The Affective Experience of Historic Trades Interpreters: A Look at Colonial Williamsburg's Bookbinders

Jessica Schott

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This project seeks to understand the affective experience of Colonial Williamsburg's historic trades interpreters, in particular the three interpreters who work in the bookbindery. It builds upon prior scholarship on the experiences of historical interpreters, but focuses specifically on the bookbinding trades interpreters' experiences. In an interview, the interpreters were asked about their experiences with their job to use as the basis of this analysis. This project examines their provided experiences as interpreters of a historic trade, as little scholarship on interpretation discusses this. Elements of this analysis included their affective experiences with the trade itself, the work of interpreting to the public, and Colonial Williamsburg's corporate and management. Each of these categories has a number of impacts on their feelings about their jobs, and together they form the basis of the bookbinding interpreters' affective experience. In order to understand their experiences, research must be done on the trade of bookbinding itself, including the process of premodern bookbinding and its role in material culture of the time. This is a crucial element of the interpreters' experience, and therefore must be included in this project.

Introduction

The first day of my internship with the bookbinders at Colonial Williamsburg, I was thrown into the process of making paste paper notebooks. I had never done it before, but making these notebooks is probably the easiest task the bookbinders do, and I ended up thoroughly enjoying it. For four hours, I showed young children how to make patterns on paper with flour paste and a fancy metal comb. My hands were dyed blue for days, and my poor white apron never recovered. While demonstrating how to make paste paper is not the best representation of the experience of being an eighteenth-century bookbinder, it is probably something a young apprentice would have done their first few days in the eighteenth century. During my six-week internship with the bookbinders, I was introduced to the basic skills required for interpreting the trade of bookbinding. I bound a book from start to finish, a process that takes twenty-seven steps. Completing it after almost six weeks of work felt like a massive accomplishment. I literally put my blood, sweat, and tears into it, but thankfully, the red flecks on the pages hide the bloodstains well. My dorm room even began to smell like the bindery after a few weeks; the particular smell of leather, gelatin, paper, and woodsmoke came back with me, something I imagine eighteenth-century bookbinders experienced as well. I thoroughly enjoyed my experience there; the bookbinders I worked alongside clearly enjoyed their work and found a lot of meaning in it, which lead me to do the same. Even after only six weeks, I gained a much deeper understanding of a trade I had given almost no consideration to previously, both in terms of its history and significance and the mentally taxing, detail-oriented work required to bind books. My internship also made me want to explore the experience of interpreting a historic trade, in particular bookbinding.

This paper seeks to understand the affective experience of interpreters who portray historic trades, and how this experience influences their understanding of the trade. In the context of this paper, affective is defined as relating to feelings and emotions—essentially how the experience the interpreters undergo influences their feelings and emotions about their job. To explore this, I conducted interviews with the three bookbinders in Colonial Williamsburg, so that their personal experiences would serve as the basis for understanding their affective experiences. I asked about the challenges and rewards they got from interpreting a historic trade, what they took away from actually performing a historic trade, and how corporate culture may impact their experiences. The interviews revealed how much they love their jobs. They spoke in depth about their experiences performing a work display, defined by Amy Tyson as the display of labor for the tourists' delight.[1] When looking into the affective experience of interpreting a historic trade such as bookbinding at a living history site, there are three key components to the interpreters' understanding of their work and interpretation. These three components are the corporate culture of the museum and its management, the dichotomy between interpreting and performing the trade work, and the personal understanding of bookbinding and interpreting the trade.

Literature Review and Methodology

Little research on bookbinding as a trade has been published recently; most comes from the early-to-mid twentieth century, around the time that bookbinding became fully mechanized and the need for hand-bound books faded. Most of the available published material on the bookbinding trade focuses on the methodology and tools required for hand-binding books, likely due to the loss of this information due to mechanization and the complicated processes behind hand binding. Other research has been done into the period in which hand binding and mechanization were combined. There appears to be less research on bookbinding as a trade within the broader historical context, even though it was an important, common trade until its industrialization; most of it focuses on the technical aspects and methods of binding.

The most comprehensive research into the practice of bookbinding is Edith Diehl's *Bookbinding, Its Background and Technique*. A bookbinder herself, Diehl's book provides readers with a highly technical history of bookbinding throughout history, from ancient papyri to modern industrial binding. Diehl also explains regional differences in bookbinding techniques. This book, likely due to Diehl's background as a bookbinder, assumes significant amounts of prior knowledge when discussing techniques. Published in 1946, *Bookbinding, Its Background*

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[1] Amy M. Tyson, *The Wages of History: Emotional Labor on Public History's Front Lines*, (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013), 11.

and Technique does not present readers with any specific arguments, instead it just provides a detailed narrative of techniques and stylistic elements of bookbinding over the course of its history. It also could act as a guidebook for researching the history of specific books or bindings. Diehl makes little note of material culture or other context as it relates to her account, outside of outlining a brief history of the trade.[2] Other publications with a similar basis include Howard Nixon's *Five Centuries of English Bookbinding*, which chronicles the history of English bookbinding techniques.[3]

There is scant research into the material culture and larger context of bookbinding within modern Western society and what exists mentions it solely to describe the trade. One such example is *Bookbinding in Early America; Three Essays*, an anthology of three articles on early American bookbinding originally published in 1941. The foreword outlines the goal of this publication: to publish information about the bookbinding trade in Colonial America, since little is documented about individual bookbinders and their world.[4] The first essay, "Early American Bookbinding by Hand" by Hannah D. French, outlines the practicalities of the trade. She discusses the methods and tools used by early American bookbinders, as well as stylistic elements distinct to this period. French's essay also contains information about specific bookbinders that were able to be identified, and the places they practiced their trade.[5] Following this is the second essay, "The Rise of American Edition Printing" by Joseph W. Rogers; this essay continues from where French's essay leaves off. Rogers discusses the beginnings of mechanization and industrialization within the bookbinding trade, and how this allowed for the first books to have editions published, instead of individual, unique copies bound by hand.[6] These two essays in *Bookbinding in Early America* provide some consideration into broader cultural themes connected to the trade, but still largely ignore this in favor of discussing bookbinding itself, like all early twentieth century research into this topic.

