Finding the Zen in a Re-Casing Process

by
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Re-Casing Procedure
One sign of an impending nervous breakdown is the conviction that your work is terribly important.
The Zen of Re-Casing

Note: Materials will have been selected for the person using this procedure. No items not matching the steps in the procedure will be given to the person performing the repair. For example, a PVA or similarly tough spine adhesive will not reach the worker.

Step 1

Take the abused item and hold it in your hands. Look at it and examine it carefully. Study the physical elements of the text block and binding. Feel the book cloth, run your hands over the paper. Look down the hollow of the spine (if there is one).

Step 2

Now, Close your eyes and perceive the book as you imagine it. Use the mind’s inner eye to achieve a perception of the essence of the book beyond its physical components. Consider the information the book contains and the way in which that information is conveyed to a user. Try to envision the fundamental aspect of the physical reality of the book. What is information and how does it relate to the book? Is the information the ink that is printed on the paper? Perhaps the ink is merely a representation of the thought of the creator of the work. Or is it the simply the effort of the printer?

Step 3

Keeping in mind the physical nature of the book and the essence of its existence, what is most important about this thing we call a book? Is it the information? Is it the physical presence of the object? If one letter of text is missing because it has been abraded over time by use is the entire entity useless? If one corner of the cover board is exposed through the cloth is the integrity of the object compromised? What if the entire case is attached merely through the presence of a few fibrous strands of cotton or linen? Where is the value of such a book: in the text or in the structure? What is the difference between the text and the structure? Aren’t both of these the body of the work? Will the world come to an end if this book no longer exists? Will the information the author worked so hard to acquire, organize and disseminate be greatly missed if this text ceases to remain in its current state?

Step 4

Think about your boss. What is their purpose in your life? How does that reflect on how you act, behave, think, and exist? That’s right, the boss gets paid to think about crap like this so lets get on with the work to be done, but let’s not loose our entire Zen-ness just because someone else gets paid to think about that stuff. Focus on the procedure to maintain a level of harmony within yourself so that you can temper your bitter feeling towards your boss (who clearly gets paid more than you for knowing less).
Step 5

Begin by looking through the text block for loose or missing pages. Make note of missing pages and set aside loose pages in a secure area so that they don’t get lost, since difficulty trying to find them later will most certainly disrupt the levels of tranquility of your soul.

Step 6

Remove the case from the text block. There are several ways to do this, just remember to be gentle with the book. Its physical stability is proportionally related to your mental and spiritual levels of peace.

Ways to remove the case:

Using a scalpel or Olfa knife cut along the book cloth from the outside of the book being careful not to cut the text block but managing to release and textile attaching mechanism in place.

If appropriate you can work from the inside of the book and cut along the cover boards in the gutter or inner margin of the book between the fly-leaf and the paste down.

Usually, ripping the cover off the text block interferes with the book’s physical integrity. Any desire to do this is probably a good indicator that you’re having a bad day and should probably turn your attention to something you enjoy doing. Remember the book’s physical stability is proportional to your mental and spiritual peace.

Step 7

Once the case is separated from the text block place it in the same secure area where you placed any loose leaves. Next, turn your attention to the text block. Consider how it is feeling at the moment. Contemplate the vulnerability it must feel. Even with a loose case it was still in a harmonious relationship with a caregiver. Now it is fending for itself. How would you feel in a similar situation? Take a moment and imagine yourself at 4 and one half years old. You have accompanied your mother to the local TG&Y to shop. One moment you are playing hid and seek with your imaginary friend Otto in the ladies undergarment collection and the next minute you are madly running about searching for your mother who is no where to be seen. Images of un-kissed owies, and long walks home to a place you don’t think you’ll ever find fill your mind. Tears well up in your eyes as desperation overwhelms you emotional being. As you fall to a plump on your round rump you realize that the end of the world is near for you and all is hopeless. How do you think that text block feels now?

Step 8

Find a lying press in which you can place the text block while you clean its spine. Before placing the text in the press cut some davy board to go on either side of the text to
prevent it from being squished by the press. Remember the text block is feeling vulnerable so be aware of its feelings and demonstrate some concern to ease its worries.

