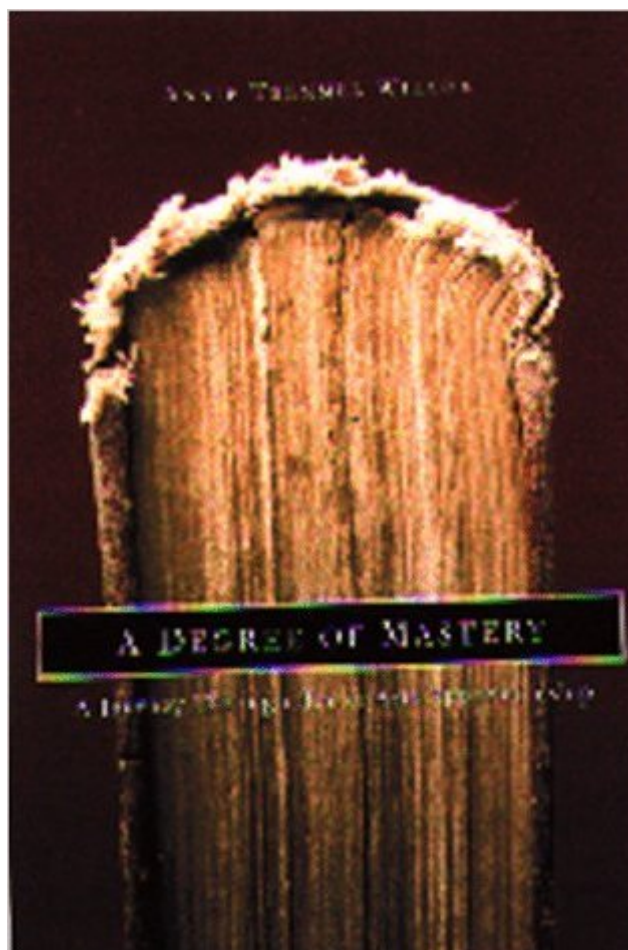


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# A Degree Of Mastery: A Journey Through Book Arts Apprenticeship



## Synopsis

Learning the craft and secrets of a master book-binder

## Book Information

Series: MVP (Book 86)

Hardcover: 222 pages

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Best Sellers Rank: #1,533,170 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #202 in [Books > Crafts, Hobbies & Home > Crafts & Hobbies > Papercrafts, Stamping & Stenciling > Book Making & Binding](#) #690 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Regional U.S. > Midwest](#) #905 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Professionals & Academics > Educators](#)

## Customer Reviews

Wilcox brings a grace and beauty to what could be a dry, technical subject. This is not a 'how to' book, though anyone familiar with the bookbinder's craft will gain insight into specific procedures. Rather, it is the exploration of why we love books, love those who love books, and love the preservation of an ancient craft, as it is handed from master to student. As her understanding of her craft grows and deepens through her relationship with Anthony, Wilcox shows us her heart and gives us a glimpse into the soul of this master binder. While the subject is bookbinding, the real story is that of passion for a craft, for the unique combination of intellectual, aesthetic, and physical skills that go into any fine craft. To share that passion with another, as Bill Anthony did in his teaching, and as Wilcox does in her book, is a very great gift, indeed.

I loved this book. At once a touching tribute to the renowned conservator and binder to whom the author was apprenticed, a look into apprenticeship, and an insight into the ethos of book conservation, the book is a delight to read. If you know even a little about how books are constructed (and even if you don't) you will learn a lot about the physical objects that obsess so many of us. After reading the paperback I went out and bought the hardcover. Destined to be a

classic among bibliophiles.

A practical person can read this book as an extended essay on how to approach an apprenticeship, and how to bind conservation texts. A spiritual person can add layers to the stories and extrapolate life lessons. Either way, the main character/author is extremely sympathetic character. Her teacher had amazing gifts, both as a conservator and as a teacher. The book is deceptively short. Looks like a quick read, but was so meaty and detailed, I found myself reading it for several weeks in order to digest all the material carefully. If your taste runs to the obscure, the "sleeper," I hope you enjoy this book as much as I did.

A Degree of Mastery tells the story of one woman's journey through the education and apprenticeship necessary to become a book preservationist. Annie Wilcox, a bright woman with an impressive past in the field of English and writing, begins to take an evening class in bookbinding at the University of Iowa taught by a world-reknowned preservationist, William Anthony. Little does she know that not more than two years later she will become the first female apprentice ever to study under the direct supervision and teaching of Bill Anthony, an honored position granted only to six others before her. Through her apprenticeship, Wilcox learns the art of preservation and the dire need for conservation in every library, but especially those libraries that house an archives, manuscript or rare books collection. Through Wilcox's autobiography, the reader learns the basic process and means by which book preservation becomes possible as well as the importance and value of conservation in today's libraries. It is a wonderful piece of literature well-worth your time.

Someone who knew that I was in the Interdisciplinary Book and Paper MFA program at Columbia College Chicago gave this memoir to me. It's a really nice read---especially since the bookbinding world is a small one, and everyone in it knows everyone else, as people travel around the country giving workshops. Always interesting to read about people who you've had as teachers. I found it very well written, an evocative and accurate depiction of an obscure art/craft/lifestyle choice, an illuminated window into a small, specialized world.

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