

*The Art
of the
Chapbook*

by
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Do not reproduce without love.

Tim Lander

Introduction

For the teacher inspiring students to write and for students ready to share their work, the chapbook offers a fun, low cost, highly creative and empowering experience. It may also spark interest in design, typography, publishing, and printing.

Chapbooks, small hand-assembled books, sometimes stapled, often handstitched or simply folded, come in so many forms that they are difficult to define. The word dates to the sixteenth century when chapmen (peddlers) distributed printers' wares—ballads, news, instalments of popular romances and poetry—on printed sheets which customers would then fold and sew.

In Canada today, the word “chapbook” applies equally to the handwritten booklet sold on the street for a penny and to the artist's edition produced by a letterpress printer and sold to collectors for hundreds of dollars. But most agree that a chapbook contains fewer than 48 pages—more than that and it meets the Canada Council's definition of a “book.”

In the history of Canadian literature, many writers, Gwendolyn McEwen, bpNichol, Nelson Ball, bill bissett, jwcurry, and Tim Lander among them, self-produced chapbooks to gain exposure and attract a readership, to experiment with form and method as part of the larger experiment with alphabet and language, or to rebel against the prevailing “structures of legitimacy.”

Today, technology makes typesetting and printing inexpensive and easy. Canadian literature has benefited from writers taking back control of their art and also from the abundance of small presses publishing beautiful reasonably priced chapbooks. For chapbooks are beautiful and personal in a way that mass produced books can never be. Their ephemeral quality makes it all the more urgent to read and understand and cherish the authors work. And because they are rare and fragile, we are all the more eager to read them and to cherish them.

The following pages contain instructions for making some simple chapbooks. A list of resources for inspiration and for instruction follows.

Before You Start

Materials

Bookmaking materials are limited only by the imagination. Students will quickly see the possibilities for creating art and learn that substance, colour and texture can enhance content.

Suggestions for Paper

copy paper	tracing paper
fine linen paper	roofing felt
fabric	wall paper
butcher paper	found scraps
wax paper	envelopes
parchment paper	road maps or sea charts
blueprint paper	construction paper

Suggestions for Printing

pen	rubber stamps
pencil	Letraset
coloured inks	linocuts
inkjet printer	woodcuts
laser printer	body stamps
photocopier	typewriter
paint	silkscreen

Tips

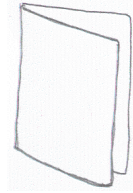
1. Use an implement to make sharp folds. Paper artists use bone folders; a dull, unserrated knife will work as well. Thicker paper may have to be creased first—use the knife against a ruler's edge and experiment with pressure.
2. Make a mock-up of the project. Construct the book, then number the pages. Orient the numbers correctly. Then unfold the mock-up, which will now look quite different. This is the easiest way to tell how to properly place the content.

Constructing the Book

Folded Books

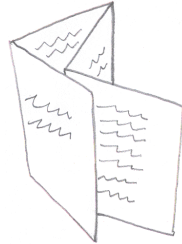
A. THE SIMPLEST FOLDED BOOK

Take a piece of paper, any size, and fold it in half. Now you have a four page chap-book (to which you can add a cover), or a two page chapbook with a self cover.



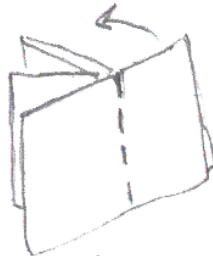
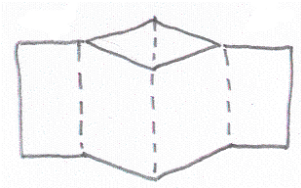
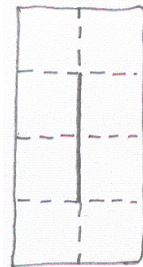
B. SIMPLE YET VERSATILE

Use a long skinny piece of paper. Fold it in half, then fold it in half again. Makes an eight-page booklet or a seven-page booklet with a front cover. You only have to decide how you will number these pages (there are a couple of ways) and if you will orient your text landscape or portrait. Try it both ways.



