
5. Once the textblock has been cleaned and repaired, the endpapers are cut and attached to the front and back pages.
6. To support the spine and to later attach the textblock to the case, Irish linen is cut and attached to the spine using a wheat paste/Polyvinyl acetate (PVA) mix to the spine. While the linen is drying, endbands are cut and attached to the spine of the textblock.
7. The first step in making the case is to cut boards and bevel one edge to fit the shoulder of the textblock; the corners of the boards are also slightly blunted.
8. The leather for the spine piece and corners is cut and pared.
9. Next a “spine stiffener” is cut out of Bristol board and attached to the leather spine. Once dry, the leather spine is attached to the boards using wheat paste/PVA mix. The corners are “tapped” into shape and the inside corner makes a fan pattern.
10. The leather corners are attached to the boards using wheat paste/PVA mix. The corners are cut off, and the boards are braced to keep the spine straight.
11. Marble paper is measured and the corners are cut off, and then pasted onto the boards. Once the case is complete, it is placed under weight while the adhesive dries.
12. Attaching the case to the textblock is the final step in the process. It is important to make sure the textblock fits in exactly the right position. Using wheat paste/PVA mix, the linen strip is glued to the boards and the book is placed under weight. Once the linen is dry, the endpapers are pasted down to the boards and the book is placed in the press overnight.

Grant Information

For the last century, WSU librarians have regularly purchased English books printed before the year 1800. Many of these volumes were bought for a trifle, but are now extremely rare. For example, WSU’s copy of Juan de Santa Maria’s the Christian Policie or The Christian Common-Wealth published in 1638 is held outside of WSU only by Cambridge University. WSU purchased this book in 1938 for $1. A similar rarity is W. Derham’s Astro-theology published in London in 1725 and purchased by WSU in 1938 for 80 cents. Cornell and Cambridge are the only other institutions that list the title.

Unfortunately, several decades ago hundreds of these books were severely damaged when an untrained temporary employee rebound them. In 2007, we received a $20,000 grant as part of the Washington State Library Preservation Initiative to conserve 100 damaged volumes and to develop metrics for future grants. The books that are part of this grant meet the following criteria:

1) Books that were damaged in previous preservation attempts;
2) Books that were printed before 1800;
3) Books that, according to OCLC’s WorldCat, are not held by any other institution in Washington State.

Before conserving any book, we first make a detailed evaluation. Though this 1632 edition of Maria’s The Christian Policie has its original boards, the book is covered with fake leather and the end papers are highly acidic. Both the covering and endpapers will need to be completely removed and replaced. In this “after the treatment” photo, the book is completely restored with acid free materials that are appropriate to the age of the volume.