



Óbuda University

Topic: Designing Series Book Covers

Könyvsorozat borítók tervezése

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1. Abstracts

The aim of this research paper is to produce a product that fits in with the lifestyle and the deep engraved passion of book lovers. Instead of the plain static aesthetics of mass volumes of books and their cover packaging, how could we as designers and engineers derive a physical product that encapsulates the genuine care and interest of printed volumes by displaying them not just as an unaesthetic being but as a fully functioning and cost-effective center piece that demands the level of respect the authors and the avid reader cherishing the set projects it as. Throughout this research paper we shall go through how a single video on a social media platform has spiked a core and intrinsic interest in me to make a passion project that not only me but many of my peers will enjoy.

2. Introduction

Books have been the fascination of many people around the world. From passing down knowledge and journaling one's life prospects to becoming a coping fictional world that fuels the creative needs of exploration and fantasy. There have been wonderful literary works that have changed how we see ourselves, and how we interact with others. The concept of books and developing the habit of craving, enjoying, and sitting down to read has been a long journey for me. I remember the days where I would look in amazement at the physical artwork cover of books and place value in the cover more than the book content itself. Flipping through the pages and despite not reading the book, pretending to have read it from the wonderful illustrations in it. With trial and error, and multiple repetition I hope that I have finally come to a place where I could enjoy and treasure the works of many authors. The lengthy process of ideating, writing, correcting, proofreading and various steps that it takes to publish a book, the procedure in which a single volume gets to the readers' hands are astounding. I believe that works of this caliber need to be displayed as the gems that they are. I hope that not only myself but many people believe in this thought process as well.

The specific product that I have in mind throughout this paper is one that could be used with completed or ongoing fictional books, or any genre of books that portray a long sequential story telling method that goes beyond two books. In such, the graphic examples I shall use in the demonstrations are that of Harry Potter, in its main story line and completion has in total eight books. Considering the ideal customer base to be readers that do not mind spending more on

quality and functionality of the packaging, I am striving to contrive a design that is still in the reasonable price range for purchasers.

I hope that multiple avid book readers, as well as those who are making their transitions into taking reading more seriously, could look at the physical book set cover and be just as enamored or be encouraged to pick up certain volumes of books.

Problem

I perceived the problem as in the current book market, the typical book volume cover design consists of the regular rectangular design that serves the minimalistic function of protecting the set books and being covered with the relative illustrations. Depending on the budget of the production value the material and the quality of the book set cover as well as the book's hard cover itself differs. Understanding the situation at hand, it seems to me that we as consumers of physically printed literature and bodies of work have become accustomed to set designs and limited ourselves to what additional functions may we allow the book cover to attain. Whether it be only for aesthetic purposes or functional display attributes, a design that encompasses both may be what sparks joy and interest for aspiring or already avid readers.

Research

I shall be showcasing the ideation processes, physical materializing, and repetitive design improvement throughout the research paper. In addition, a survey has been conducted to understand the scope and anticipation of how the prospective consumers would react and feel to such a physical set book cover product.

3. Motivation

The product idea first arose when I saw the viral video on Letterform Archive's Tiktok Channel showcasing a leather bond easel binder. The book was unlike any binding nor book I had seen before. In the video, the narrator describes a meaning of which that there are a few books made of such binding as the book's production may have been labor intense and costly. The geometric physique and properties of the structure were alluring, so much so that I wondered how we could disperse the high cost and repurpose the design into a contemporary everyday function that aids our daily uses. Since the binding is attached and purposed for a book, I sought out to deliver a similar looking and functioning exterior made for a differing purpose.

Aim and Relevance

The aim of this research paper is to showcase an alternative book cover design that could seamlessly integrate into the already established book publishing and reading industry without feeling too forced or alienlike. While reviving an innovative design made in the mid-2000s made by Glenn C. Henry, which sadly did not receive the technical and ingenious recognition it deserved. However, since the resurfacing on multiple social media contents, it seems like the aesthetic nature and the usage are inspiring many more in the society. I hope and predict that similar forms may appear in the near future for various of usages.

4. Literature Review

History

Born on the 16th of March 1904, Glenn C. Henry was an electronics engineer and an inventor. He was the son of Dr. Frank and Annie Cameron Henry. Besides being the president of Glencraft Production Co., he had multiple patents for his numerous inventions. He mentions that the easel inspired book cover took him “five months to develop the idea, five years to patent it and six years to learn how to make it.” He had to design and invent the equipment and machinery to manufacture the easels that made possible for the book to stand on its own as well as be at a proper eye reading angle (“Obituary for Glenn C Henry (Aged 55),” 1960). His early career was spend working as a recording engineer at the National Archives, perhaps explaining why his inventions were predominantly focused on storing, retracting and shelving (General Services Administration. National Archives and Records Service. Office of Educational Programs. Education Division. 4/1/1985, 1937).