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[2] Edith Diehl, *Bookbinding, Its Background and Technique* (New York: Reinhardt and Co., 1946).

[3] Howard M. Nixon, *Five Centuries of English Bookbinding* (London: Scholar Press, 1978).

[4] Hellmut Lehmann-Haupt, foreword to *Bookbinding in Early America; Three Essays*, ed. Hellmut Lehmann-Haupt (New York: R. R. Bowker, 1967), vi-viii.

[5] Hannah D. French "Early American Bookbinding by Hand," in *Bookbinding in Early America,* 3-130.

Perhaps the only source that takes social and cultural context and material culture into consideration is *The Bookbinder in Eighteenth Century Williamsburg: An Account of His Life & Times, & of His Craft*. Published in 1959 by Colonial Williamsburg, this text was the joint project of the then-master of the bindery in Colonial Williamsburg and the research team. It outlines the history of the trade in Williamsburg during the Colonial period and discusses how Colonial Williamsburg knows this information. More importantly, it specifically mentions how the trade there was tailored to the needs of the community, which brings new information about the relationship between the trade with broader culture. The author, Thomas Ford, also provides information about the bindery as a business, something that was only brought up elsewhere in Hannah French's essay. For a small publication, it provides the most specific research into the topic, and does not try to act like a manual, like many other sources.[7] Similar historical research into bookbinding is carried forth in Lawrence Wroth's *The Colonial Printer*.[8] Mostly about the entire colonial book industry, Wroth has several chapters dedicated to bookbinding in Colonial America. Another historical text is Mirjam Foot's *The History of Bookbinding as a Mirror of Society*, which discusses bookbinding within a broader social history.[9]

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[6] Joseph W. Rogers, "The Rise of American Edition Printing," in *Bookbinding in Early America*, 131-188.

[7] Thomas Ford, *The Bookbinder in Eighteenth-Century Williamsburg: An Account of his Life & Times, & of His Trade,* (Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg, 1959).

[8] Lawrence Wroth, *The Colonial Printer,* (Portland, Me.: Southworth-Anthoensen Press, 1938).

[9] Mirjam Foot, *The History of Bookbinding as a Mirror of Society,* (London: British Library, 1998).

A significant amount of literature about bookbinding serves as guidebooks for contemporary bookbinding and conservation. "On the Rebinding of Old Books," written by Hellmut Lehmann-Haupt, is the last essay in the anthology *Bookbinding in Early America*. Lehmann-Haught's essay discusses modern instances of restoring and rebinding old hand-bound books and looking for evidence within the bindings to understand a volume's history. He also explains best practices for rebinding old books.[10] Other books focusing on providing instructions for hand binding books include *Binding and Repairing Books by Hand* by David Muir and *Bookbinding and Conservation by Hand: A Working Guide* by Laura S. Young. Both of these are practical guides published to instruct readers on how to bind books by hand. Neither offer readers discussions about any topics outside the process and materials necessary for binding and conserving books, since that was not the intention behind writing them.[11] As stated earlier, most of the relevant literature about bookbinding comes from the twentieth century, as the modern bookbinding industry became fully mechanized.

There is also a significant body of literature on living history museums and interpretation. This scholarship is important because living history sites are some of the only places that the general public can still engage with bookbinding. Much of this scholarship focuses on interpreters' experience working to educate visitors about history, as well as how these museums present history. The literature about interpretation focuses on the how individuals handle interpreting challenging parts of history, particularly social history. One example is Ywone Edwards Ingram's article "Before 1979: African-American Coachmen, Visibility, and Representation at Colonial Williamsburg," which looks into portrayals of Black history and slavery at Colonial Williamsburg before it instituted new policies about interpreting social history. It also explains why this portrayal was flawed, but Black interpreters played an influential role in determining the history depicted at Williamsburg.[12] Some of the literature looks at the experience of designing interpretive programs, such as "A Firm Foundation: Archival Research and Interpretation at Historic Sites." Written by Linda Barnickel, this article looks at how archival research is used to create interpretative programs and how this research should be used to create programs that tell new stories.[13] Other literature looks at how these programs of interpretation have changed to include new topics. One book on Colonial Williamsburg, *The New History in an Old Museum: Creating the Past at Colonial Williamsburg*, discusses the inclusion of new topics on social history in the 1970s and how they have been implemented into interpretation. Handler and Gable examine how living history museums like Colonial Williamsburg operate like a business, and how this often leads to a disconnect between the historical research being introduced by these places and that which is interpreted during the usual programs, especially regarding topics that might cause controversy. Handler and Gable also discuss the experience of the interpreters, including tradespeople, at Colonial Williamsburg, particularly how they handle this disconnect.[14] Literature about living history and interpretation, including all of these two sources, draw inspiration from the social movements of the mid-to-late twentieth century and the introduction of new ideas into traditional interpretation.

