Adopt a Book

De Mole, F. E. (Fanny Elizabeth), 1835-1866. *Wild flowers of South Australia / by F.E.D* London and Adelaide: [Paul Jerrard], 1861. [23 leaves]: 20 hand-coloured plates; 36 cm.

Rare Books & Special Collections
Strong Room 581.9942 D38

About

This rare and lovely work, with 20 lithographed and hand-coloured plates illustrating 38 species of local plants, was prepared by the Adelaide botanical artist Fanny de Mole (1835-66) to raise funds for St Bartholomew's church in Norwood, of which her brother-in-law was Rector. Though De Mole exhibited regularly at the Society of Arts, this was her only work as an author and due to her fragile health most of the specimens illustrated were collected in the area near her home at Burnside.

One of the two copies held by the Barr Smith Library bears an impressive and unique gilded leather binding, commissioned for presentation to the Archbishop of Adelaide.
Original condition

The gilded cloth presentation copy was bound with ‘gutta percha’, by which leaves were glued to the spine. Over time the gutta percha had become dry and brittle and all leaves were detaching from the spine. Both head and tail of the spine were damaged. Spine hinges were loose and the corners also damaged.

The second copy had been bound with the plates attached to paper ‘hinges’. These were tightly bound, causing damage to the leaves when fully opened. The half leather binding was worn and distorted.

Restoration by Anthony Zammit

The presentation copy binding was removed and reinforced, the leaves sewn and the binding replaced with spine and corners repaired.

The second copy was re-sewn such that the leaves opened without stress and rebound in conservation binding.

Cases were made for both copies to ensure safe ongoing storage.