Figure 1: Glenn C. Henry at the National Archives

G. C. Henry filed for his easel binding book cover on the 15th of August 1946. Published under the publication of US2587316A, it's anticipated expiration date was on the 26th of February of 1969 (Henry, 1952).

Feb. 26, 1952

G. C. HENRY

2,587,316

ARTICLE SUPPORT AND THE LIKE

Filed Aug. 15, 1946

20 Sheets-Sheet 7

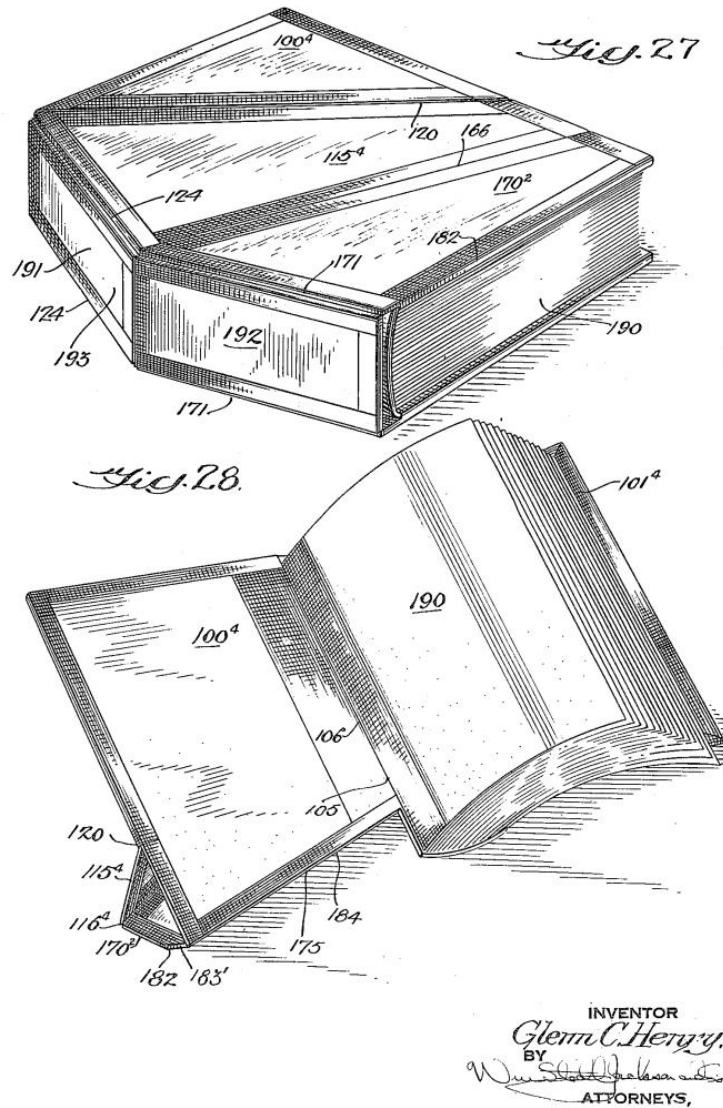


Figure 2: Easel Book Binding technical drawing from Henry's Patent

Figure 2 shows the contents of the patent document. On it, Henry displays his ingenious innovation and craftsmanship as he not only illustrates the easel book binder, but a multitude of other designs that utilize the self-sustaining easel like structure. For instance, the document contains information on a vinyl record holder, alternative book holder, and varying origami like layouts for smaller and light weight documents. In total, in the “Article Support and the Like”

document there are 20 differing designs that could creatively integrate with how we display products and certain documents in our current daily lives. (*Article Support and the Like*, Glenn C. Henry, 1946).

Henry, along with his wife Guinevere, created and developed the iconic design. It is mentioned that together they “cut and pasted hundreds of false starts until they found what they needed”. Since such an act of grand book binding feat was seldom at that time, the couple sought out and made machines that could manufacture and produce their own products (*Bookbinding & Book Production* 1953-09, 1953). Later the married couple proudly established and opened their own company—Glencraft Products Co. They produced their book cover-easels for bibles, dictionaries, and more (*Bookbinding & Book Production* 1953-09, 1953).



Figure 3: Henry displaying the Book Cover-Easel

Viral Emergence

On September 13th in 2022, the Letterform Archive on their Tiktok channel had posted a fascinating video on opening the easel bond book the Type Faces of Monotype, Linotype, and

Miscellaneous Display Faces, by The Cuneo Press of New England, Cambridge, 1955 (*Letterform Archive* (@letterformarchive) TikTok, 2022). For which the same video later being posted on twitter as well (*Letterform Archive* [@lett_arc], 2022). It instantly became a viral sensation, stacking up around 1.7 million views and over a thousand comments. It seemed that many were taken aback by the surreal structure and ease of use the book had.