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[10] Hellmut Lehmann-Haught, "On the Rebinding of Old Books," in *Bookbinding in Early America*, 189-284.
[11] David Muir, *Binding and Repairing Books by Hand,* (New York: Arco Publishing Co., 1977).
Laura S. Young, *Bookbinding and Conservation by Hand: A Working Guide,* (New York: R. R. Bowker Co., 1981).

Other literature on interpretation focuses on the affective elements of interpretation, particularly those related to living history sites as a workplace. One of the most well-known works related to the experience of interpreting history is Amy Tyson's *The Wages of History: Emotional Labor on Public History's Front Lines*. Tyson's book uses the author's own experiences and those of interpreters at Historic Fort Snelling in Minnesota to discuss the workplace environment of historic sites and the experiences interpreters have. Tyson talks about the challenges interpreters face, particularly with company culture and challenging historical topics. However, despite discussion of interpreting trades, *The Wages of History* never expands upon the particular affective experiences of interpreting trades—that is, the feelings and emotions of doing the work of the historic trade.[15] Handler and Gable also fail to expand upon this. They have discussions with interpretive staff as front-line workers and discuss workplace hierarchies within Colonial Williamsburg, as well as challenges to introducing newer historical ideas into interpretation. [16] This scholarship is partially historiographic in nature by intent, outlining the history of interpretation at living history sites.

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[12] Ywone Edwards-Ingram, "Before 1979: African American Coachmen, Visibility, and Representation at Colonial Williamsburg," *The Public Historian* 36, no. 1 (February 2014): 9-35.

[13] Linda Barnickel, "A Firm Foundation: Archival Research and Interpretation at Historic Sites," *Archival Issues* 27, no. 1 (2002): 9-21.

[14] Richard Handler and Eric Gable, *The New History in an Old Museum: Creating the Past at Colonial Williamsburg,* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).

Other scholarship focuses on the emotional elements of interpretation and their role in the affective experience. This scholarship comes from a wider range of fields, including sociology and performance studies. Rebecca Schneider's *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatric Reenactment* discusses performance, including performance art, theater, and Civil War reenactments, as a way to connect with history, and the emotions these experiences bring. Schneider also analyzes these performances as a way to merge the past and present, often resulting in emotionally charged pieces.[17] An article by Divya P. Tolia-Kelly titled "*Feeling* and *Being* at the (Postcolonial) Museum: Presencing the Affective Politics of 'Race' and Culture" is a sociological article analyzing museums as theaters of pain for Maori visitors and other visitors whose cultures had been colonized and whose cultural memories were displayed. Emotions play a large role in the affective experience of interpretive spaces in postcolonial museums, and Tolia-Kelly makes this concept the focus of her article and scholarship.[18] Both of these works highlight how emotional responses are a large part of the affective experience for both the viewer and the interpreter, particularly regarding issues of race, war, and conquest. Scholarship on this is also an interdisciplinary endeavor and includes material from several fields. However, all of the above scholarship misses the affective experience of performing a work display and engaging with historic trades and tools.

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[15] Tyson, *The Wages of History*.
[16] Handler and Gable, *The New History*.
[17] Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactmeent* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2011).

The focus of this paper and broader project is the affective experience of actually working on a historic trade, in this case bookbinding, and how this shapes interpreters' understanding of the trade itself. This project therefore relies heavily on the need to conduct interviews with those who interpret this trade. While I have some experience from my time as an intern in the bindery in Colonial Williamsburg, my experience pales in comparison to that of Williamsburg's professional interpreters, who complete roughly five years of an apprenticeship, much like their historical counterparts. For my research, I interviewed the three bookbinders at Colonial Williamsburg on their experiences with both interpretating the trade to visitors and binding books. To do so, I visited Colonial Williamsburg in March 2021. During this visit, I interviewed Dale Dippre, the master of the book bindery, and Donald Mason, a journeyman bookbinder, about their experiences with interpretating bookbinding. While I would have preferred to interview them separately, Dale walked in right as I was starting my interview with Don, leading to a joint interview. While I do think it limited what they said during the interview, it also allowed Dale and Don to have a dialogue and discuss my questions. Unfortunately, Barbara Swanson, an apprentice bookbinder, was unable to be there for an interview that day. I conducted a phone interview with her and asked her the same questions. During my visit, I had wanted to listen to their interpretation, so that I could remind myself of how Dale, Don, and Barbara interpreted bookbinding and see what types of questions they get from guests. However, due to the pandemic, much of Colonial Williamsburg is closed, and the indoor historic trades are open once a week, so I was unable to watch them engaged in interpretation. This sort of ethnographic research would have been an interesting element in this paper, but unfortunately it is not currently possible. Blending their experiences with my own provides this paper with a wide variety of affective experiences to analyze and hopefully provides a wider insight into how this experience shapes people's understanding.

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[18] Divya P. Tolia-Kelly. "Feeling and Being at the (Postcolonial) Museum: Presencing the Affective Politics of 'Race' and Culture," *Sociology* 50, no. 5 (October 2016): 896-912.

