

Conservation and Restoration of Cowper's *Anatomia* (1739)

This article was featured in [Library Notes, #43 \(Winter 2007\)](#).

The Library's copy of William Cowper's *Anatomia corporum humanorum* (1739) from the A.D. Black History of Dentistry Collection has been restored and returned from the bookbinding and conservation studio of Martha Little in California. The oversize folio, measuring 52 x 36 centimeters has had a near complete makeover. The spine covering was entirely missing as were corners on the boards.

The volume was disbound, pages thoroughly cleaned; leaves and end sheets repaired; new threads replaced the well worn and rotted ones; new cords were added and the book block was completely re-sewn. A new leather spine was added, integrating it with the original leather; corners of the boards were rebuilt with paper mache and toned with acrylics to match the color of the leather. Another 300 years of use has been added to this distinguished volume.

The volume is noteworthy inasmuch as Cowper, a great anatomist and surgeon in his own right, "borrowed" the majority of the plates from a 1685 edition of Govard Bidloo, a Dutch anatomist. Cowper did not give Bidloo proper credit for his involvement in this work, however, it may be argued that Cowper's text was better!

Viewing the library's historical and rare books is by appointment only. Please call (312) 503-8133 or [email](#) for an appointment with the Special Collections Librarian.



Cowper's *Anatomia* needed a little work.



The spine covering was entirely missing.



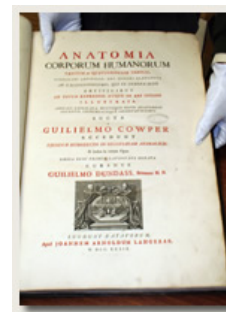
Board corners were considerable damaged.



The pages are delicately cleaned.



A new leather spine is added.



The *Anatomia* has a new lease on life!

Written by: Ron Sims, MA, Special Collections Librarian

This article was featured in [Library Notes, #43 \(Winter 2007\)](#).

Printed: Saturday, June 29, 2024 12:49 PM

Source: <https://galter.northwestern.edu/news/conservation-and-restoration-of-cowpers-anatomia-1739.pdf>