With much attention being drawn to the asymmetric Cuneo Press book cover-easel, it prompted large libraries to seek if they possessed such a book. On the same day the Letterform Archive's Tiktok video was published Merriam-Webster confirmed that they had one in their possessions—the Seventh Collegiate Dictionary, based on the 1961 Unabridged (*Merriam-Webster* [@MerriamWebster], 2022).



Figure 4: Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary

complete book volume sets, vast majority of the participants mentioned their liking to admire their book display, and have revealed that the physical designs do matter to them, nearly 40 percent stated that they always gift books to others, and closely 54 percent says that the packaging matters to them, over 50 percent mentions that they are willing to pay a bit extra for the aesthetics of the product, similarly over 60 percent remarks that they are also willing to pay a bit extra if the cover has more than one function, and roughly 65 percent were pleased to spend around 1000 HUF to 5000 HUF for multi-functioning and aesthetics book set packaging.

Table 1: Survey Results

		N	%
Age	18 - 25	74	35.24%
	26 - 35	63	30.00%
	36 - 45	31	14.76%
	46 - 55	28	13.33%
	55+	14	6.67%
Gender	Female	127	60.48%
	Male	82	39.05%
	N/D	1	0.48%
How often do you read books?	Always	89	42.38%
	Sometimes	101	48.10%
	Often	17	8.10%
	Never	3	1.43%
Do you buy full set volumes?	Yes	116	55.24%
	No	94	44.76%
Do you treasure and display your physical books?	Yes	185	88.10%
	No	25	11.90%
Does the packaging and design of a book matter to you?	Yes	126	60.00%
	No	84	40.00%
Do you gift books to others?	Always	83	39.52%
	Sometimes	61	29.05%
	Often	53	25.24%
	Never	13	6.19%
When gifting books does the packaging matter to you?	Yes	113	53.81%
	No	97	46.19%
If a cover of a book set is aesthetic, would you pay a little bit more to buy it?	Yes	120	57.14%
	No	90	42.86%

If a cover of a book set has more than one function, would you pay a little bit more to buy it?	Yes	131	62.38%
	No	79	37.62%
How much are you willing to pay for the multi-functioning packaging and design of a book set cover?	<1000 HUF	38	18.10%
	1000 HUF – 5000 HUF	137	65.24%
	6000 HUF – 10000 HUF	25	11.90%
	10000 HUF >	4	1.90%
	None	6	2.86%

Material Research

Due to the book series being over 3 kg in weight and that this product shall be encompassing various of beloved series of differing weights, I thought it be best to make the entire structure durable and hefty.

Since many book covers lack structural support, it has become common for them to rip in the crease line. However, if the material is supported sufficiently along its' weak lines, than despite the transportation or user errors, the book set cover could maintain it's form and last long with the user, giving lasting satisfaction with their purchase. Hence why, a 2mm paperboard was selected (*High Quality Certified 1.5mm 650gsm Rigid Board China Grey Paper Chipboard Grey Board Paper Sheets - Buy Grey Board Paper, Chip Board Paper, 650gsm Paper Grey Product on Alibaba.Com*, n.d.).

The paper is supplied by the company Youngsun, uses mixed pulp, is moisture proof, is uncoated, and is compatible with digital printing. The size is 787x1091mm therefore suitable with most cuts. They have a range of thickness from 0.48 to 4mm and have a long standing history of producing album paperboard, gift packaging, book covers and jewelry packages.

Cost evaluation

The comparison volume produced by Bloomsbury is on the market selling for GBP 140 while on the Hungarian market it is retailing for HUF 71'890 (bloomsbury.com, n.d.; *Rowling, J. K.*, n.d.). Since the product is the first of its kind, it is very complicated to place an exact price point; however, I estimate that it would retail for an approximate HUF 85'000 to HUF 90'000.

The additional costs blend into the increased durability, as well as the functional aspect of the product.

6. Design

Since the easel book cover design had been rarely seen in the market before, the designing and calculating of the metrics deemed to be tricky. As the book in the video shown on Letterform Archive's content was a heavy set with enough pages to weight pressing down the outer walls, securing the planting of the flaps on the table. The complication I faced with then it came to large sets of was how to disperse and maintain the spine of the structure as heavy books were putting pressure on it.