The other aim of this project, albeit smaller than the research component, is to create an exhibit showcasing my research. While it might be a challenge to represent some of the most intangible elements of interpreting a historic trade that may arise without using text, an exhibit is a good way to represent the actual process of book binding, or maybe a select few of the roughly twenty-seven steps involved. My exhibit intends to display a few examples of different types of bound books, including the book I bound during my internship and a copy of *Tom Thumb's Playbook* that is technically a Christmas ornament I received from Barbara and Don. Essentially, I have created an exhibit based around the required materials to bind a book and hopefully some examples, with text to describe the process and how the experience of binding a book shapes our understanding. Much of the required equipment for binding books is larger than the display case in the Bank Building, which makes presenting some of the steps in binding books more challenging without pictorial or textual representation.

Since this project is looking into the affective experience of bookbinding, I thought of creating a "pop-up" showcase for the public to come visit and try a basic bookbinding skill. This allows people to get some tangible representation of what I have been researching and help further their understanding of the affective experience in a way that is easy to understand. The first day of my internship at Colonial Williamsburg, I made paste paper, a cheap, easy way to replicate marbled paper that many bookbinders produced as a way to offer cheap decorative paper goods. It requires only a few materials to make paste paper, and it can be done by small children, so making paste paper seemed like a good skill to teach those who came to this showcase. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, I could only show one to two people at a time how to make paste paper. Normally, paste paper was used as either end paper inside bound books or as the cover of soft bound notebooks, so I thought it would be interesting to provide visitors with the required instructions and materials to make a small notebook of their own, since it must be done after the paste paper has had a few days to completely dry out. This process hopefully provides visitors with a sense of what I am attempting to research and discuss in both my paper and the exhibit. The showcase and the exhibit are meant to try and show people the affective experience of performing a trade in a living history museum, and how this leads to a better understanding of historic trades.

Analysis

In order to best understand the affective experience of interpreting bookbinding, a short introduction to the history and process of eighteenth-century bookbinding is beneficial. Like any trade, bookbinding requires many technical skills that Williamsburg's interpreters must learn in order to demonstrate the trade. There are approximately twenty-seven steps to binding a typical bound book, from folding the sheets into pages to adding decorative elements. This process also requires a lot of time where the binder must wait for certain elements to finish before the next step can commence. The techniques, materials, and processes of bookbinding remained very similar over the course of the early modern era until bookbinding became industrialized in the nineteenth century, and the process remained much the same for binding books regardless of what was bound and its elaborateness.

The first step in binding a book is folding the sheets of paper into signatures, ranging from a single sheet folded only into a folio to signatures of thirty-two pages. With each successful fold, the size of the page decreases until signatures of thirty-two pages average a couple inches tall.[19] From there, the pages are trimmed to size before each signature is sewn together around cords, called "bands," that run horizontally across the book's spine. The number of bands varies between books, as larger books require more than smaller ones.[20] After the signatures are sewn together, they are pressed together, trimmed once again, and then glued together with gelatin as the spine is "rounded." The gelatin is then scraped off and boards are attached by gluing on the cords with flour paste and flattening them as best as possible.[21] Next, the headband and tailband are added; more cord is laid across the top and bottom of the spine and sewn to the signatures. Leather is pasted onto the spine and the boards, then decorative paper can be added to the cover. The endpapers are pasted onto the inside of the cover, and the last step before adding decorative elements is defining the edge of the spine. After everything is complete, the book is pressed again.[22] While this is a simplified process, it demonstrated the time-consuming process of binding a book. Many steps require long waiting periods, when the book is being pressed together or paste is drying, during which typical bookbinders would be working on parts of other books.[23]

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[19] Diehl, *Bookbinding,* 165-166.
[20] Ibid., 59-60.
[21] Douglas Cockerall, *Bookbinding, and the Care of Books,* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1910), 13-14.
[22] Cockerall, *Bookbinding,* 13-14.

Other than the process of bookbinding, the main topic the interpreters at Colonial Williamsburg discuss is bookbinding in the broader culture of the eighteenth century, particularly the Colonial South. At that time, most of the material being produced in a bindery was very plain, particularly in the colonies, and consisted of primarily edition books or blank books.[24] While only a handful of especially well-done books were created, they were valued much more than simpler edition or blank books, leading them to become the basis for modern scholarship on pre-industrial bound books. These fancy custom books were used to demonstrate wealth and status, and English books in particular were very extravagant. These were collector's items, unlike the typical book that was designed to be used.[25] Whether it was an edition book designed to be more affordable and accessible, or a blank book designed used and disposed of, these books reflected that the typical buyer needed functionality over design, mirroring the culture of the time.[26]

Explaining the history of the trade and its cultural context plays an important role in what is interpreted in the bookbindery in Colonial Williamsburg, despite being discussed little in scholarly circles. Little is published on the topic, particularly bookbinding in the colonies, so understanding and interpreting this cultural knowledge can be challenging. Tying this specifically to Colonial Williamsburg provides even more of a challenge. While there is some knowledge of colonial binders in Williamsburg, most of the records come from daybooks that survived or distinct markings made on books by tools, like a recurring chip in decorative finishing.[27] Colonial Williamsburg's interpreters must make this information, as well as the process of binding a book, connect with their audience, rather than elements of social or political history like many other interpreters. As a result, the affective experience of interpreting bookbinding as a trade is shaped by their understanding of the trade and how to make others understand it on their own.

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[23] Ibid., 13-14.
[24] Dale Dippre, interview with the author, March 20, 2021.
[25] Foot, *The History, 93-100.*
[26] Ibid., 103.

