

And because there *is* a big picture as Jesus said, not even the Internet - even with Bill Gates' three hundred satellites buzzing the earth - will be a substitute for sitting amongst a few treasured books and seeing fresh facets in God's unchanging truth.

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Binding has no Bounds **Saturday Afternoon with Fred Pohlmann**

Tony McCumstie

After our Saturday picnic lunch in the park, we headed off to Camp Mountain to visit Fred Pohlmann a master bookbinder. It was a pleasant journey through the hills just outside Brisbane. (Did I say "hills"? Some of the hills were so hilly that the driver had to use an additional brake to ensure the bus did not end up in a ravine else the number of theological librarians may well have been significantly diminished). We only got lost once, so all in all it was a pretty good journey.

Having arrived, we were met by Fred and his wife, Gundy, and they showed us some of the work they do. "They" consist of Fred, Gundy and their son who work in a studio attached to their mud-brick house nestled in the bush on top of a mountain ridge.

We began with the bread and butter stuff - the binding of serials for libraries. A few questions were asked which Fred fielded quite happily but then we moved on to more interesting things.

Fred gave us a fascinating display of the craftsmanship and care that go into the repair and restoration of books like the ones you have tucked away out of harm's way and are wondering what to do with. Fred explained that there are basically two ways of treating a badly deteriorated volume. The first is essentially a band-aid approach which repairs the book and makes it serviceable again. Relatively cheap. The second is restoration proper, which involves matching the binding material, matching the paper where necessary, more work, more craftsmanship, more care and more expense.

Then, Fred moved on to the piece de resistance - fine binding. Fred collects and binds limited editions for himself and binds limited editions for others. These bindings are works of art in themselves. Bound in a variety of leathers (e.g. emu, kangaroo and even cane toad) and intricately detailed, the bindings are intended to complement the works they encase. Fred briefly explained some of the centuries-old techniques he uses and some of the unique methods he himself has devised. Not content with creative binding, Fred also dabbles in creative storage with cunning little hand-made boxes custom-designed to store, preserve and present the books. The standard of Fred's work is such that it is displayed in world-class exhibitions.

Fred seemed very pleased to have an interested and enthusiastic audience and fielded our questions quite happily. Over afternoon tea, we were able to chat to the Pohlmanns individually about their work and lifestyle. I, for one, came away a little envious of their creative field of work in fine binding and the idyllic setting in which they both work and live.

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