elementary points of typography by metaphor and simile, while still entertaining and informing readers.

The design problems imposed by poetry is next considered, and books with a mass of editorial comment such as the volumes of Virginia Woolf's diaries, published by the Hogarth Press in the 1980s. Encyclopaedias, botanical handbooks, and architectural and topographical guides are discussed. The examples range from the seven volumes of Wainwright's walking guides to the Lake District (1955-68) which were entirely hand-drawn, including the lettering, to the lush, ultra-modern 'packaged' books like Ireland in the 'Eyewitness Travel Guides' series from Dorling Kindersley (1995). These are followed by many examples of exhibition catalogues, and books on exhibition design and the graphic arts, all with Bartram's thoughtful comments. The book ends (except for a short discussion on book jackets, which is perhaps where the lack of colour is most noticeable) with Alan Bennett's Writing Home, published by Faber and Faber in 1994. Carefully designed and generally traditional, it still has a thoroughly twentieth-century character; and Bartram asserts that there is little to prevent any book consisting of text being of this high standard. The author claims that most readers are unaware of the design of a book—

and even publishers sometimes think it is dispensable. Strictly speaking, it is, just as poorly-cooked food can still keep you alive. Properly prepared books are more digestible. Although designers are always hoping for support and understanding, in their hearts, as they pursue their curious trade, they may be echoing the famous prayer of the Spanish Securicor robber, made while transferring the money to his own car. 'I'm not asking you to help me, God. Solo que no me jodas;' which, loosely translated in a way acceptable to my publisher, means 'Just don't mess me around.'

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In 1985, an annual series of lectures was established to honour the celebrated Victorian librarian Sir Anthony Panizzi's contributions to the development of The British Library. Each series deals with the subject of bibliography in its broadest sense and utilizes, as much as possible, the holdings of the Library. This publication consists of an edited version of three lectures given in 1997, the bicentenary of Panizzi's birth, by Dr. Mirjam Foot, the
recently retired Director of Collections and Preservation in the Library. Recognized internationally as an expert in the field, Foot is the author of many books and articles on the history of bookbinding, including *Studies in the History of Bookbinding* (1978), and *The History of Decorated Bookbinding in England* (1992) which she co-authored with Howard M. Nixon. Foot is presently on the faculty of the University of Virginia’s Rare Book School.

Over the decade during which Foot examined the British Library’s apparently randomly acquired collection of historic and fine bindings, several patterns began to emerge as to why and how they had been acquired. Some were the covers for important texts and others were a part of specific collections, while others had been acquired for historical or art history reasons. Starting from this point, Foot began to formulate the opinion that aside from the most obvious purpose of protecting the text, there was evidence that bookbindings are a rich resource for the study of the book as a physical object.

In this well-illustrated synthesis of her lectures, Foot offers convincing evidence demonstrating why the study of bookbinding history should be taken much more seriously than it has in the past. Offering more than a review and description of examples of an often underrated part of the booktrade, Foot presents the history of bookbinding as something more than a minor subject on the fringes of bibliography or art history. She has had the enviable task of surveying the enormously rich holdings of the British Library to show how the techniques of binding and decorating books reflect how books were produced, how the booktrade developed and, ultimately, how the production of bindings is linked with questions of authorship, publishing, reading, and collecting.

The first chapter traces the emergence and development of a number of decorative techniques and how certain techniques spread with the help of trade and travel as well as the influence of religious and political movements. Foot then provides fascinating examples of the relationship between several bookbindings and their intended use, and between the bindings themselves and their contents. The final chapter contains an insightful overview of several of the original owners who commissioned bookbindings, how they viewed their books, and what the relationship might have been between owner and craftsman.

Foot’s highly readable text is enhanced by eight colour and seventy-five black-and-white plates of photographs. The coherency of the chapters has not been interrupted with elaborate footnotes, however, the author has provided citations for sources where more information can be discovered about the material described and about the availability of further illustrations. This book sheds light on a fascinating aspect of book history and is recommended for those with an interest in historical bookbindings and their evidentiary value in a very broad historical context.

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