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# Poison Book Project earns worldwide publicity

A recent feature by ***The Washington Post*** on the **Poison Book Project** has been picked up by news outlets around the world. The Poison Book Project is an interdisciplinary research initiative at Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library and the University of Delaware.

This ongoing investigation explores the materiality of Victorian-era publishers’ bindings. Research focuses on identifying potentially toxic pigments used in bookbinding components and how to handle and store potentially toxic collections more safely.

The *Post* article is behind a paywall, but you can read the full article in ***The Seattle Times***, ***The San Diego Union-Tribune***, ***The Spokesman-Review***, and **elsewhere**.





Melissa Tedone, former head of the library conservation lab at Winterthur, now Assistant Professor of Library/Archives Conservation and Associate Director of the Winterthur/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation, examines the toxic covers of books in the library at Winterthur.

An excerpt from the article:

*The Poison Book Project began after Melissa Tedone’s own chance encounter with a curious emerald tome.*

*At the time, Tedone was the head of the library conservation lab at Winterthur, a historical estate and museum affiliated with the University of Delaware, where she assessed and restored objects in the institution’s collection. In 2019, for an exhibition on Victorian aquariums, she was tasked with repairing a book called “Rustic Adornments for Homes of Taste.” “It was a bright green book, and the covers had fallen off,” Tedone said. It was her job to put them back on, but she noticed something strange while working.*

*“There was something about the way the pigment was behaving. I could see it flaking off under the microscope,” she said. At the time, she was reading a book about arsenical wallpaper common in the 19th century. “It was a serendipity moment. I*





Boys *and* Friendship’s Golden Altar.

*“Arsenic is in its own category,” Tedone said. “Not only is it more toxic than the other heavy metal pigments, but we are finding that measurable levels of arsenic are coming off on your hands.”*

*The findings have led large institutions, including the National Library of France and the University of Southern Denmark, to remove books from circulation and place them in quarantine.*



BLOG POST DETAILS

Posted By:  
Jason Brudereck

Date:  
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