Rebinding for General Circulation.

The regular May meeting of the New York Library Club, "Rebinding for General Circulation" was the subject of an interesting discussion. The topic is one of importance to librarians, and the points brought out by the members of the club were of such practical interest that we present the "symposium" in full, as reported by The Library Journal.

Mr. G. H. Baker, of Columbia College Library, opened the discussion as follows: "The question of binding is one of the greatest importance for all libraries. In a library like ours the circulation is a minor feature, and it does not create the necessity for rebinding that it does in a public library where books are sent out by the hundreds and thousands. We therefore do not bind as such a library would, and our experience would consequent not be of much use to a public library. We bind with goat back; very few books of the better class are bought in cloth or other kinds of cheaper binding. For instance, law-books and others of that description make great expense for rebinding, more, perhaps, than any other class. They wear out and many have to be rebound. They must be rebound in as good or better binding than they were in originally. With other works, as of general literature, our rebinding is caused by general wear on the shelves and general library administration more than actual circulation. For the past year or two we have done much in the way of repairing books that had got loose in their covers and did not really need rebinding. Our man who gilds or numbers the books repairs them at the rate of perhaps thirty volumes a week at an expense of twenty-five cents or thirty cents a volume. Most books so repaired will last a great many years and save the expense of sending them to the binders and having them rebound.

"In the matter of subscription-books, you have all been beset by book agents who have got books out in two or three different styles of binding; cloth, half morocco, etc. It has been our practice to take cloth bindings even in books of reference that are likely to come to pieces in a year or two from constant use. We put them on the shelves and let them wear as long as they will. We get the book in its cloth-bound form and get six months or a year or two of wear out of it and then bind it. We are often asked why we do not buy better binding; but we find our practice the most economical."

Mr. R. B. Poole followed: "My experience is similar to Mr. Baker's and naturally falls in the same lines. I think there is a great difference between the needs of binding in a reference library and in a circulating library. I follow Mr. Baker's plan of getting cloth bindings and get the wear out of them. I think much money may be wastefully spent for binding. As to the circulating library, much discretion must be used as to what is best to be done. For a book that is to be worn out, I think a binding of buckram a very good one; it will wear much longer than cloth and considerable economy can be effected by binding in this material. Good cloth bindings are very good. Sheep may be used if of the best quality. I do not think much of buffing as a material for binding."

Mr. G. W. Cole continued the discussion. He said: "We have bound some 8,000 volumes, or nearly one-fourth of the books of the Jersey City Library, since it has been in operation. Of this number 5,000 to 6,000 volumes were rebound, the rest being books bought in paper covers and sets of magazines bought in numbers. For books which circulate extensively, particularly for fiction, we bind in half-buffing. Our experience as to wear, though limited as to time, shows us that this binding will generally outlast the paper of which the books are made. There is now so much wood-pulp paper used in making books that there is more danger of a book of this kind going to pieces than of its binding wearing out. Our experience with books of this class shows that the glue used on the back of the book has not that affinity for wood-pulp paper than it has for rag-stock paper. The paper disintegrates and the paper and glue soon separate, the paper cleaving off in thin flakes with the glue. This being the case we do not consider it economical to bind in the better styles of leather those books which circulate largely. We have a very competent and honest binder, and he has developed a style of binding which we think will commend itself to those who have to do much rebinding. I will attempt to describe it: The first and last signatures of each volume are first taken and run through a sewing machine with the stitch set very long, sewing along the entire back a strip of good stout muslin about two inches in width. Three-eighths or a half inch of this muslin is sewn so as to lie between the first and second and the last and next to the last signatures when the book is put together, the remainder being used for the hinge or joint. The whole book, including the first and last signatures so prepared, is then sewn all along upon the cords in the usual manner. The narrow strip of muslin is then pasted to the signatures to which they are sewed and the next ones to which they come in contact when the book is put together. Over the back of the book is glued a flesher, or strip of leather from the inside of a split sheepskin. The book is then ready to go into its cover. The boards are fitted and the strip of muslin and the cords, fanned out, are pasted between the boards and the lining papers, forming a very strong hinge or joint. This hinge has the advantages over the usual form of cloth hinge, in that it is securely sewed, as has been shown, to the first and last signatures, besides being pasted between their leaves and those of the ones with which they come in contact, whereas the usual form of the cloth hinge is only pasted between the loose binding paper and the first or last leaf of the book. After our hinge is made, the leather is put over the back, forming a loose back, and finished in the usual way with vellum corners. With the flesher glued to the back of the book before it is put into the cover we get..."
the advantages of both tight and laced boards back, with none of their disadvantages, viz.: the destruction of the leather and lettering caused by the constant wrinkling every time the book is opened and shut. On the back we have gilded the author's name, the short title, and the call-number.

