

# *Leather Bound Books Rejuvenated*

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It is common knowledge that leather is a perishable natural material which can deteriorate significantly due to wear and tear by environmental exposure over many years. The rejuvenation of old leather can provide a new lease of life for old leather material that has deteriorated over the years. Reconditioning the leather can make it supple and flexible again so that it can withstand many more years of use.

## *Causes and prevention of decay!*

Vegetable tanned leather is used for book binding and this, exclusively, is the material to be considered.

Deterioration occurs in two forms:

1. physical wear and tear - the skins of different animals vary in their resistance to abrasion; and
2. chemical decay which attacks leather whatever the source of the skin.

Chemical decay of bookbindings take the form of cracking, to be noticed in early stages on the hinges of the book at the top inside. As deterioration advances the cracks spread and open; the underlying tissue gradually loses its resiliency and disintegrates to a red or brownish powder, and in a few years the whole hinge may become detached.

The edges of the binding are easily abraded with the finger-nail in the early stages. It is only to be expected that with the advance of chemical decay, physical resistance will be impaired and disintegration accelerated, chemical decay can be associated with the initial processing of the leather as well as continued exposure to harsh environmental conditions such as UV rays from the sunlight, oxidation from the air and exposure to pollutant gases from the atmosphere.

It has long been known that sulphuric acid is present in badly decayed leather. Gas burners were rightly blamed for much of the damage of a previous age. The atmosphere of industrial towns was believed to be more liable to cause damage than the purer air of the country, by reason of its much higher content of sulphuric gases. Sulphuric acid was regarded as the arch enemy of leather bindings. Leathers were sold and purchased as "guaranteed free from sulphuric acid". What was not appreciated, and has only been discovered comparatively recently, is that all vegetable tanned leathers have the property of absorbing sulphur dioxide from the atmosphere, a gradual and cumulative reaction which results in their eventually containing sulphuric acid. Age may account for physical wear and tear, but bears little relation to the apparent dryness and cracking that results from chemical disintegration.

### *Usefulness of leather dressings*

The observation that leather gradually absorbs sulphur dioxide from the atmosphere is based on chemical analysis. The main claim for leather dressings is that they feed and recondition the skin, acting as a shield for the fibrous tissue, preventing it from drying up and cracking.

### *Leatherlife services*

Leatherlife is a company exclusively committed to the protection of the highest quality leather products. The leather-bound books and other reference works in your library represent an enormous investment which can and will deteriorate in time. We can help to overcome this. All the work is done on your premises using products tried and tested here and in Europe over many years. The service includes cleaning, nourishing, protecting and repairing minor problems at no extra expense to save binding costs.

Many law libraries around Australia have become clients and testify to the efficiency, economy and excellence of our treatment and services. Among them are Monash & Sydney University Law Libraries, Magistrates Court Melbourne, Arthur Robinson & Hedderwicks (Melbourne), Freehill Hollingdale & Page (Melbourne & Sydney), Mallesons Stephen Jaques (Melbourne, Sydney & Perth), Supreme Court of Western Australia, Finlaysons (Adelaide) and the Melbourne Law Institute Library. If anybody wishes to obtain a reference please contact me.

Leatherlife is prepared to travel interstate to commence work on your leather-bound books. If you require any information regarding the costs, treatments and how we can protect your library investment please feel free to contact me.

## **Old leather bound books rejuvenated!**

We are exclusively committed to the cleaning, nourishment and protection of valuable books and without this service they will suffer considerable and irreversible damage.

Many libraries from around Australia have used and testify to our rejuvenation.

For more information contact

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