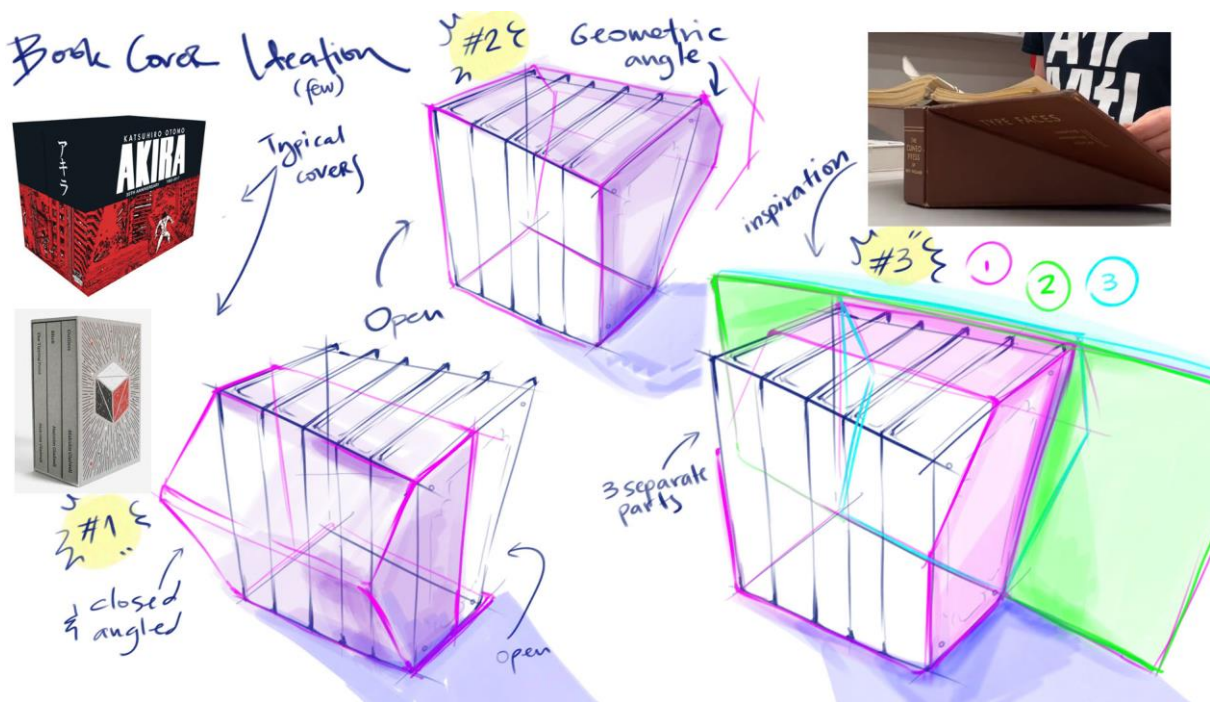


Figure 6: Ideation Process

As seen on Figure 6, multiple iterations of the design lead way to a conclusion that the best way to secure the entirety of the structure was to closely follow the premade design and have the book set cover be consisting of three main parts, each elevating and prolonging the longevity of the structural spine.

Prototype

To get the perfect measurements for the product, I went through around 15 different product iterations. Each time shortening, lengthening, moving to angles to the right and to the left by small increments to have a working model that creates the least resistance while opening and sufficiently maintains its form and structure.



Figure 7: First Full Model Prototype

Figure 7 shows the first full model prototype I made. The mathematics were not quite correct at that time hence the product was stiff when opening and did not maintain its shape upon opening. In addition, there was structural tension that prevented the books from being fully visible.



Figure 8: Front view of First Prototype



Figure 9: Top view of First Prototype

Both Figures 8 and 9 demonstrate the constraints of functionality the first prototype had. When open the cover would close back and the only way for it to remain in its open feature was to stabilize it on the edge of a desk.



Figure 10: Latest Prototype

In the Latest Prototype, shown on Figure 10, we could clearly see a well defined smooth figure. The rounding and the handles on the first prototype laid way for the betterment of the later version. The angles and configurations of the metrics became fluid so that it did not have much resistance when opening and well maintained its form.



Figure 11: Latest Prototype Front View



Figure 12: Latest Prototype Top View

As illustrated on the above Figures 11 and 12, the cover no longer needed to be placed on the table edge to sustain its form while still looking aesthetic.



Figure 13: Side by side comparison (Latest version on the left, First version to the right)

When compared side by side, we could see how a minor change in angles elevation affects the end result. Despite the latest design being more self-sustaining, the first design has a better handle, as it does not cause much pain when holding heavy books for a longer period.

Technical Drawing

Sample Product

The sample product that I had in mind for the design was the Bloomsbury Harry Potter Raven Claw Edition open door book set. Despite not having the exact measurements on their Bloomsbury home site, on amazon with the exact same product I had attained the measurements. Sitting at a dimension of 213x154x290mm, the Harry Potter set weighs 3.34kg, and is listed with an ISBN – 13 of 9781526624512 (Rowling, 2021) .

As the product is being made from three components, the following figures showcase their technical drawings.