"In this binding we get a volume most thoroughly put together and which opens very freely. In fact, it is a binding which will last longer, on the average, than the book itself, especially if made of wood-pulp paper. It is also a binding which can more easily be repaired and put back into the old cover than the ordinary halfbindings with lace boards, as there is plenty of room to put back the book after it has been resewed. When this is done with a lace book the resewing increases the thickness of the book and it never opens as fully as when first bound, the leather then having been shrunk to the book.

"Now a word as to buying books in the original cloth bindings, getting as much wear as you can out of them as possible, and then rebinding them in a more substantial manner, according to the plan of Mr. Baker and Mr. Poole. I am in accord with the plan for two reasons: First, publishers charge an unconscionable difference in the price of their books bound in cloth and those bound in half morocco. They seem to argue that if a customer wishes the latter he is a man of means and a fit subject to be bled. Take as an example the Century Dictionary in six vols. The publisher's price in cloth is $60, in half morocco, $90, a price out of all proportion to the comparative cost and the materials employed. We all know that we can get them rebound for from $2 to $3 a volume in as good or better leather and with better workmanship, to say nothing of the cost of the original cloth binding. Second, the publisher's half morocco bindings are no better as a class than their cloth bindings, both being by what is known by binders as 'case' or 'edition' binding, whereas, when we have the same volumes rebound we insist on their being sewn all along, and have the boards laced, and generally get at far less cost a binding which is in all respects superior to the publisher's. It may not be as elegantly gilded, as the publisher is able to employ his presses in gilding his cases with elaborate pattern but we get in its place a much more durable and solid binding, though perhaps a less showy one."

Miss Hull said that according to her experience the paper wears out quite as much as the binding.

Mr. Berry: "Many books wear out in the rebinding because they are made of wood-pulp paper. We all have had experience with our binders sending back books with a string around them. They will not stand the third resewing. I am pleased with the idea of the leather (flesher) back and cloth hinge."

Mr. Poole: "Has anyone had experience with duck binding?"

Miss Hull: "The duck-bound books sell very easily."

"Our binders," said Mr. Berry, "have not yet used it enough to get it into a proper condition to prevent it soiling. We use it, but it is soiled very easily. I believe binders may be instructed by showing them a set of Scribner's in the publisher's binding, in which the duck is glazed. In this case we get durability."

Mr. Tyler: "Will this be cheaper than buckram?"

Mr. Poole: "The Scribner's say their binding is buckram. A number of years since I made enquiries about buckram. It is made of linen, and this polished surface is made by using sizing which injures its quality and lasting power. I am using duck. The more dyed stuff you get in the duck the worse it becomes. The nearer you get it to its natural colour the more durable it is. I take the drab colour and use it for binding. Newspapers and books that are used much I bind in brown."

The discussion was concluded by Mr. A. W. Tyler, of Columbia College Library, who said: "I wish to give a word of warning as to the binding of the so-called better class of subscription-books. The Kansas State Library had a copy of the 'Encyclopedia Britannica' bound in so-called half Russia, but suddenly the covers began to come off. The cords did not go into the covers at all, or were not laced. At the St. Louis conference we had a sample volume to show and it was a miserable piece of split leather. In this library you will have a chance to see the same thing. It is a fraud. I think it a better way to buy the cloth and have it rebound. I think also that we should enter a strong protest against publishers putting out books entirely in white bindings. A part, at least, of every edition so bound should be bound in colours for use in libraries. As for covering books in the fiction and juvenile department, my experience has been thoroughly unsatisfactory. We covered books until they were rebound in leather. They were excellently covered. I think some books can be covered to advantage. If you are fortunate enough to have a good binder you will get a book that will last a long time. Fifty years from now the books printed on wood-pulp paper will go to pieces. The better books ought to be printed in two editions: in one for those who will pay the wood pulp-price, and in rag paper for those who wish the books to last."

"Needles for Book Sewing Machines.—Needles intended for use in book sewing machines are now being made with a penetrating point to be forced outwardly through the fold of the signature, and with a hook into which a thread is laid and drawn by the hook down into the signature, for the reception of threads or loops passing longitudinally within the signature. In these machines the penetrating hook receives a movement at right-angles to the bar upon which the signature or folded sheet is laid; then, after the loop of thread has been drawn down into the signature by the hook, the loop is cast off from the hook in order that the loop of thread may not be retained by the hook and broken by the downward movement of the sheet-holding bar and the needles carried by it. In some classes of machines for such work a hook-closer or cast-off has been made use of, receiving a motion at the proper time to open or close the hook of the needle, but in this improved device the cast-off is made to operate automatically by a frictional detaining mechanism, the hook-pointed needle within the sheet-holding bar receives the proper movement, the cast-off automatically throwing off the loop from the hook of the needle."