Step 9

After removing any loose debris from the spine take some methylcellulose and apply it to the spine of the book. Use a spatula or a bone folder or an old brush or even your finger. Again, it is vital to remember that any physical contact between you and the book can only serve to intensify a compassionate symbiotic relationship between you and the object. After placing the methyl cellulose on the spine cover it with a piece of scrap saran wrap. This will keep the moisture near the offensive glue on the spine of the book and cause it to soften more quickly. If you don’t have any saran wrap don’t worry it will work fine without it.

Step 10

After some time examine the glue to see if it is softening. If not give it some more time. If it is soft pull the plastic wrap away and using a micro spatula begin to remove the glue and textile (if present) and any paper fibers that remain. Be carefully not to scrape the folds of the paper signatures of the text block. Always remember, cricket, the vulnerability of the text block. When most of the glue has been removed it might be advisable to switch to a bone folder as this will not scar, mutilate, abrade, or otherwise damage the signatures.

Step 11

The spine is clean. Consider once again the feelings of the text block. What is left for its comfort: a thin thread holding its signatures together; no glue, no cloth and paper spine, no cover boards. How are the feelings of the text block affecting the way you treat it? Are you more delicate in your physical touch? Are you more worried that you will make a mistake? It is important at this point in the procedure to begin to realize your place in the greater role of the world of this book and the universe. How small are you? How small is this book? Where do both you and the book fall in the continuum of cyclic and planar existence? How would the balance of the existence be altered if either you or the book ceased to exist? If the balance were determined by what you get paid (and I know I was once there myself) probably not much would change. And the book? Probably not a whole lot would change there either since there are likely to be about 50,000 copies of this book in existence and it wouldn’t be on you bench if it were extremely rare. So, yeah, you tore one of the signature folds when you were cleaning the spine, mercury is not going to fall into the sun’s gravitational pull (actually Mercury falls into the sun’s gravitational pull constantly over and over and over). Well, I digress. The book is fine, you’re fine, the heavens are aligned and all is well with the lab.

Step 12
Remove the text block from the press and place with the case and the loose pages. Cover your methyl cellulose and glue pots and moisten your brush and go get a cup of coffee. You and the book have been through a lot and need to spend some time apart. It is important that you both be comfortable with the new place you are in and understand how it affects you personally.

Step 13

Hope the coffee was good. Now, back to the book. This is the point at which you need to begin building it up again. The delicate process of tearing it down has come to an end and now you and your book can grow together into a new existence of self-assurance in which you will be a service to your communities.

Place the book on the bench and if necessary try to reconfigure the round of the book (if it has one—if it is a flat back then square it up as best you can.) If at this point you notice any broken sewing this to should be repaired. To repair sewing refer to Bhuddistic Sewing: the thread of life weaves throughout the folds of interpretation. Once you have manipulated the text block into a nice round let go of it. Unless the text is one of highly developed spiritual existence the text will return to the shape it was before you tried to change it. This is the first lesson to learn in re-building your book. The spiritual growth of you and your book must evolve together as the trunks of the Bo tree grow and support one another over hundreds of years to achieve the ideal representation of life. Now that you know not to force you book into an existence that you would like for it and to instead let it determine its own destiny you can begin to assist it in its development.

Step 14

Place the text block in the press with davy boards protecting the first and last pages. Apply a layer of wheat paste on the spine and then place a piece of Japanese tissue needle-torn to size over the wheat paste. The Japanese tissue may or may not over hang onto the first and last pages. If it over hangs it will save a step later in the process, but consider how the book would feel. It is not time that matters, it is the process. You should let the paste dry. After the paste has dried brush out the spine with pva. Place a piece of textile cut to size on the spine with an inch hanging over onto the first and last pages (this part of the textile should move freely, it need not be glued down. After the pva has dried, one to four hours, brush more pva onto the spine of the book on top of the textile. Place a piece of 70lb Mohawk cut to size on the spine. For larger books it might be advisable to add a second layer of paper at this point.

