

A vintage bookbinding workshop with two workers. The scene is filled with stacks of paper, book spines, and large industrial machinery. The lighting is warm and golden, creating a nostalgic atmosphere. The workers are wearing aprons and are focused on their tasks. The background shows large cylindrical tanks and various tools and materials scattered around the workspace.

# THINGS YOU NEED TO DO BEFORE YOU GO TO A BOOKBINDER

DONCASTER BOOKBINDERY

# five things you need to do before you go to a bookbinder

*So, you're nearing the final stages of your research project. Almost nailed the word count, the pictures look amazing and your references are spot on. Now, you just send it off to the book binders and you're done, right??*

**wrong!**

So many students think that the last and easiest part of the completion of their thesis is just printing out and sticking a cover on it. But in most cases, that is far from the truth. After you've sold the farm, doubled up the mortgage and sold off a kidney to get this far, the last thing you need to worry about is having to reprint a 400 page document or scrap the whole book. A poorly constructed

binding won't pass the scrutinizing eyes of the examinations office, much less do all of your hard work the justice it deserves.

For too long the general public, and especially students, have been kept in the dark about what to look for in a bookbinder. For centuries this mystical craft has been hidden from those who need and

treasure its services most. As a result, there is almost always a problem with formatting, margins, colour or spelling.

Now, in a world first, there IS a comprehensive guide to help you navigate your way through the printing and bookbinding of your thesis, and get you out on the other side of publishing your own work.

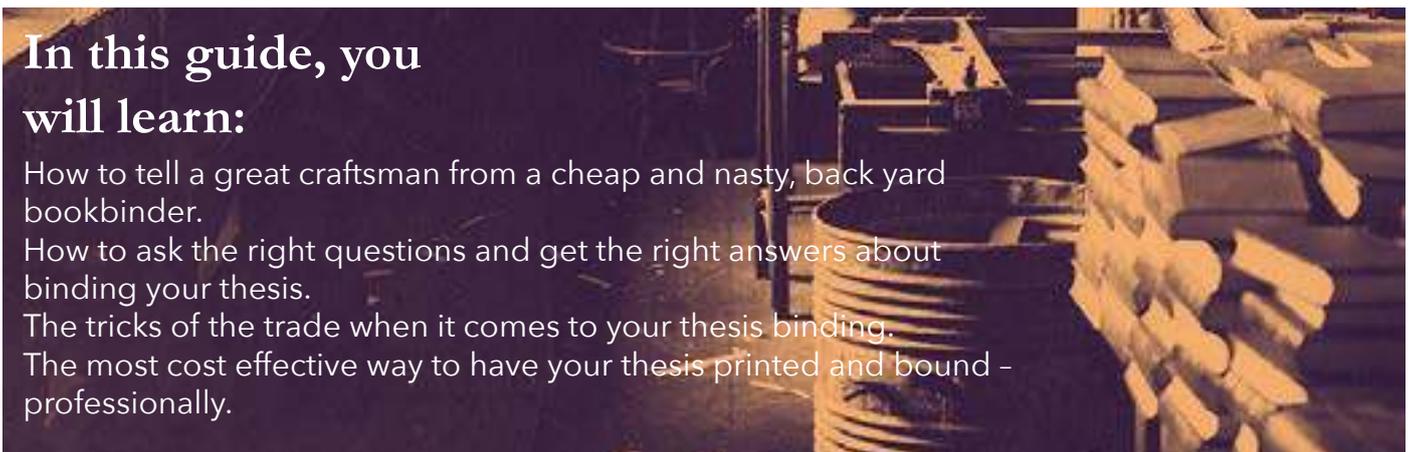
## In this guide, you will learn:

How to tell a great craftsman from a cheap and nasty, back yard bookbinder.

How to ask the right questions and get the right answers about binding your thesis.

The tricks of the trade when it comes to your thesis binding.

The most cost effective way to have your thesis printed and bound - professionally.



# not all bookbinders are equal

## **Be wary of bookbinders with a residential address:**

*While some are true craftsmen and women, most are backyard hacks.*

## **Ask some leading questions about your university requirements:**

*Ask them to state the minimum requirements for lettering on the cover, for example.*

## **Ensure they have the capacity to 'foil stamp' or 'letter' the spine and front cover:**

*The inability to actually do this on site means they are not set up to regularly produce thesis binding.*

## **Ask about the binding process:**

*Are the pages sewn or just glued? Do they sew on the endpages AND flysheets for added strength and durability (Endpages are the first and last two blank sheets of paper in your thesis)*



In the bookbinding realm, almost all bookbinders think they are topsh\*t. They simply think their method really doesn't stink. Many may have limited formal training, but instead have developed a set of skills that can only be used for one aspect of the trade.

As there is a shortage of good bookbinders willing to invest in the future of the trade, the skills continue to die out with retiring craftsmen. Bookbinding trade houses used to fill the industrial estates, and were thriving businesses. As the demand for

their slow painstaking work was replaced by a digital age, the craftsmen began to retire, and passed on their tools of trade to printers and other less skilled business owners.

These days, the true bookbinding trade houses are few, and many second generation bookbinders simply operate out of their garage at home. While keen and passionate about binding books, they are often simply not skilled or set up to handle the high quality precision work of thesis binding.

