

Lucy Cokes
Major Award Recipient 2014
Report

My journey with books began before I started an undergraduate degree in English Literature. It has since led me to many fascinating bookshops, buzzing binderies and even to a secondary school where I was a library assistant, encouraging children to read and promoting the joys of reading.

With support from the Stationers' Foundation, I have been able to continue my journey and define a path to travel down: that of a book conservator, studying at West Dean College.

I will soon be leaving for summer with a Graduate Diploma in the Conservation of Books and Library Materials. I have learnt so much over the past year and I am indebted to the help the Stationers' have given me. I have interacted with so many people and places of the book: my knowledge has grown and I hope I can use that knowledge during work experience over summer and beyond.

Places of the Book

To help consolidate our knowledge of book conservation, we went on many trips to various institutions that opened our eyes to the professional world of book conservation.

As well as interacting with our fellow conservation students from Camberwell at the National Archives, I have been delighted by the collections held by the Admiralty Library in Portsmouth. I find

Napoleonic and Naval history fascinating, and I would love to explore the collections more – signal books, charts and almanacs bring history alive.

More local collections have also provided us with a fascinating insight into historical book collections – Chichester Cathedral Library holds many treasures that document the history of the Cathedral and the town, and from Goodwood House we were lucky enough to obtain some 19th century racing calendars to conserve, marking our first forays into re-backing a book with new leather.



Sewing a springback



Bookies at Goodwood

Perhaps the most influential place of the book we visited was Paris on a college-wide study tour. As well as visiting the Louvre Lens (with a fantastic display of conservation outreach) the books department visited many private institutions. We really got a sense of how book conservation as an industry works. Visiting the Bibliotheque Nationale was a dream, with clean and organised conservation labs and a passionate and enthusiastic staff. We learnt so much at the Conservation Research Centre and got a glimpse into private practise at two studios in the city. The



Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris

last 'place of the book' we visited was the National Institute of Cultural Heritage: Conservation Department (the INP), a purpose built college in France for teaching conservation. It was fascinating: the college afforded us a view of what book conservation teaching looks like in Europe.

The trips have been amazing – I have learnt so much from them.

People of the Book

In Paris we met many conservators who were passionate about their work and from whom we gained a lot of knowledge. Closer to home we have met librarians and curators among others: it emphasises the important role conservators have with such people of the book.

At the Admiralty Library, Jenny Wraight is a proud librarian, the kind of person I would like to be when I 'grow up'. Her immense knowledge of the collection she shepherds is astounding. She really appreciates whatever work we do and is a vital source of knowledge for our conservation projects.



Shaping headcaps for the springback

We were lucky enough to visit the workshops of the great Bernard Middleton and his assistant, Flora Ginn. Their knowledge and skill is vast, and their bookbinding workshops showed just the surface of their legend.

At West Dean we have been treated to a number of visiting lecturers who have helped us to improve our skills. Karen Vidler enthused us about leather conservation, Bridget Mitchel bowled us over with her box making and Richard Nicholls put a spring in our step with a springback ledger binding workshop, which I have written about for the college blog:

<http://westdeanconservation.com/2015/04/28/springback-binding-with-richard-nichols/>

As well as the visiting lecturers, our tutors at West Dean have been incredibly supportive, and I now know so much more than I did before about bookbinding, conservation science and book conservation. We are lucky to have Sonja Schwill,

Abigail Bainbridge and David Dorning as our tutors. They have shared their knowledge and passions and made book conservators of us all.

Journeys Ahead

In just one year at West Dean, I have learnt so much about books and the trade. I can repair tears, sew books and even use sci-fi-esque equipment to analyse materials. I can work with leather and I have more of an understanding of why books work the way they do.

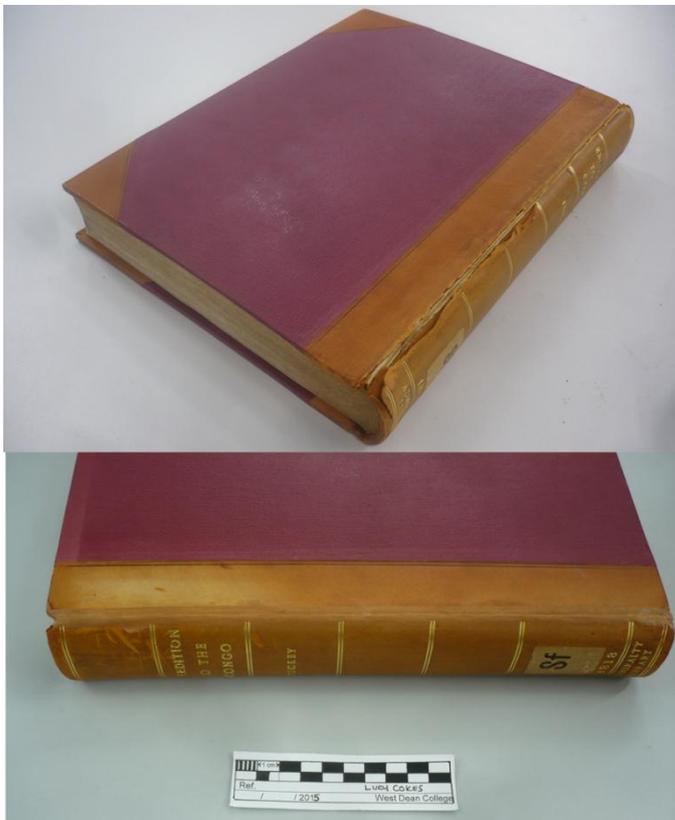
If not for the Stationers' Foundation, I would not be able to say that I have passed my first year and will move onto a second and an MA. I still have so much to learn.

I hope to use my skills over the summer volunteering at The Museum of the Order of St. John, which has a fascinating collection I can interact with: it will be an opportunity to handle many types of object and increase my experience within the museum sector.

Although I have a lot ahead of me, I will be forever grateful for the support I was given by the Stationers' Foundation Major Award, without which I would not be able to continue my journeys with books.

Photos

Conservation



Exhibition to the Congo, 1818, Admiralty Library
Before and after treatment



Vingt mille lieues sous les mers, date unknown, The Edward James
Foundaton
Before and after treatment



Dust jacket from *Baedeker's Guide to Great Britain*, 1927, private owner
Before and after treatment



Racing Calendar, 1830, Goodwood House
Before and after treatment

Binding



The completed springback binding



Summer binding tasks
Sewing models, flexible binding and drop-spine box



A year's work at West Dean College

Lucy Cokes

Graduate Diploma in the Conservation of Books and Library Materials

West Dean College

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