Step 15

Now remove the text block from the press and place it on the bench. Create endsheets for the text block by first finding a sympathetic paper and folding it in half. Place one of the folded endsheets on the text block as it lay on the bench and make it conform to the shoulder of the round (the folded portion of the endsheet should be lined up with the top of the shoulder of the rounded spine—all other edges can over hang for the time being).
Remove the endsheet and further develop this fold with a bone folder. Now place the end sheet on some waster paper and take a second waste sheet and line it up with the fold you just created from the shoulder of the rounded spine. Using a brush spread a thin coat of PVA over this area of the end sheet. Now carefully remove the waste paper and lift the endsheet up and place it lined up with the shoulder of the spine and bone down. At this point you can paste out and overhanging Japanese tissue and attach it to the endsheet. Repeat this process with the other side of the text block.

Step 15

Once the endsheets are in place using a straight edge, cutting mat and a scalpel or Olfa knife trim the endsheets even with the text block.

Step 16

Take any loose pages that you have stored away in a secure place and tip them back into the text block in their appropriate place. For more information on tipping and hinging in loose leaves consult: Hinging and Tipping In: the flexibility of the physical promotes the flexibility of the intellectual.

Step 17

Now, that the text block is fully consolidated replace it in the secure location with the case so that the text block can commune with its former self as identified in the old case. This step is vitally important to the spiritual development of the book. It is necessary for the book to identify the change that is occurring so that the shock of reaching a higher state of being is not traumatic. Additionally, it is important that the text block and the case understand their separateness so that they can realize that their individuality is not limited to their association with one another, but exists independently. This would be a good time to check your e-mail as the text and the book need to be alone together.

Step 18

After deleting all those silly forwarded e-mails return to your bench and take the text block out of the secure location. Do not yet discard the case. You must at this point realize that the case is an entity which possesses a certain amount of usefulness in that it can still convey information. Although the text and the case have reached states of independence, it is essential to understand that they are not indifferent to one another yet.

Step 19

Taking a scrap of Davy board place it on one side of the text block next to the shoulder of the spine. Find the place where the board rests comfortably at the base of the shoulder. Now, move it away just a bit. Place a straight edge on top of the davy board and the shoulder and notice the distance between the edge of the davy board and the top of the shoulder. Imagine the new cloth coming over the spine, across the top of the shoulder,
down the slipper slide to the shoulder’s face and at the bottom moving over to the base of the edge of the davy board and then up the edge of the davy board to the top of the board. This is the distance you care about, not the numbers on the straight edge. How do you measure this distance? In your mind travel the path of the cloth and imagine the space you must transverse when sliding down the shoulder and climbing the board edge. Transpose that image onto a strip of waste paper and position that waste paper where the cloth ultimately will reside. Push it into the space. Mark the top of the board and the top of the shoulder on the paper and pull it out of the groove. Was this the distance you imagined in you mind? Was it about 8mm? Tuck that distance into your soul and hold it there as a part of the growth process you have experienced with the book.

Step 20

Cut Davy board to fit on the text block, front and back, with three to five mm extra on the foredge and the head and tail. The edge of the davy board should reside right along the base of the shoulder where you placed the scrap davy board in Step 19. The best way to cut davy board is to identify the direction of the grain and cut a strip with grain running parallel to the spine that is the height of the text block with 6-10 mm extra for the squares. Then cut slight larger than the width of the text. Place the board on the text and mark about 3 to 5 mm away from the fore edge and trim the board at this point. Cut the other board to the same size.

Now that the boards are cut place them in the appropriate position on the text block and examine to make sure that the squares are even.

Step 21

Cut a piece of 20 pt lig free to the width of the spine. Use a piece of paper to measure the spine from shoulder to shoulder and transfer this measurement when cutting the spine (grain parallel to spine) strip. Trim the strip to the height of the cover boards.

Step 22

Find a book cloth of a color sympathetic with the original case. You can never re-create the case so don’t try. In fact, the entire process so far has been structured to promote the disassociation between the text and the old case in order to foster spiritual, informational, and mental growth. Choosing a sympathetic color of book cloth will reflect the previous existence of the book and serve as a reminder for those who connect with it that it has reached a state of greater enlightenment as a result of its circulating status and the care which was wrought upon it by you, the repair god that you are.

