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Tip: A Book Mount for Technical Examination and Treatment

Introduction

Instrumental analysis often requires the surface of an object to be perpendicular to the analytical equipment. For the analysis of book pages, this means that the book must open flat so that the surface being examined is horizontal under the instrument. Likewise, treatments such as reattaching mounted materials or repairing tears in the pages require weighting pages, which is much easier if the page in question is horizontal. Achieving a horizontal orientation with traditional foam book wedges requires the book to open more than 90 degrees, which can be difficult or impossible for books with tight bindings.

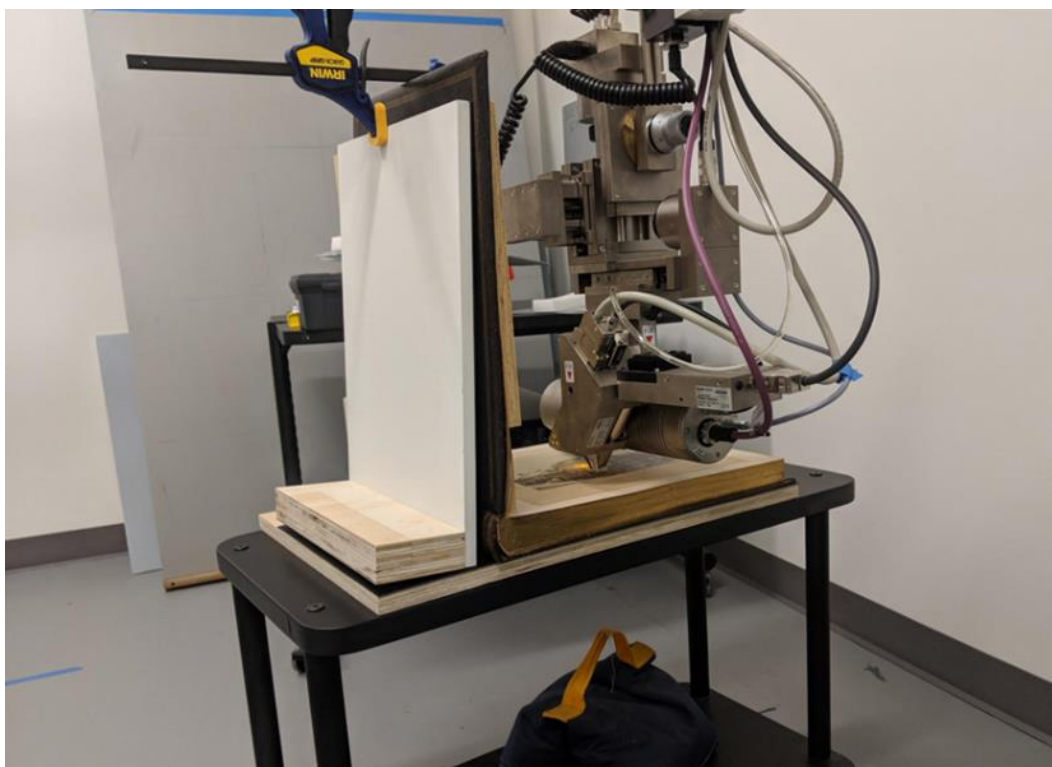


Figure 1 The mount holding a large photograph album during XRF examination at the Harvard Art Museums. Image credit: Laura Panadero.

While at the Harvard Art Museums, the author encountered similar challenges while studying a large album of mounted albumen photographs. To facilitate instrumental analysis of the photographs, the author collaborated with Jill Comer, Senior Exhibition Production Specialist, to design and build a mount for the album. In this instance, a rigid mount was desirable because using foam wedges stressed the stubbed page attachments. In addition, the foam wedges needed to be backed with weights to prevent them from sliding out from under the heavy album. This created a large and unwieldy set-up for analysis.

Design

The book mount presented here was a solution to these challenges. The mount allows the back half of a book to lie horizontally without obscuring the open page. The mount will also hold a book at a 90 degree opening, reducing stress on the binding and page attachments. It is a simple, customizable design that is cheap and easy to produce. It is more stable and has a smaller footprint than a collection of foam wedges and weights.

The mount is comprised of three separate parts: a flat platform for the book to rest on and two vertical supports that hold the open book cover. One vertical support fits into a slot on the platform and is cut away at the bottom to allow space for the spine. The other vertical support sits behind the open cover; an L-shaped base at the bottom of the support provides stability. The open cover and pages of the book are sandwiched between the two vertical supports.