When asked about their experience with interpreting bookbinding, all of three of Colonial Williamsburg's bookbinders seemed to demonstrate a distinct personal understanding of the trade, which influences their interpretation. This understanding comes from both their personal connection to bookbinding and their understanding of what should be interpreted, and this understanding is a large part of their affective experience. They also perform a trade for visitors to engage with, also known as a "work display," which also affects how they go about the work of binding books. While bookbinding at Colonial Williamsburg is still an historic trade, it is not done to produce sellable goods, unlike the interpreters' historical counterparts. Each of the bookbinders approaches bookbinding with a different mindset and thinks through the trade in very different ways, which shapes their experiences. Nevertheless, the affective experiences of all three bookbinders have several points in common.

Colonial Williamsburg prides itself on its recreation of the eighteenth-century apprenticeship system within its historic trade shops, despite being unable to replicate it exactly as it existed historically. Colonial Williamsburg's website states historic trade interpreters are "modern-day practitioners who use 18th-century tools and techniques to apprentice in—and eventually master—blacksmithing, woodworking, gunsmithing, just to name a few."[28] Interpreters work their way up from apprentices to journeymen after learning the technical elements of their trade and can eventually become masters. The trade shops' masters are usually in charge of their respective shops and act as modern-day management staff on top of interpretive responsibilities.[29] Despite the titles, however, it is hard to replicate the eighteenth-century model of apprenticeship within a modern corporate setting. Historically, apprentices were fairly young, generally around ten to thirteen, when starting an apprenticeship, and it was upheld by a contract, where the apprentice would pay back their training to their master. An apprenticeship would typically last around seven years, during which time the apprentice gradually learned the trade from the master, becoming a journeyman after these seven years were completed.[30] Obviously, these conditions cannot be perfectly replicated within modern society and within Colonial Williamsburg, and so the apprenticeship system there is essentially only a title. While it does affect wages and reflect the experience level interpreters have, Colonial Williamsburg's apprenticeship system is a toned-down version of a pre-modern English apprenticeship. The bookbinders are each at a different stage of the apprenticeship process, which in turn affects their experience within the trade shop.

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[27] Ford, *The Bookbinder, 9-11.*

One of the biggest parts of the bookbinders' understanding of their trade comes from their personal connections to it and what they get out of the experience. For Donald, a journeyman bookbinder, the action of binding a book presents him with a puzzle to solve.[31] Dale, the master of the bookbindery, enjoys learning skills that are uncommon in modern society.[32] Barbara comes from a family of bookbinders and printers in Sweden, so she feels a deep connection to her family history through bookbinding, as well as a sense of personal satisfaction.[33] This personal connection goes beyond what they get out of it, however. The experience of bookbinding also provides the bookbinders in Williamsburg with a certain understanding of the trade. Dale thinks of bookbinding in a very practical way, particularly regarding the fundamentals of constructing a book, since he tends to be very practical himself. He thinks of bookbinding as "mediocrity at best." Interpreting bookbinding has made Dale, and Don as well, realize how mediocre most of the material coming out of binderies really was.[34] On the other hand, Barbara discussed how binding books has made her more aware of all the time, materials, and labor that go into a book beyond what the binders do. She said it blows her mind to consider how much goes into one book, including the animal products involved, the cooperation of other tradespeople, the importation of goods, and how hard it was to access all this.[35]

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[28] "Historic Trades," Colonial Williamsburg, accessed April 27, 2021, https://www.colonialwilliamsburg.org/explore/historic-trades/?from=navexplore.

[29] Dale Dippre, interview.

[30] Patrick Wallis, "Apprenticeship and Training in Premodern England," *The Journal of Economic History* 68, no. 3 (2008): 834.

[31] Donald Mason, interview with the author, March 20, 2021.

Another big part of the affective experience is the way that the binders learn the process of bookbinding. While it would have historically been taught through an apprenticeship, today's bookbinders are largely self-taught, meaning that the first bookbinders in Colonial Williamsburg taught themselves bookbinding and have passed it down to each new interpreter.[36] This does replicate the apprenticeship system quite well, with one small caveat. The first bookbinders in Colonial Williamsburg taught themselves, perhaps incorrectly, so the information being passed down from interpreter to interpreter may be flawed or incorrect.[37] There has also been a recent push to document the knowledge of older, more experienced interpreters to prevent valuable knowledge from being lost when they retire.[38] Interpreters learn on the job, much like their historical counterparts, but today the focus is on providing quality interpretation to visitors.[39] Research on trades for interpretation or personal discovery must be conducted on their own; Williamsburg's previously thriving research department has dwindled to one researcher for all the historic trade shops.[40] This includes research on social history that is only now gaining recognition, particularly on enslaved tradespeople in each particular shop, a project put together by the National Association of Interpreters and Colonial Williamsburg to help keep interpreters' jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic. This independence allows the bindery interpreters to explore the angles that interest them, but it also puts more pressure on the interpreters to teach themselves and create accurate material for interpretation.[41] The act of teaching themselves, both in terms of research and physically binding a book, plays a role in how the affective experience of how bookbinders gain a personal understanding of the trade.

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[32] Dale Dippre, interview.
[33] Barbara Swanson, interview with the author, April 3, 2021.
[34] Dale Dippre, interview.
Donald Mason, interview.
[35] Barbara Swanson, interview.
[36] Dale Dippre, interview.

