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A Newsletter from HBI and the Library Binding Institute

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HBI - *High Quality Books One Book AT A Time*

Celebrating Seventy-Five Years of Hardcover Binding Excellence

www.hardcoverbinders.org

Werner Rebsamen, Professor Emeritus at the Rochester Institute of Technology and technical consultant to HBI and the Library Binding Institute.

Technical Director's Report

Werner Rebsamen

Creating Panoramic Books with FlexBind® Technology

In the early 1950's, our bindery in Zurich, Switzerland had to bind thousands of atlases to be used in the schools. A pre-requisite for binding was that every four page signature should open uninterrupted in the inner fold. In other words, the school book administrators did not want to see things like staples or threads. With a special stripping machine made by Brehmer, we mounted these folded, four-page sheets onto thin paper strips. Inserted into each other, they then were machine sewn through the fold. Actually, it was a little bit more complex as we had to add filler strips. But that is another story. The fact is, hinged panoramic sheet bindings have been around for the last 60 years.

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A 1948 School Atlas with hinged four page signatures-techniques used to achieve an uninterrupted panoramic view.
Photo by Werner Rebsamen

The Digital Photo Book with Flexbind® Technology

Digital printing revolutionized the way we store and use our beloved photographic images. No longer do we use film, order prints and mount them into photo albums. We shoot as many pictures as we want, pick the best, sort them out and send them to a photo book printer / binder. That business is not just growing; it is exploding! Newcomers to the trade may quickly master digital printing, but struggle with many aspects of binding.
We see digital photo books being stapled with wires through the side; other books are side-sewn (best if used by children) or adhesive bound with a stiff spine. Many of these hardcover bindings could serve as mouse traps! These bindings do not open flat. If you want to scratch yourself wherever it itches or pet your dog or cat, the binding will snap-close! You will always need two hands to keep a binding open. Is that a way you want to enjoy your beautiful pictures? Back in school 60 years ago, studying geography, we could enjoy an "open book," while using paper and pencils to make notes without it closing.

Luckily, a new product is now available to achieve this goal of hinged photo papers. A process called FlexBind® integrates a flexible hinge into high quality, archival digital papers. In other words, these are specially prepared sheets ready for printing. Flexbind® photo paper sheets are combined with the patent pending FlexBind® hinge and are available in a variety of weights and sizes. After printing, the unique hinge allows finished bound books to lay flat to display full panoramic spreads. For smaller photo books, larger sheets are offered with FlexBind® hinges on both sides.

The FlexBind® Hinge

Now you wonder, what actually is a FlexBind® hinge? It is not a new binding system as you may have suspected.

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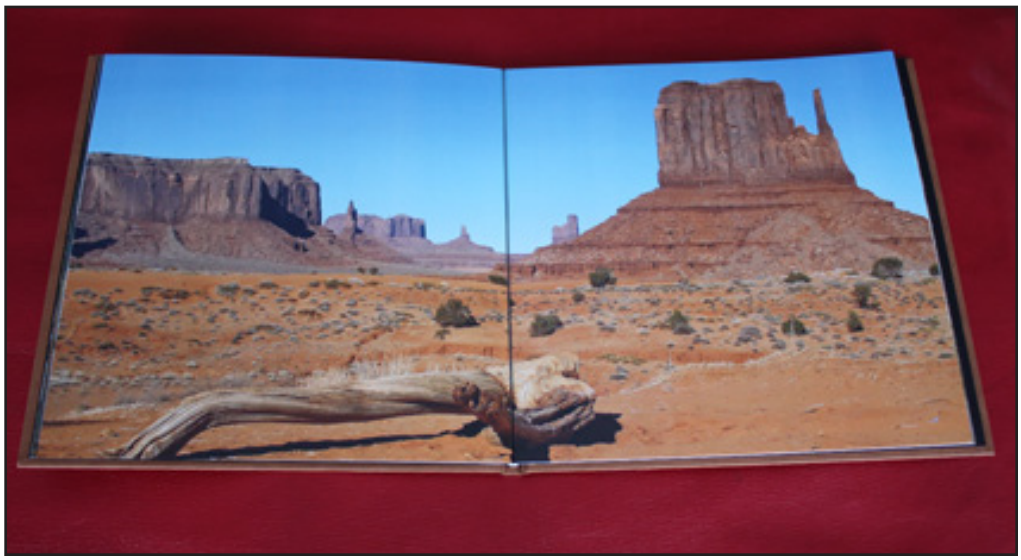

