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World's oldest communications device gets a look, and a lift

Portland, Ore. — Looking for books in all the right places, longtime bookbinder and writer Margaret E. Davis landed in China to tackle the history of books on paper, culminating in *China Under the Covers: A Binder's Journey to the Roots of Books* (Ma Nao Books, 2017). From the workrooms of Beijing's National Library of China to the Gobi Desert, Davis joins the techniques and materials of bookbinding with the adventure of traveling the Middle Kingdom.

Romance, intrigue, illustrated instructions to four of the oldest bindings, and images of tools and artifacts play a part as ancient and popular cultures blend and intersect.

At a time when screen readers are hungry for tactile pleasures and DIY off-grid efforts, *China Under the Covers* resonates with its window into another world, shining a light on an often-overlooked but influential craft. It is difficult to imagine civilization without books; how else could we have evolved this far?

This book on books helps ponder the questions and literally puts one of humans' most important inventions within our grasp. Readers get their hands on history as *China Under the Covers* invites everyone to "Take the journey, learn the craft."

About the author

After learning to set type at Scripps College, Margaret E. Davis won a grant from the Durfee Foundation to study bookbinding where it was invented. Along with an apprenticeship at the National Library of China, she traveled the country to survey books and related arts and reached the Silk Road outpost of Dunhuang, where the oldest dated, printed book in the world was discovered.

She returned to China to work for *Beijing Scene*, the country's first independent English-language newspaper, which was shut down by the government.

As a MacDowell Colony fellow, Davis completed a limited edition of books bound in traditional Chinese style. She teaches workshops and lectures on Chinese bookbinding. Her work as a writer and editor has appeared in *Outside*, *Utne Reader*, *Chicago Reader*, *Tin House*, *Beijing Scene*, and the *Portland Tribune*.

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Ma Nao Books, P.O. Box 12383, Portland, OR 97212; manaobooks.com

Contact: Margaret Davis, [manaobooks @ gmail.com](mailto:manaobooks@gmail.com)

chinaunderthecovers.com

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