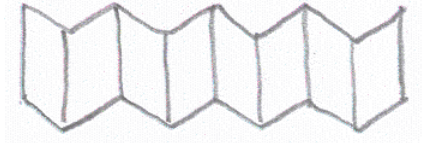
C. AMAZING

Fold your paper so that the fold lines define eight sections. Use an exacto knife to cut the solid line shown in the diagram to the right. Fold the paper in half lengthwise and follow the folding directions in the two diagrams below.



D. THE ACCORDION BOOK

Fold your paper back and forth. Now you have 16 pages to work with. They can be read stretched out or in book form, with only one page showing at a time. The charm of this second method is that the chapbook turns into the never-ending story.



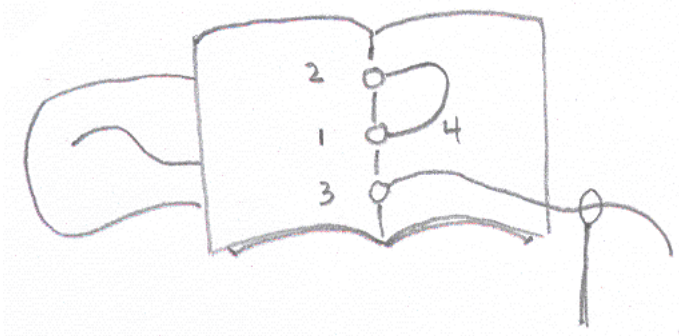
Sewn Books

Use the simplest folding book (shown on page 5) and add as many pages to it as you like. Don't forget a cover!

Poke three holes through the spine. You can use a strong needle or a small nail for this.

Using needle and thread, come up from the cover through hole number 1. Sew down through #2, come up again through 3, then finally down again through 1.

Tie a knot on the outside of the book. If you would like the knot to be inside, just reverse the process.



Filling up the Pages

Creating the by hand

Work with the unfolded book, using the mock-up as a guide. Write directly on the page or use glue to attach a pre-printed piece. Now, reassemble the book, either by folding or by sewing.

This may be a one-of-a kind chapbook, especially if the artwork is elaborate. To make more copies, repeat the process or photocopy the unfolded book as many times as you wish.

Using software to impose the pages

Most word-processing software will construct a booklet for you. Simply define your page size and type the content onto each page in normal sequence. Then instruct the software to build a booklet, selecting “two-up, saddle-stitch.” It will rearrange the pages into the proper order for a booklet.

To print, select paper size you want to print on (e.g. if your booklet page is 5.5 by 8.5 select 11 by 8.5 (landscape orientation). Instruct the printer to print both sides (duplex printing). If the printer doesn't have this feature, then print the odd pages one side, flip the paper by hand and print even pages on the other. After printing, fold and sew!

MS Word instructions are under “Create a Folded Booklet” in the Help menu.

In PageMaker the feature is under the PlugIns menu: “Build Booklet.”

In InDesign the feature is in the File menu: InBooklet SE. Be sure to check the box “Create New Document.”

The web offers several **chapbook templates**. The one at the League of Canadian Poets works with Microsoft Publisher.

Resources

For inspiration, visit the Naughty Dog Press
www.emilymartin.com/gallery.htm
Yasutomo www.yasutomo.com/project/moreprojects.html
Beth Lee's book arts pages www.callibeth.com/galleries.php

The many books on chapbook making include
The Art of the Handmade Book by Flora Fennimore
Creative Bookbinding by Pauline Johnson
The Art of the Book series from the
Canadian Book Binders and Book Artists Guild

Canadian micropresses publishing chapbooks
www.danforthreview.com/links.htm#12

Letterpress publishers include
barbarian press www.barbarianpress.com
Running the Goat www.runningthegoat.com
(m)Öthêr Tõnguê Press www.movertonguepress.com
Frog Hollow Press www.froghollowpress.com/
High Ground Press

Canadian chapbook awards include
bpNichol chapbook award
www.pcwf.ca/bpnichol/chapbook/award
Shaunt Basmajian Chapbook Award
www.sympatico.ca/cpa/shaunt.html

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