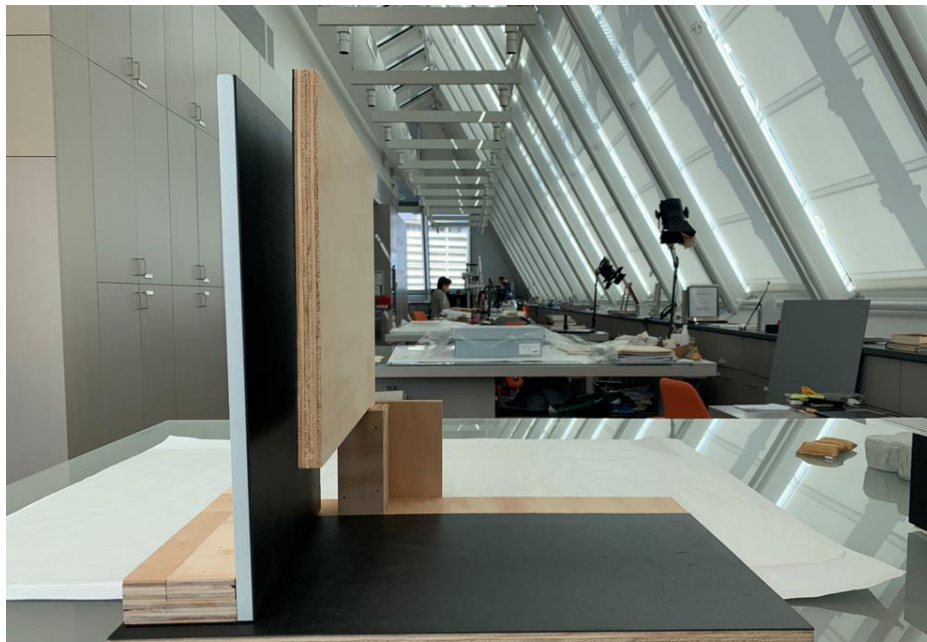


Figure 2 The assembled book mount, empty. Image credit: Penley Knipe.

To install a book, the book is placed flat on the platform, opened to 90 degrees, and the center support is slotted into place in front of the open pages. The L-shaped support is then placed behind the open cover. The support at the back can be weighted, or it can be clamped to the center support, as shown in Figure 1. The amount of compression necessary depends on the rigidity of the book pages and cover.

The mount produced at the Harvard Art Museums was fabricated from plywood. Volara was attached to all the surfaces that would be in contact with a book. The measurements for the Harvard model are shown in Figure 3, but the size of all elements could be adjusted to accommodate even larger books.

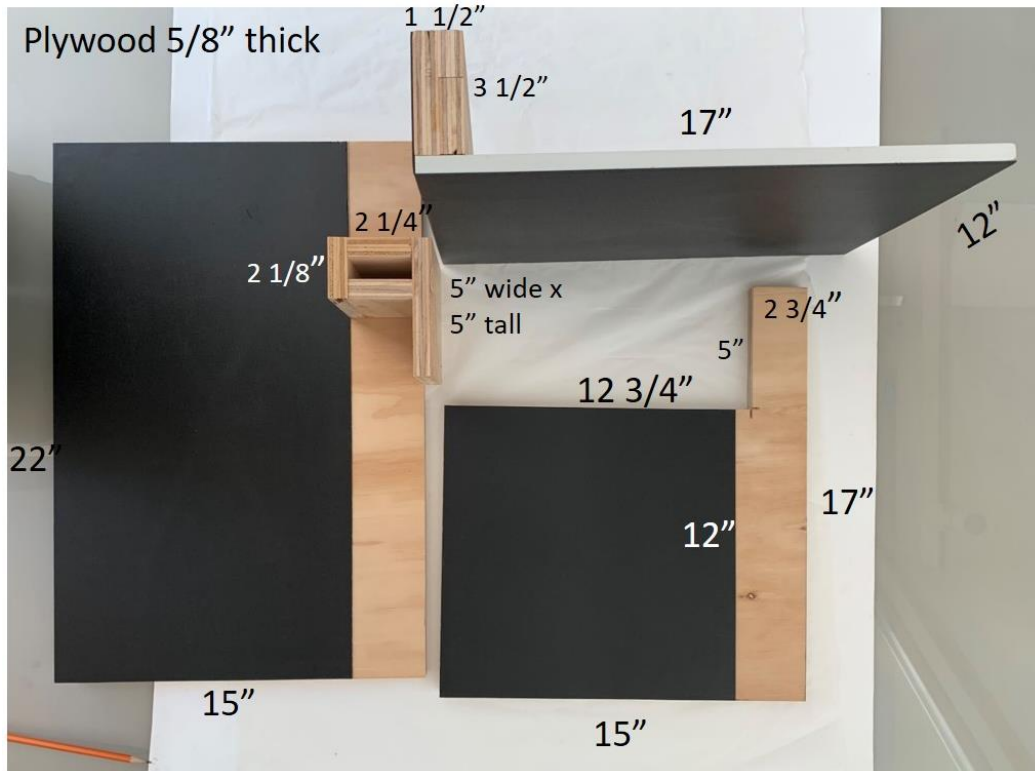


Figure 3 The specifications for the mount at Harvard Art Museums. Image credit: Penley Knipe.

Acknowledgements

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