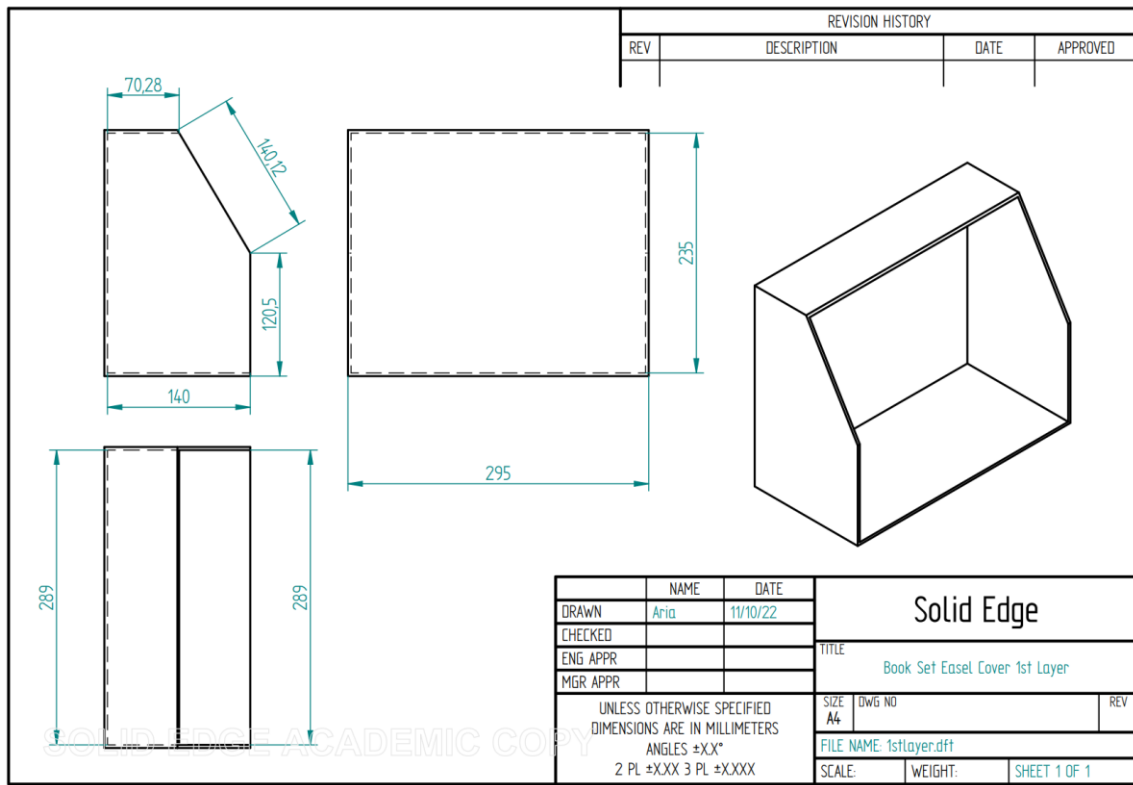


Figure 14: First Layer Cover First Version

The following technical drawings are the initial products' drawings and the second technical drawings are the bettered and developed ideations of the book cover series.

