“archived” state of most of them is not a sign that they will eventually disappear.

Great cause for concern resides with the “Digitized Microforms.” Twenty-eight collections appear under this rubric, most of them genealogical in focus and all carrying the status “archived.” Selecting any of these collections leads to an archived page on the older site on which a series of digitized microfilms is listed. Click on a reel number and a digitized version appears. But a major problem remains: some of the JPG images have not been sized for a computer screen (e.g., “Passenger Lists: New York [1925–1935]”). On my 14-inch laptop, only about one-third of the image could be seen. Nor is there an option to shrink the JPG to fit within the frame of one’s monitor. So, the user needs to scroll back and forth, up and down if viewing the JPG version directly. A PDF option is available. However, use that and the opposite problem occurs – the PDF box is much smaller than the screen, necessitating use of the magnifying tool, which, of course, severely reduces the amount of the page one can view. The load time when clicking from page to page is also significantly reduced when using the PDF viewer. LAC clearly did not think through the technical issues of converting a microfilmed document for online use. Let us hope that the deal it has struck with Canadiana.org to convert about sixty million microfilm images will lead to a much more thoughtful online delivery system.

In general, LAC offers digital tools and documents on its websites that are well worth exploring. However, what is there represents only a modest amount of its holdings, and the digital delivery of some of it leaves much to be desired.

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In the preface and acknowledgements of Books Will Speak Plain, Julia Miller quickly gets to the heart of the matter that her book will address: the lack of adequate reference works on bookbinding
structures that highlight ordinary books. Her book succeeds in addressing that gap and provides an essential reference work for librarians, curators, conservators, bookbinders, booksellers, and collectors. As Miller eloquently argues, “[a] book with its mends is, like a life, much worked upon, as we strive to continue whole and productive. Historical bindings, even broken and mended, still have a lot to tell us” (247).

In the opening chapters, Miller describes the history of bookbinding from the earliest handmade books to those produced in the nineteenth century. While this overview is very useful, there are other well-known reference works that cover much of the same ground. Miller is critical of the tendency of scholars and bookbinding historians to dismiss nineteenth-century books as ephemera and trash, since the nineteenth century also produced important books of literature, poetry, and science. In Miller’s opinion, “nineteenth-century books are often a visual feast” (181) just now coming into their own as worthy of collecting and scholarly attention. In reflecting on the current status of the book and what it means for curators, conservators, and librarians, Miller is optimistic that digitization and online databases will aid in the work of cataloguing and managing rare-book collections. Throughout her book, Miller provides excellent references and highlights other projects attempting to describe, conserve, and digitize binding collections such as the Ligatus project and another project ongoing at the National Library and Archives (Dar al-Kutub) in Cairo (249).

The final three chapters and appendices in Miller’s book, with their visual and textual references, are indispensable aids for the person confronted with a historical binding and wishing to identify that binding’s materials and structures. Excellent photographs and drawings by J. Wayne Jones and Pamela Spitzmueller, respectively, accompanied by descriptive captions that identify the source of the artifacts greatly enhance the text. Miller’s binding description proceeds from the covering material (animal skin, cloth, paper), to the boards (wood, paper), to the decoration. Two novel categories that Miller includes are: (i) visible structure through intent, as revealed, for example, through exposed sewing structures and tackets, and (ii) visible structure through damage from use or misuse. Damaged bindings enable the researcher to glean information not available with an intact binding. She also advises the curator to “remark the remarkable,” including repairs to books by individual owners such as boards re-sewn to the spine and the addition of protective covers (241–47).
As tempting as it is to reproduce the details of binding structures in a digital image, Miller suggests drawing binding details to capture information because “photographs can give us too much information to absorb and separate. A well-done drawing is a marvelous tool for documentation and understanding how a structure works” (250). I would add that producing simulacra of binding structures is also invaluable for truly understanding a book’s structure.

Miller argues that even though the “future of the physical book is more and more uncertain … our historical bindings will continue with us, and become more precious and more interesting if we can access them” (3). She laments the lack of binding descriptions in most catalogue records and offers a methodical procedure, supported with images and text, to survey and describe a collection of historical bindings, yet remains cognizant of the time and expense of doing so according to her thorough guidelines. To assist the novice, she includes survey forms, terminology, and a descriptive hierarchy. Her advice is to keep it simple. She suggests developing a survey form and using it on a random selection of books, making adjustments before committing to a specific worksheet or database structure. Included in the second appendix, “Sample Survey Suggestions and Description Case Studies,” are photographs of books and Miller’s accompanying descriptions (381–97). This is a very useful tool for developing a consistent, descriptive vocabulary. Miller also provides a sample Machine-Readable Cataloguing (MARC) format record with the binding information added to the MARC 655 form/genre field. The final sections of Miller’s book include an extensive glossary; a selected, categorized bibliography; an index; and a DVD with 1471 images (including colour images of photographs in the text and additional images), making it an essential reference book.

Miller’s care for historical bindings extends to cleaning and surveying the collection regularly. In the third appendix, “Stacks Maintenance and Physical Condition Assessment Guidelines,” she describes the cleaning procedures and physical condition surveys practiced at the University of Michigan Library (398–411). While this is a very useful exercise in collection management and would serve to identify items that require conservation support, I suspect that not many institutions with special collections have the staffing complement or specific job descriptions that would enable this useful and necessary task for the long-term benefit of the books. For this and similar projects, Miller advocates using information, methods, and resources from similar projects for new initiatives, tapping into a
volunteer community, and arranging an exchange of experts among institutions to assist cash-strapped organizations (301).

Miller’s knowledge of the binding history of ordinary books is evident throughout *Books Will Speak Plain*. If her guidelines for documenting historical bindings are followed, both the books and the scholars who consult them will benefit. It is a volume I expect to consult regularly with great pleasure and high regard.

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ISBN 9781584562993

Book reviewing in summer without access to the Internet or social media necessitates a complete reliance upon the text under consideration. If the text itself fails to deliver information then concerns or questions must remain unanswered.

First of all let us deal with the title-page, for book titles can be confusing and may misrepresent what the book actually accomplishes. *Publishing the Fine and Applied Arts 1500–2000* is not a five-hundred-year history of “arts” publishing. This volume contains the published proceedings of the thirty-first annual conference on book-trade history, held in London in November 2009. Why this information is buried and not conveyed at any point on the title-page or on the dust jacket, and why there is no mention of a conference in the editors’ introduction, is a mystery. The publishers or editors apparently did not want such information to be immediately obvious. It is only in the acknowledgements following the introduction that the conference details are very briefly outlined. Granted, a list of those who attended the conference does appear on the contents page (v), and it is soon evident that what we are looking at is a series of individual essays, but surely readers and scholars deserve greater clarity up front. Conference proceedings are not the same things as historical surveys. In this instance, the title implies or suggests, for this reader, a comprehensiveness that the texts are not intended to cover and do not contain. Yes, the essays do range over these five centuries, but...