Conservation Treatments
Cloth Rebacks and New Cases

Cloth Reback

One of the most common repairs on modern book bindings is the cloth reback, or spine repair. Through wear and tear and abuse, the spine will rip along the hinges. Left untreated, the damage will only get worse and the covers fall off and eventually the book will totally fall apart. We use a piece of strong cloth to replace the original spine. If the original spine is still present and in good condition, we will adhere that to the new spine to maintain the original look of the book.

On the left is a damaged book. The spine is ripped along the back hinge and the back board is loose. On the right is the book in process of being repaired. The new lining is on the spine, the back board is reattached and the front is ready to be. Standing is the completed repair. The dark blue cloth is the new material we have added.
New Cases

When the original cover is beyond repair, a new case, or cover, will be made. Depending on the book, this can take different forms. The basic new case is made of sturdy bookcloth with thick binders board underneath. In this example, the original leather spine labels were saved to give the book a little of its original look.

Not all books are made the same way. The next example is an exhibition catalog. It had a paper wrapper which was tattered around the edges and the spine was pretty much missing. In order to give it a more substantial cover but to keep its original feel, I made a semi-limp cover. The original front and back cover panels are adhered to the cover. The spine is made from dyed Japanese tissue. In order to allow the covers to open easily without stressing the pages of the textblock, I used a sewnboards technique where the cover is sewn as if it was the first and last signatures (this repair based on a historical structure called the Ethiopian-style Sewnboards Binding).