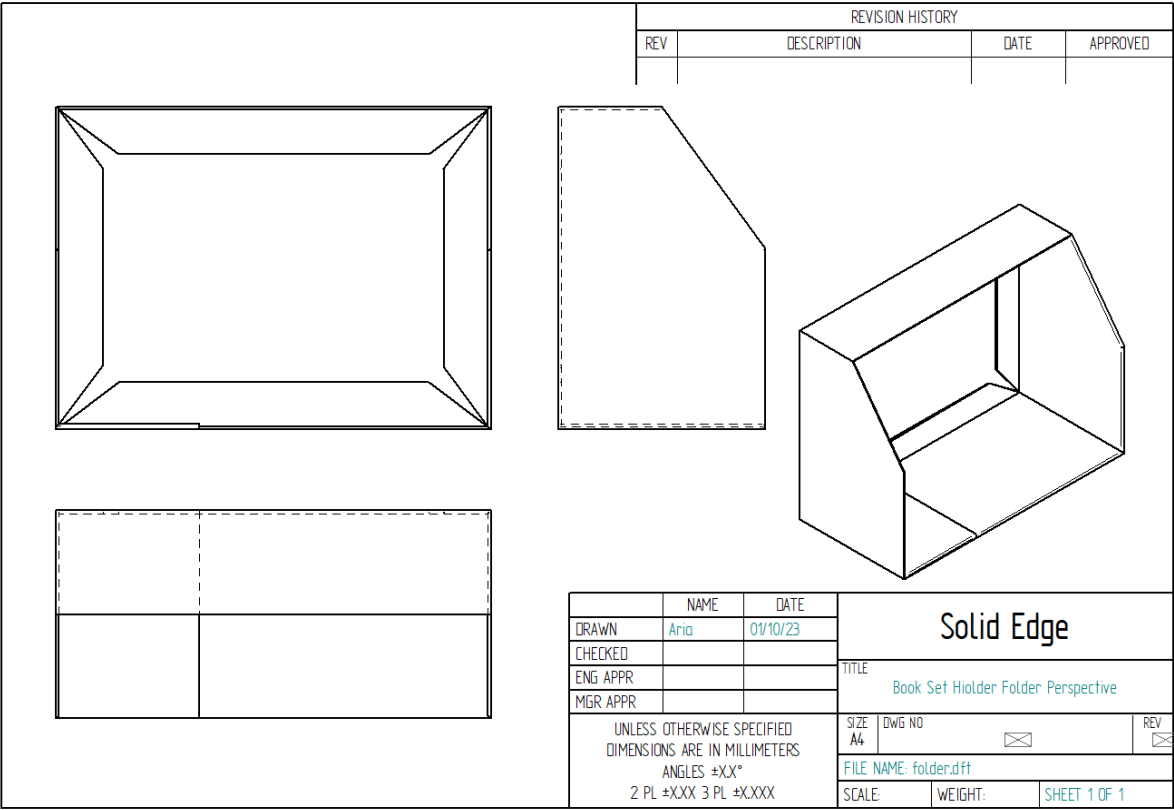


Figure 16: First Layer Cover Second Version

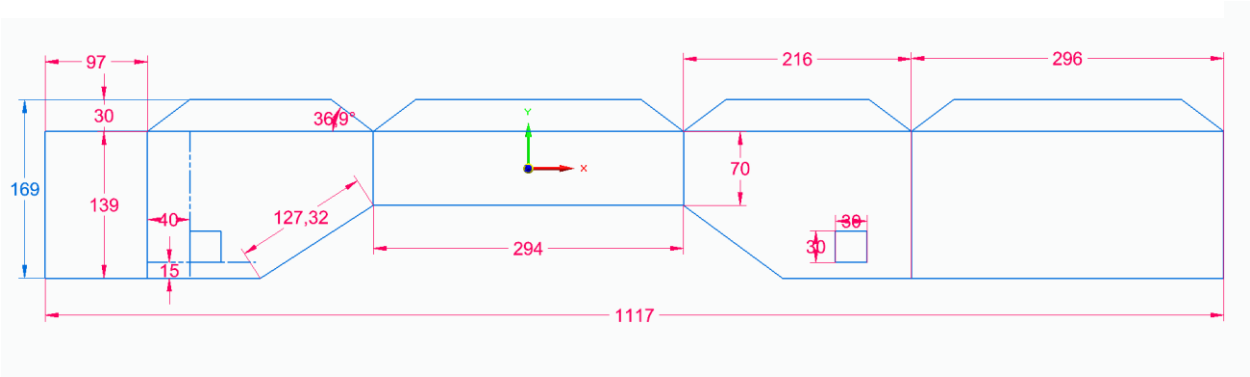


Figure 15: First Layer Cover Second Version Technical Drawing

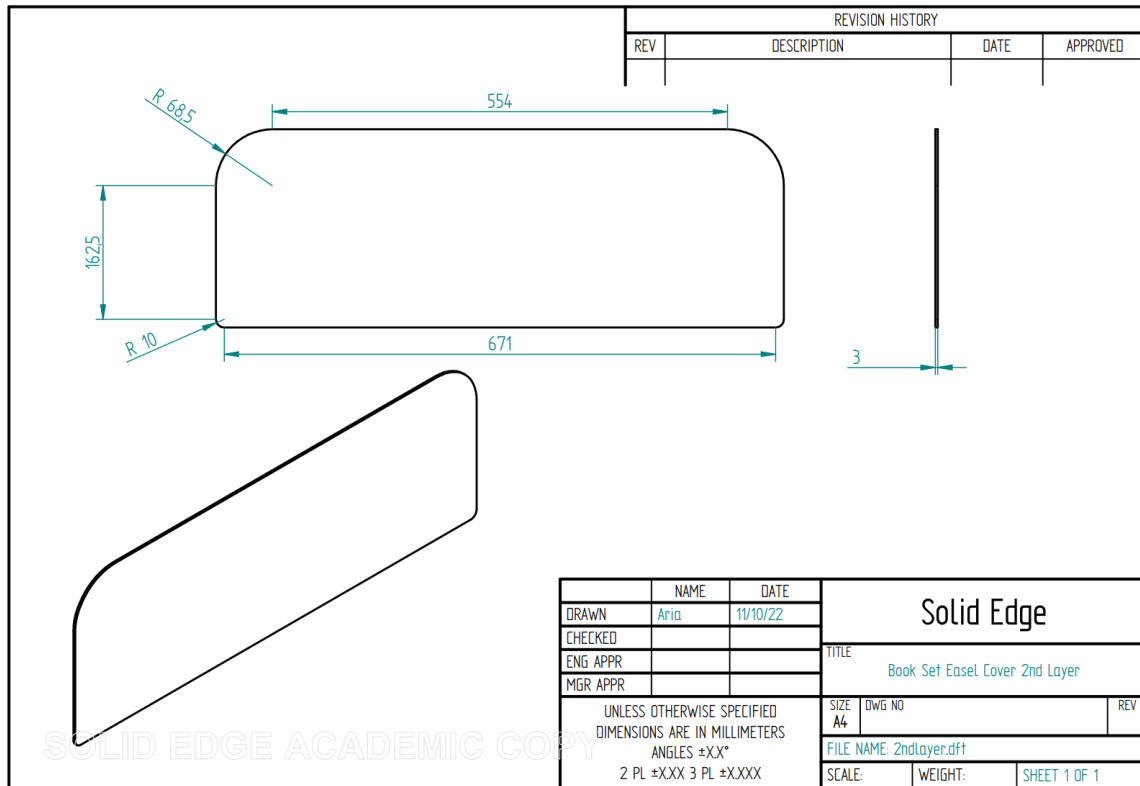


Figure 17: Second Layer Cover First Version