Step 23

Cut the book cloth you have chosen slightly larger than the cover boards and spine inlay (that 20 pt lig-free piece you cut for the spine). Lay the cloth out on the bench and using a straight edge draw a straight line approximately one inch from the bottom of the cloth
with a pencil. Now place the cloth on waster paper and paste out the cloth. Place one of boards to the left side of the cloth about one inch from the edge of the cloth and line it up with the pencil line you drew before pasting. Now take the spine inlay and lay it to the right of the first board and make the distance in between the first board and the spine inlay the distance that you traversed in you mind when sliding down the slope of the should and climbing the edge of the board. Next lay the second board to the right of the spine inlay the same distance as the space between the first board and the spine inlay. Bone down the components of the new case while being sure that they don’t move.

Step 24

Using your 2 cm cutting jig trim the edges of the cloth around the board edges. Cut the corners of the cloth to within one and a half board thicknesses of the corners on a 45 degree angle. Fold over the head and tail turn-ins and bone down. Next do the foe edge turn-ins crimping in the flaps near the corners first. Bone down.

Step 25

After nipping the new case in a press place it, the text block and the old case together in a quiet secure location so that all three elements can acclimate to the changing spiritual environment. You’ve already checked e-mail, had coffee, you probably want to go to lunch. Well, take some time off to do something else and let me know when you get back.

Step 26

Welcome, back, hope you took it easy on the carbsts so you don’t get too sleepy later. Place the text block in the new case and make sure that they fit together harmoniously (and that your squares are nice and everything.) Remember, cricket, to perceive the book in a state beyond the present. Do not simply see the squares as being different from what you planned, but think of them as yet unformed. Go beyond the square and look to its influence—the groove. What will become of the groove will determine the square.

Step 27

Now that the new case and the text block are ready you can begin casing-in. Place the text block in the new case and center it so that the squares are even. Lay the book carefully on the bench and open the cover. Carefully, place a sheet of waster paper under the paste down of the endsheets and paste out the end sheet. Be careful not to move the text block throughout this process. Once the paste down is pasted out remove the waste sheet and carefully close the cover of the case using both hands to bring the case up and over the shoulder of the round. Let the cover lay easily on the endsheet. Do not press the cover at this point. Now, gently pick up the book and place it on its spine with the paste down cover away from you. Open the cover slightly and examine the placement of the endsheet on the cover board. You can move the pastedown slightly at this point.
Now close the cover again and place the book with the recently pasted cover and paste down facing down on the bench. Carefully, raise the text block and leave the pasted cover flat on the bench and using a cloth or piece of waste paper gently rub down the paste down and smooth out any wrinkles.

It is important not to spend too much time on this part of the process. The text block is achieving a new state of existence and it is up to the elements of pva and paper and moisture to catalyze the process. Too much of interference by you will only serve to hinder the process. Recall trying to reshape the round of the spine and then letting it go and the natural tendency of the text block to return to its original position. This is exactly what is happening here. There are elements of the universe that work in harmony with one another and don’t require outside influence. This is one of those times.

So, after a minimal gentle rubbing—think of it as just a caressing of the souls of the paste down and the coverboard—close the book and place a sheet of wax paper, mylar, or lig free fences between the paste down and the text block. It is important to isolate the paste down and the cover board during this intimate time.

Next place the book between two boards in a press. Do not over tighten the press. The press serves as a gentle reminder that the text, the paste down and the case are in a new relationship and it serves to foster this new relationship with gentle pressure. The book can remain in the press for about thirty minutes. After that, remove the book and keeping it between boards place it in a secure environment and put a little weight on top of the board.

Come back tomorrow and celebrate the heightened existence of the book. Transfer any information from the old cover to the new cover and discard the old cover. Its soul and spirit are now gone. You will be able to tell this as you hold it in you hands and it feels lifeless and cold. Its spirit has transformed into a new relationship between the text and the new cover. Always remember the spirit of the old case is not lost, it is transformed.