The historic trades have played an important role in Colonial Williamsburg's portrayal of more diverse histories since their introduction. These trades allow Williamsburg to show more than the political and military history and introduce guests to the lives of the colonial-era working class, and the trade interpreters are largely responsible for this. In their book *The New History in an Old Museum*, Handler and Gable interviewed a variety of tradespeople during their research into the presentation of social history at Colonial Williamsburg, and they pointed out that workers' interpretation was largely based on their own experiences with the trade. One interview with the master cooper revolved around how the cooper's understanding of the trade historically led him to introduce more elements of labor history into his interpretation, as the coopers were early leaders in labor organizing. His affective experience of making barrels also led him to realize that Williamsburg's coopers were too skilled, something he tried to discuss with guests in his interpretation.[42] Much like the bookbinders, his affective experience of performing the trade gave him a deeper personal understanding of it, which he attempted to share with guests.

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[37] Dale Dippre, interview.
[38] Barbara Swanson, interview.
[39] Donald Mason, interview.
[40] Dale Dippre, interview.
[41] Barbara Swanson, interview.

The bookbinders' personal experiences play a large role in their interpretation; it influences what they think needs to be interpreted and helps them connect with audiences. Barbara, who joined the bookbinder's shop most recently, discussed how she tended to just parrot what other interpreters said, or what she was told to say, before she gained a better personal understanding of the trade and formed her own opinions.[43] All three of the bookbinders agree that one of the most rewarding aspects of their job is talking to guests and connecting with their audience. Getting the chance to have an impact on somebody's life, especially a young child's, is especially meaningful to Don and Barbara. Don said that his favorite part of interpreting is when a child has that "a-ha!" moment of realization. He feels children have a better chance of understanding key concepts in interpretation than adults and loves the opportunity to interpret to kids.[44] Barbara, as a woman interpreting a historic trade, feels that interpretation can be "a big responsibility," as well as "a heavy burden," when speaking with visitors that are minorities, young women, or children. She wants to make those typicallly written out of history feel included in places they would have been included in historically.[45] Each bookbinder's personal connection to the trade allows them to relate with their audience and form lasting connections with guests.

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[42] Handler and Gable, *The New History*, 93-94.
[43] Barbara Swanson, interview.
[44] Donald Mason, interview.

While not usually depicted at living history sites like Colonial Williamsburg, women played important roles in local economies during the colonial period. Whether they were helping their husbands or family or they had their own business, like Margaret Hunter's milliner's shop in Williamsburg, women would have been visible in trades historically, a fact Barbara expressed in her interview.[46] Modern scholarship has shown this was indeed the case, although there is none specifically about women and bookbinding. An article by Kristi Rutz-Robbins shows that women in colonial North Carolina were actively engaged within their local economies, owning and operating businesses and bringing financial grievances to court on their own when necessary.[47] Barbara's personal connection to the trade has given her a sense of responsibility to show others that they historically had a seat at the table through her interpretation. This is reflected in her interpretation, as she discusses her experience in order to show her audience that they would have been active participants in colonial society, despite the lack of representation.

It is clear from the interviews with the bookbinders that connecting with guests is very rewarding for them; they obviously want visitors to engage with their interpretation and the bookbinding work they are doing. Amy Tyson, in her interviews with interpreters at Fort Snelling discusses a similar thing among the interpreters there. Many of the people she interviewed talked about the emotional rewards of connecting with visitors; it made them proud of the work they did, despite its draining nature.[48] Tyson also notes the relationship between interpreters and the idea of authenticity. Many interpreters, especially those who have spent many years in living history, made it one of their goals to portray a craft or skill as authentically as possible, and, while these "games of authenticity" often caused workplace issues, they gave interpreters more opportunity to connect with guests and engage them in discussions of historical skills.[49] Tyson also discusses her own experiences in a manner similar to Barbara; both discuss how interpreters get their own style as they become more familiar with the expectations of their role and the material. Tyson's anecdote about how she, after working at Fort Snelling for several years, once went into a program barefoot so that she could create a historically realistic scenario about the relationship between servants and their masters compared to Barbara's statement about introducing more personal beliefs into her interpretation after a couple of months at the bindery.[50] Connecting with guests plays a large role in the affective experience of interpreters, since it is such an emotionally rewarding part of the job, and as both Tyson and Williamsburg's bookbinders have evidenced, it comes from a personal understanding of what is being interpreted and its importance.

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[45] Barbara Swanson, interview.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Kristi Rutz-Robbins, "'Divers' Debts': Women's Participation in the Local Economy, Ablemarle, North Carolina, 1663-1729," *Early American Studies* 4, no. 2 (Fall 2006): 436-439.

At the same time, however, there can be a large gap between what visitor's expectations are and what interpreters want to discuss in their interpretation. When interviewing the bookbinders, all three of them discussed how they want their guests to ask questions and shape their own experience. Don and Dale both expressed that they wanted their interpretation to feel more like a conversation, rather than a forced interaction or a pre-written script. They both also said that as Colonial Williamsburg wants to include more social history, interpreters, particularly tradespeople, are being given more talking points that they must include in their interpretation.[51] Dale says this creates a dichotomy between what visitors want to talk about and what the interpreters need to say as required by management, since there is less focus on individual shops and their histories, which is what visitors want to hear.[52] In her interview, Barbara also discussed the tension between how interpreters see themselves and how guests see them. She talked about how living history sites wants to make the public understand the importance of understanding the past as a warning for the future, but stated that this is hard because it is not what visitors want to hear, so it often comes across as “preachy.”[53] She also questioned how the public sees interpreters. Are they educators? The public’s conscience? Entertainers? Lecturers? No matter how the public may see interpreters, Barbara states that it is their responsibility to connect the dots for the public, despite how challenging that may be.[54] These tensions between visitor expectations and interpreters’ desires or requirements seem to be very frustrating, since it is more of challenge to bridge these gaps, but they still play a large role in the affective experience of interpreting a historic trade.

