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Bnf binding policy in the last decades : a short overview (2024)

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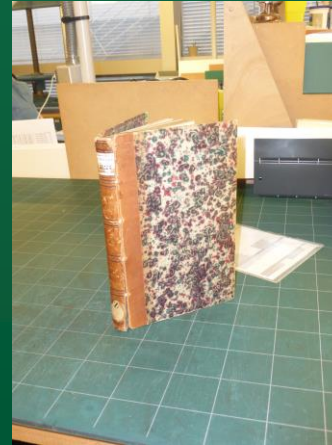


1 - Binding at the BnF : An old but still major practice/1

- Dual mission for BnF : to preserve and to give access to heritage documents
- A growing number of heritage documents received from Legal Deposit Law
- Binding is the only relevant practice to fulfil the two missions
- A large part of preservation budget dedicated to binding

1 - Binding at the BnF : An old but still major practice/2

- In the last centuries :
binding as a sign
of prosperity or
poverty of the
National Library



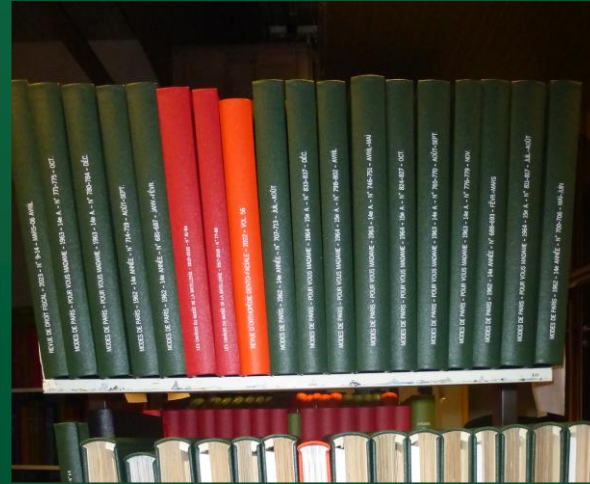
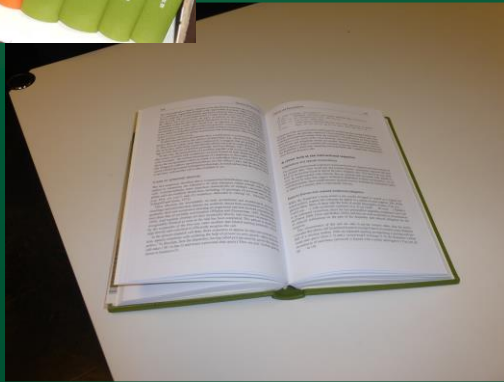
1- Binding at the BnF : An old but still major practice /3

- In the Nineties: a work with bookbinders about binding quality
- Stronger bindings obtained, fitted with larger audience
- Before the opening of BFM, priority to free-access collections...
- ...which in the end were rarely used by the public
- Bad condition of recent heritage collections due to lack of binding

Buckram bindings, for reading rooms and storage rooms



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1- Binding at the BnF : An old but still major practice /4

- Then priority gradually given to heritage collections
- And gradual stop of free-access binding
- 2005-2013 : strong decrease of global binding, then so far stability
- Binding remains the largest budget dedicated to physical preservation
(0,8 to 0,9 M€ each year)

2- Binding organization at the BnF: the two kinds of binding

- **Industrial bookbinding** : for recent or new books and periodicals, if sound paper; strong clothes (Buckram); 98% of bound documents and 80% of budget; entirely outsourced from 2004
- **Hand-crafted bookbinding** : for old, rare/precious new books or periodicals, sheet documents, even if repairs necessary; half-cloth or half-leather covers; much more expensive ; only partially outsourced
- Both industrial and hand-crafted bindings are funded with four-years contracts

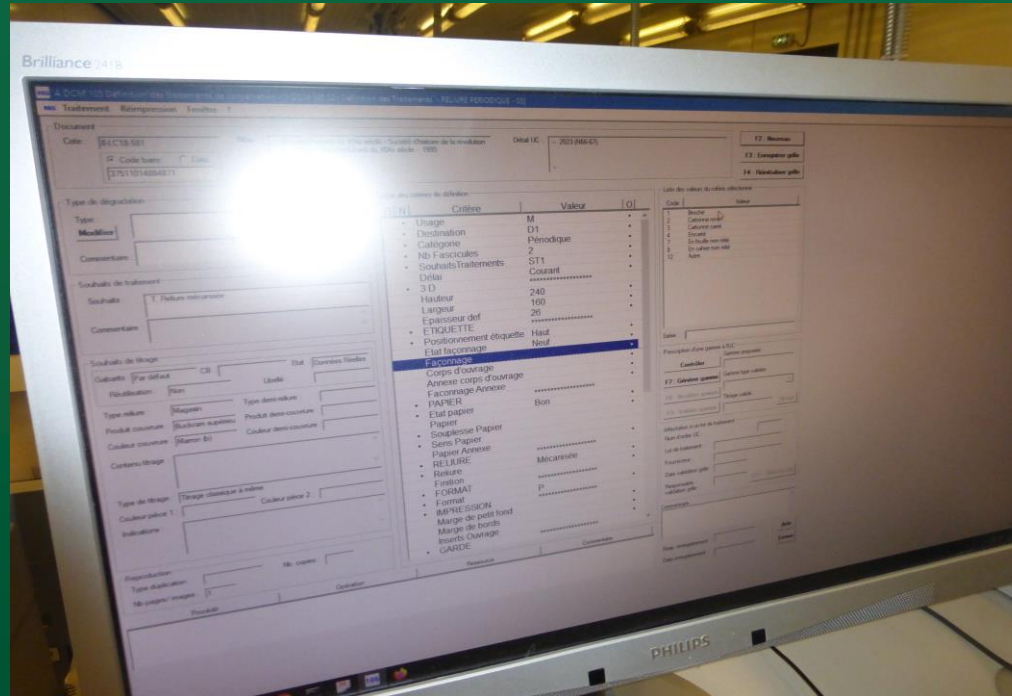
Hand-crafted bindings (BnF and external workshops)



2- Binding organization at the BnF: a)production

- A DSC team dedicated to binding definition, shipments and quality control after treatment
- Very short-time process for industrial bookbinding
- Process entirely computer-controlled for industrial binding
- Treatment computer-archived and linked to BnF records

computer aided definition



2- Binding organization at the BnF: b) Selection

- Documents chosen by conservation teams of Collections departments
- Great priority for french heritage documents (15% of the Legal Deposit of monographs)
- 30% are periodicals (no more newspapers)
- Firstly retrospective selection, now mostly current entries

3 – What future for binding at the BnF ?

- Current attempts to improve the relevance of selections (data, AI ?)
- Binding still largely supported, not challenged by digitization
- But we expect a downward trend because of budget and staff cuts
- An other risk in the medium term : digital legal deposit ?
- BnF responsibility to prevent bookbinding from disappearing

THANK YOU

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