



*The Aldus Society*  
PO Box 1150  
Worthington, OH 43085  
Aldussociety.com

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## Restoring the Word: Rebound and Cleaned, Old Books Open Connections to Fading Past

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**By Bill Eichenberger, Dispatch Book Critic**

In 1563, the Book of Martyrs was first published in English.

John Foxe chronicles the praiseworthy lives and often-horrific deaths of Christian martyrs, beginning with the stoning of St. Stephen, "occasioned by the faithful manner in which he preached the Gospel to the betrayers and murderers of Christ."

By daylight and by candlelight, readers have since marked their favorite pages in the massive and popular book -- especially the pages that include fantastic images of saints being burned at the stake.

That they have done so is a matter not of speculation but of verifiable fact.

Harry Campbell, book conservator for the Ohio State University Libraries, is in the midst of restoring the nearly two dozen OSU copies of the Book of Martyrs (also known as Actes and monuments) -- including, most recently, editions from 1570 and 1596.

"In the 1596 edition of the Book of Martyrs, I found pins deep in the gutter margins that were so rusted they were black," Campbell said. "And I found a note written in what is clearly an Elizabethan hand, with a large 'S' that reminded me of Shakespeare.

"Many of the pages are stained with melted candle wax, so the image of a reader from centuries ago -- hunched over a book in a darkened room, drawing his candle ever closer to the book -- is a vivid picture for me."

Discovering such traces of the past, he said, is like "rubbing elbows with the people who have read the book before you."

From 1985 to '94, Campbell served as head of "collection maintenance and bindery preparation" for the OSU Libraries. From 1995 to 2001, he worked at the world-renowned Etherington Conservation Center in North Carolina.

He returned to OSU almost a year ago as book and paper conservator.

The Etherington center was charged in recent years with the care of documents such as the Magna Carta, the Gettysburg Address and the Declaration of Independence.

During his tenure, it worked on the original copy of the Charter for the Carolinas -- four oversize pages, roughly 3 by 4 feet, on which King Charles I bequeathed the Carolinas in 1663 to Lord Clarendon and seven other lords proprietors.

“The charter got a state police escort to our building -- lights flashing and everything,” Campbell recalled.

The center also handled papers vital to Ohio history: the original Ohio Company contracts, the deeds for 900,000 acres of land, northwest of the Ohio River, given to former officers of the American Revolution.

Book conservation typically includes a range of activities, from rebinding and deacidification to cleaning and housing.

Despite the rewards and challenges in North Carolina, Campbell found one drawback in his work:

“The center was a for-profit business. So as soon as I’d get finished with a book, I’d have to send it to its owner and never see it again.”

These days, whenever he gets the hankering, he steals away from his workbench in the basement of the Main Library and wanders through the rare-book collection, reacquainting himself with old friends.

“It’s very satisfying,” he said. “I have to go up there for meetings, and when I do I find myself looking at the shelves and thinking, ‘We’re getting there; we’re getting there.’”

Working on the numerous OSU editions of the Book of Martyrs -- the library has undertaken the task of restoring them all -- is particularly gratifying.

“It’s great because the Book of Martyrs is more than 400 years old,” Campbell said, “and yet it is one of the most heavily used books in the entire collection.

“We’re not restoring the books as museum pieces but to be handled and read and used. Books are like machines, and our job is to get them back into running order.”

Many book conservators move eventually into library administration, the next rung up the career ladder.

Campbell isn’t interested.

“I love the hands-on aspect of working at the bench. I love handling the physical object,” he said. “I was an artist before I became a conservator, and I guess I’ve never lost my love for the art and craft of book restoration.”