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[48] Tyson, *The Wages of History,* 88, 91.
[49] Ibid., 117-118.
[50] Ibid., 131.

Other differences between visitor expectations and the bookbinders’ interpretation are more easily corrected and can often be humorous. Don and Dale also expressed frustration at another gap between audience desire and their interpretation: when visitors do not want to discuss the tasks and skills they are currently working on while interpreting. This means that they practically have to have someone performing the trade while another interpreter talks to the public.[55] Barbara noted more humorous examples of overcoming visitors’ ideas in her interview.

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[51] Dale Dippre, interview.
Donald Mason, interview.
[52] Dale Dippre, interview.
[53] Barbara Swanson, interview.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Dale Dippre, interview.

She said she frequently has to explain to visitors that women could, and would, have been 18th century bookbinders. Realistically, a wider variety of individuals than depicted at Colonial Williamsburg would have been involved in trades, including women, young apprentices, and people of color, and Barbara enjoys correcting this assumption.[56] She also discussed how many visitors come in with the "good ol' days" mentality, thinking that everyone read books in the past and that that was so much better than today's technology. She points out to visitors that books at that time were almost exclusively for the wealthy, and there was almost no access to information for the common man when compared to today. Of all the differences between visitor assumptions and historical reality, this seemed to be Barbara's favorite to correct visitors on, stating that she views this as evolution rather than reminiscing on the past.[57] These differences in expectations, as well as those above, play an important role in the affective experience of these interpreters. While connecting with visitors may be one of the most rewarding aspects of interpretation, it can also present many challenges for the interpreters, who need to find a balance between portraying a historic trade as accurately as possible and discussing social histories in relation to the trade.

Similar ideas about these differences in expectation appear in both Handler and Gable's work and Tyson's interviews. Interviews in Handler and Gable with those on Colonial Williamsburg's front line reveal the frustration that interpreters and others in customer service have when visitors present them with ideas that are, at best, uneducated and, at worst, idiotic.[58] The bookbinders, however, did not seem to express the same amount of frustration, and instead found it rewarding to challenge visitors' questionable assumptions, more akin to what Tyson

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Donald Mason, interview.

[56] Barbara Swanson, interview.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Handler and Gable, *The New History*, 188-189.

discusses in her book. In *The Wages of History*, she discusses interpretation of slavery and Native American history at Fort Snelling and the ways that interpreters learned how to address more painful histories. While emotionally taxing for the interpreters, those who chose to engage with more painful histories found it especially meaningful to talk to guests about this. Tyson also discusses how guests come to have an affective experience, but interpreters also have an emotional response.[59] This is apparent in my interviews with the bookbinders as well. Discussing more painful or challenging topics is an important role in the experience of interpreters, and the tensions that happen when there are differences between guests' and interpreters' expectations. Whether these conversations frustrate or delight the bookbinders, they make up a key component of the affective experience of interpreting a historic trade.

The last key factor in the experience of the bookbinders in Colonial Williamsburg is corporate and managerial involvement. While none of them seemed especially upset with Colonial Williamsburg's corporate culture or their direct management, they all had a few grievances with their higher-ups. Dale, the current master of the shop, discussed how when the master before him retired, the bookbinders were promised more autonomy as a shop and more ability to make their own decisions.[60] However, this was never delivered, as the master of the print shop was made the manager of the bindery as well. Dale and Don, and Barbara less directly, also discussed that because of this, they tend to create their own autonomy.[61] Dale elaborated on this by saying that as a shop, they want to make management feel unwelcome, so they can do what they want to do.[62] One such example of this comes from the interview with

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[59] Tyson, *The Wages of History,* 168.
[60] Dale Dippre, interview.
[61] Dale Dippre, interview.
Donald Mason, interview.
Barbara Swanson, interview.
[62] Dale Dippre, interview.

Don. In late 2019, the bookbinders moved from the building they had occupied since the beginning to a new, more visible one on Duke of Gloucester Street, which required moving all of the large, heavy equipment used in the bookbinding process up several flights of narrow stairs. Despite the bookbinders' desire to stay in the same spot, and warnings about the size of the equipment involved, management pushed it through, annoying everyone. Don clearly was frustrated with the whole experience, but the worst offense was that the new space was supposedly larger, but actually gave the binders less space to work while providing more space for guests. The binders' understanding of the trade also plays an important role in this story; Don noted that the inside of the shop would not have been laid out like this historically, since the furniture was arranged to accommodate the space required for public viewing.[63] Don's anecdote about moving highlights how corporate involvement is part of the affective experience; the bookbinders have some autonomy within their shop, but ultimately, they still have to comply with what their management dictates. Historically, the master of a shop would have the final authority, and twenty-first century management limits interpreters' ability to understand their eighteenth-century counterparts. Today's bookbinders lack the same autonomy that they would have had, and this plays an important role in their experience.