The following Figure shows the second iteration of the product. As the initial development was faulty and did not fit in the original sample.

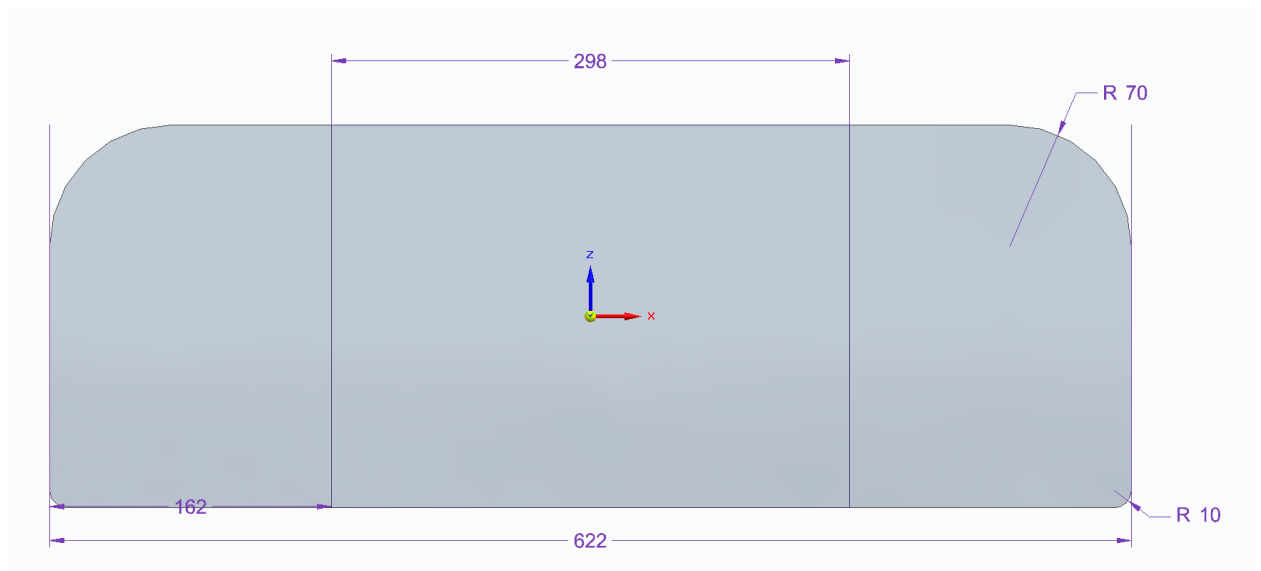
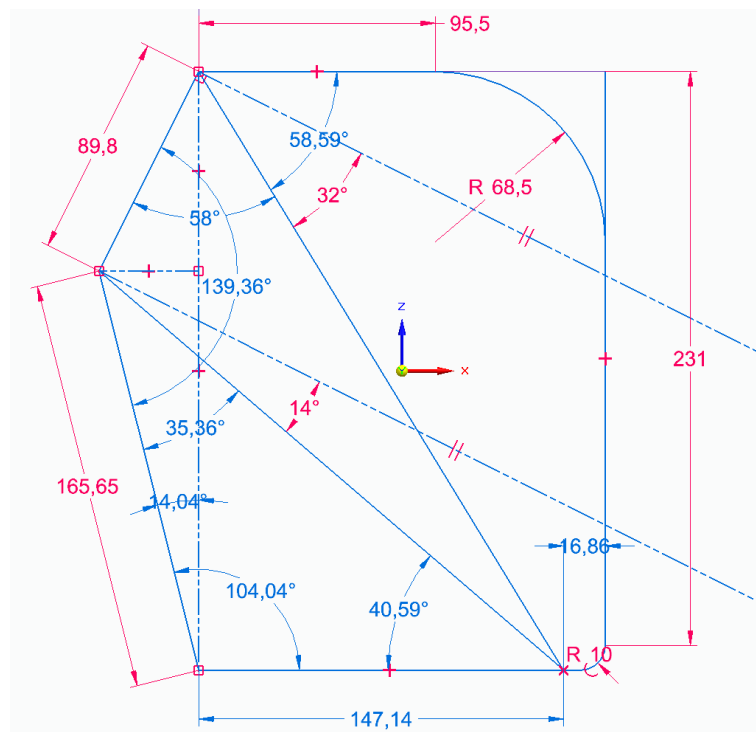
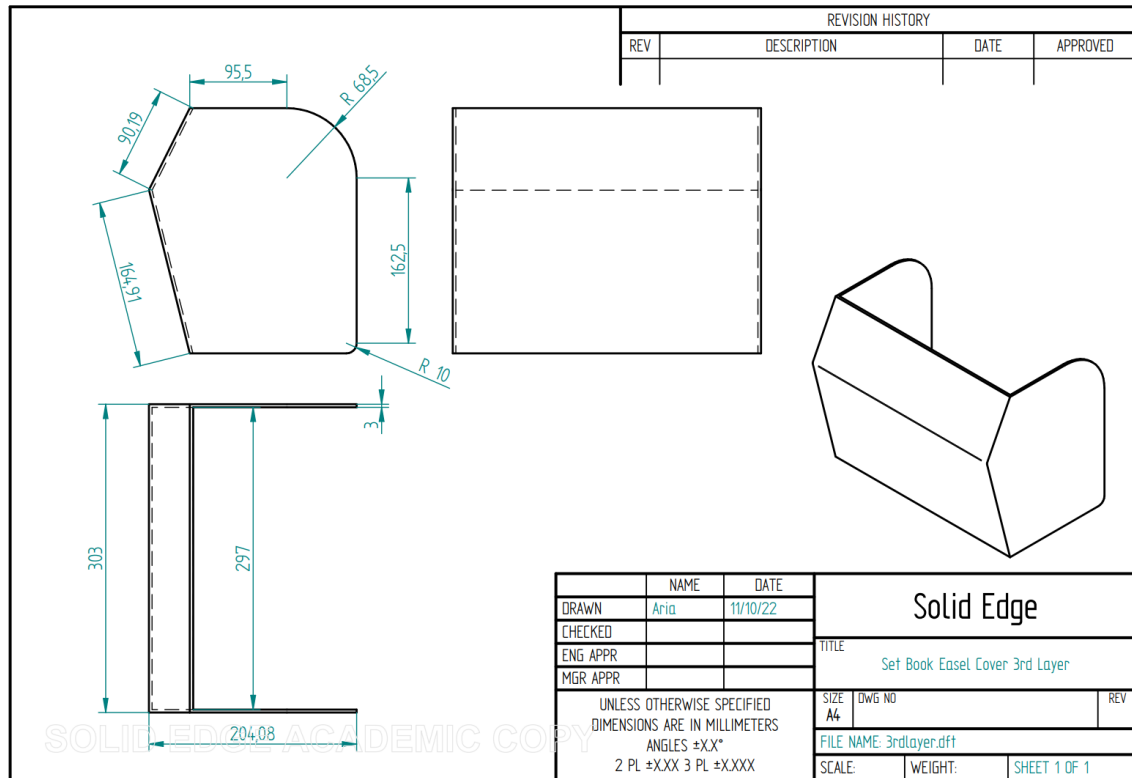