Every University has a list of 'recommended' thesis binders. It is almost certain that of the list, three work from their own garage, two are closed down or retired, and only one or two are actually in a position to produce a thesis binding which meets your university's requirement and your own personal expectation.

There are even some 'entrepreneurial' printers who promote their bookbinding, but are simply utilising cheap and short term processes and materials.

# be wary of ‘we do it all’ bookbinders

**Be sure to ask the bookbinder about their printing - if they offer it.**

**Are there other areas where the bookbinder might be distracted?**

How much of their business is dedicated to printing and how much to book binding?

**Marbling, board production, classes etc.**

These all take away from the time and effort they dedicate to binding your thesis.

**Is their trading name ‘Printers’?**

*This is a good indication that perhaps they were printers before they were binders.*

**If a bookbinder claims to be a great printer too, what are they compromising?**



Bookbinders can't do it all. As the digital revolution began to swamp the printing and binding industries, it became very popular for bookbinders to move into the digital print arena. All of a sudden, bookbinders were able to print and bind, super quickly, any range of book imaginable.

That is perfectly fine, and a great way to diversify your business. But what does it mean for the bookbinding? All the time spent on creating a perfect print, or correcting self-made errors due to lack of printing expertise, means reduced time on binding, thus

reducing quality. Sewing theses becomes too slow, so simply gluing the books is the option. Needing to increase a broader range of skilled staff increases costs which forces prices up for the student. Mistakes in quality, timelines and quantity can increase. All of this causes problems for students with tight deadlines.

Real bookbinders recognise the need for experts to exist in complementary industries. Printers need to be the best at printing. Paper and board manufacturers have the equipment, knowledge and expertise to produce their quality product.

Why would a bookbinder be better at printing than a good quality independent print shop?

At Doncaster Bookbinders, we do not print. We don't know the first thing about printing. That's why we offer our printing as a service only. We have partnered with an off-site specialist printer. He knows everything there is to know about printing. He calibrates his machines weekly, and demands a higher quality output than that of his peers. We leave the printing to the experts and concentrate on our own expertise.

# not all bookbinders are ethical

**If you're conscious of environmentally sustainable or non-animal products and caring for our planet at a local level, you need to be able to ask the right questions:**

Are your glues made from animal products or are they synthetically produced?

Is there an option for leather-like products or 'faux leather' as a book covering?

Are your tools made from animal products?

What are your methods of discarding wet waste?

Do you have a recycling program in place?



Traditionally, bookbinders have used an incredible variety of adhesives, materials and tools to complete the task. In many ways, there is an incredible ingenuity in the places bookbinders searched and discovered suitable materials for the purpose of binding books.

However, in a bygone era, use of animal products was considered normal and

acceptable. In truth, they achieved sensational results in binding, adhering, restoring and rejuvenating books, along with preserving for future generations. In this day and age however, the use of such things as tusk ivory, animal skin glue and other questionable products, are not considered sustainable or humane.

Often, and if not managed by contentious staff, bookbinding

as a trade can involve practices which are considered potentially damaging to the nearby ecosystems and environment.

# what about the customers?

To ensure the best service, it's important you ask some questions:

Are there added options available, or is it one style fits all?

Are there personalisations available?

How transparent is the company? Do they go the extra mile to make sure you are happy AND meet your deadline?

What is being said about them on social media?  
Is there guidance, assistance and support every step of the way?

What happens if something goes wrong?

Overall, how helpful is the bookbinder?

Do they want your business?



Just because someone is a highly skilled craftsman, it doesn't mean they are entitled to treat customers rudely or with lack of respect.

Surely old fashioned service should be a perquisite for an old fashioned trade? Sadly, we are hearing more and more stories of crabby bookbinders, turning customers away or creating conflict with them in the cusp of their graduations.

It is true that not everything goes to plan 100% of the time. Mistakes do happen. Human error will never go away completely.

Often what is more important that a 100% perfect job is the response to a problem, and the ability and willingness to solve it, irrespective of who is to blame for the issue.

Alongside a robust complaints

handling policy is the importance of enhancing the book being bound. Those little optional extras go a long way to personalising your thesis, and setting it apart from all the others

# the most important aspect – price

**Bookbinders can be either undervaluing or overvaluing their services. In both cases, this indicate a lack of understanding the customer's expectations.**

Check for Credit card surcharges

Does your Binder offer a free delivery service?

Is there more than one option for pick-up and delivery?

Are there faster service options available?

What is a courier charge?

Are there optional extras available – borders, centrepiece embellishments, different grades of cloth finishes?



When thesis binding is cheap, it almost always suggests that short cuts are being taken, and the quality of the raw materials may be questionable. Substituting quality, sewn on endpapers for cheap, thin, glued on sheets of paper is one example.

When the binding is expensive, often there is a sense that the customer is foolish or because of limited time or alternative

suppliers, has no real option but to pay the high price.

Other indications include credit card surcharges, no discount for multiple books (price breaks), over inflated pricing for printing and charges by the word for lettering on the cover. At Doncaster Bookbinders, we implemented a 'User Pays' policy many years ago. We believe you should only have to pay for what you want. We

don't believe that your thesis binding should be subsidizing someone else's rush job, or lack of time management. Our price structure rewards high number of books. We also offer a unique 'free delivery service' to all major Universities in Melbourne, and a flat rate delivery fee to Local and interstate addresses. We never charge credit card surcharges.