Issues of autonomy and management also extend into what is interpreted within the bookbindery. Don and Dale both expressed frustration with recent pushes to create more inclusive interpretation. Both note that while they feel including elements of more challenging social history is important, they also feel that corporate is going about it the wrong way. Instead of allowing interpreters to find more personalized ways of introducing this history that fit within the context of the trade, corporate has provided a series of talking points that must be included in interpretation. There is less focus on each site or trade shop's individual history, and it makes interpretation less natural.[64] Don and Dale have tried to include these new ideas as naturally as possible, and they said they often send guests to sites within Colonial Williamsburg better suited to discuss certain topics.[65] However, this is not what corporate wants interpreters to do, and all three bookbinders said they will get pushback if they said something corporate or their direct management does not like.[66] Barbara is less frustrated about this than Dale and Don; she feels that Colonial Williamsburg is walking a tightrope between visitor and donor expectations. She feels Colonial Williamsburg needs to be an impartial, apolitical observer in order to do this, but that is nearly impossible, especially with increasing pressure from current social movements, some of which are not universally supported by corporate and donors.[67]All of this has also been deeply affected by the current pandemic. As COVID-19 has impacted Colonial Williamsburg's operations, managerial involvement has increased. With the indoor trade shops operating only once a week, management wants interpretation to be more efficient.[68] Barbara notes that it has been hard to operate as one of the only museums open during the pandemic, and that all the bookbinders are grateful to still have a job as Colonial Williamsburg has had to worry more about money.[69]

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[63] Donald Mason, interview.

Corporate culture at living history sites and museums has always been a large part of interpreters' affective experiences, and these interviews highlight how this is becoming even more challenging in a contained trade shop. Interpreters face decreasing autonomy as these sites are run more as a company over time, evidenced in both Tyson's book and Handler and Gable's study of Colonial Williamsburg. Tyson discusses the autonomy of interpreters in Fort Snelling, saying that "lead guides," essentially interpreters who often saw themselves as the managers of the interpretive staff, often policed others' interpretation, limiting the control of interpreters to make individual choices about how best to engage their audiences.[70] This is more visible within Handler and Gable's study of Colonial Williamsburg as they discuss the widening gulf between Williamsburg as a company and Williamsburg as a museum. Handler and Gable discuss how the increasing commercialization was used to support the museum, which continued to become more educational and historically authentic.[71] Interpreters, particularly tradespeople, interviewed by Handler and Gable discussed how they had talents and skills that corporate never would, but they were scarcely recognized for these "special talents." They recognized that Colonial Williamsburg's rhetoric and company practice often did not align, particularly regarding interpreters' management.[72] In their conclusion, Handler and Gable discuss how Colonial Williamsburg's insistence on controlling what interpreters said to visitors limited the potential of conversations between visitors and interpreters, a sentiment that is echoed by the bookbinders.[73] It is nearly impossible for interpreters to escape the impacts of corporate culture and managerial involvement, as evidenced by the opinions of the bookbinders and literature on living history sites. This makes it a large part of interpreters' affective experience, since historical interpretation is first and foremost their job, and they therefore lack the complete autonomy that the tradespeople they interpret would have had.

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[64] Dale Dippre, interview.
Donald Mason, interview.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Barbara Swanson, interview.
[68] Donald Mason, interview.
[69] Barbara Swanson, interview.

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[70] Tyson, *The Wages of History*, 136-138.
[71] Handler and Gable, *The New History*, 132-133, 137.
[72] Ibid., 165-167.
[73] Ibid., 224-225.

Conclusion

Colonial Williamsburg’s bookbinders are pushed to try and recreate the experience of being a tradesperson in the eighteenth century, but there is no way to completely replicate that experience. They put on a work display and demonstrate to visitors the pre-industrial process of binding books, but their affective experiences will never be the same as their historical counterparts whose entire job was just binding books. However, the bookbinders have created their own personal understanding of the trade and its significance during their experience at their job. While there are too many factors that separate eighteenth-century bookbinders from Colonial Williamsburg’s modern-day interpreters, these factors provide them with something to interpret to the public and provide that personal touch that allows it to resonate with guests. As interpreters, that connection to guests is what matters to them and ultimately shapes the majority of their affective experience. The books they bind are nothing but the product of their interpretation, no matter how much they may enjoy the process, as Dale expressed several times throughout his interview.[74]

Despite this, the tangible experience of bookbinding still plays an important role in the workers’ affective experience. Whether it is the joy of solving a complex puzzle that needs to be assembled or a connection to family history, the physical experience of putting a book together means something unique to each interpreter. It feels safe to assume that an eighteenth-century bookbinder might experience a similar feeling, the same joy at solving a puzzle, but it never needed to be used to connect to an audience in the way that the bookbinders’ affective experiences are. Each interpreter in the bindery uses their own experiences in their interpretation, leading each to talk about different aspects of the trade, and this personal connection to the physical act of binding a book sets Williamsburg's historic trades interpreters apart. Their affective experience is shaped by their own personal understanding of both the physical and cultural aspects of the trade that comes from the act of actually making something using historical tools and methods, but it is complicated by the expectations of both their audience and their management. These interpreters must balance the experiences of doing an eighteenth-century job within the context of their twenty-first century job, rather than play a specific individual who are performing a task. This is what makes their experiences as interpreters unique.

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[74] Dale Dippre, interview.

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