An example of a FlexBind® panoramic view. Book furnished by the Holmberg Company. Even very stiff papers turn with ease and exert no pressure onto the binding.
Photo by Werner Rebsamen

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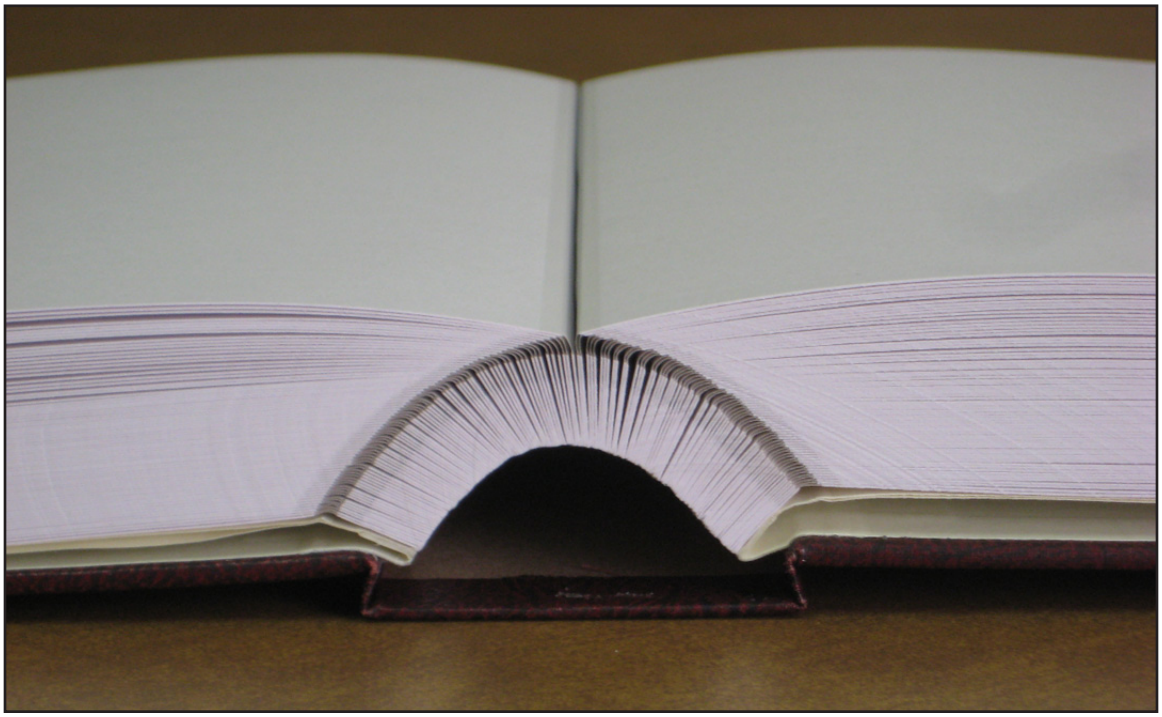
The best technical description is that it's a pre-converted digital photo paper sheet. The sheets are die-cut to form the hinge and are then reinforced with a transparent, archival tape on both sides. The width of the die-cut space for the hinge is approx. 1/8 inch. In other words, their expression of a FlexBind® is correct as with this procedure, a flexible hinge is created. You then can bind these prepared sheets any way you desire—Perfect, Side stapled, Side-sewn, Over-sewn, Unibind, Velobound, ChannelBind—and with a variety of desk-top equipment like Powis Parker, Exact Bind or FastBind to name a few.



Example of an oversewn FlexBind® binding bound by Duncan Campbell at Campbell-Logan Bindery in Minneapolis. Photo furnished by Holmberg, the creators of Flexbind® Technology.

The actual paper spine tabs vary in their width. I must assume that the wider ones are designated for screw bindings. It does not matter what you do with those strips, the flexing occurs farther inwards, past the die-cut and taped area. The final results of this process are simply amazing. Even the heaviest weights of paper stocks allow the sheets to lay completely flat.

Are there limitations to the thickness of a specific photo book? The answer is no.

Note the photo on this page of an oversewn, bound book that is 2 inches thick! The book's pages lay totally flat, regardless of what page is turned. Simply Amazing!

With the examples sent to our office, there are helpful tips and pictures for binding. Tests done on Moffetts Tensile Page Pull and Flex Testing machines exceeded all industrial expectations in regard to strength. Other documents stress the archival integrity. The best news is of course, you will need no special binding equipment to process FlexBind® sheets in your bindery.

For further information go to www.flexbind.com.

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