Figure 18: Second Layer Cover Second Version



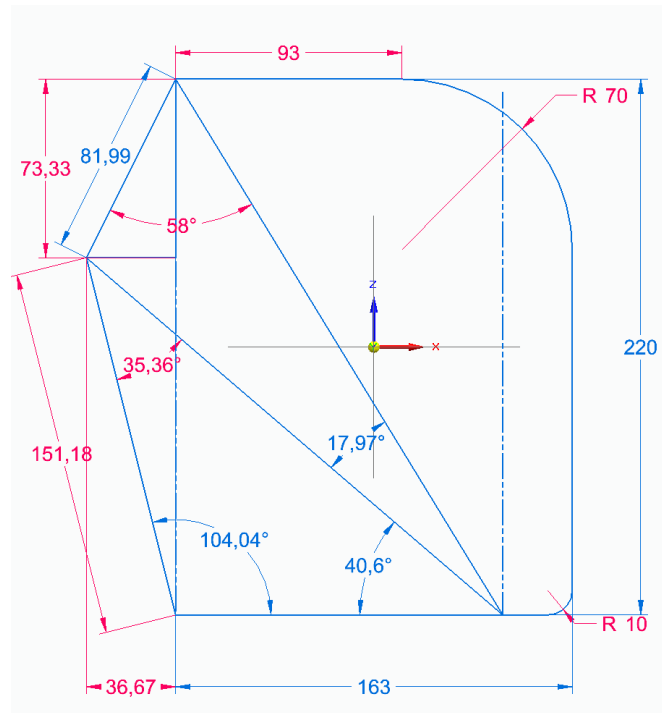


Figure 21: Third Layer Refined Details

This is the bettered attempt at the “falcon” or “origami” like cover that supports the entire structure. As this is quite a difficult folding piece the following images are the breakdowns of how the cover will be assembled as well as how it displays all on it’s own.

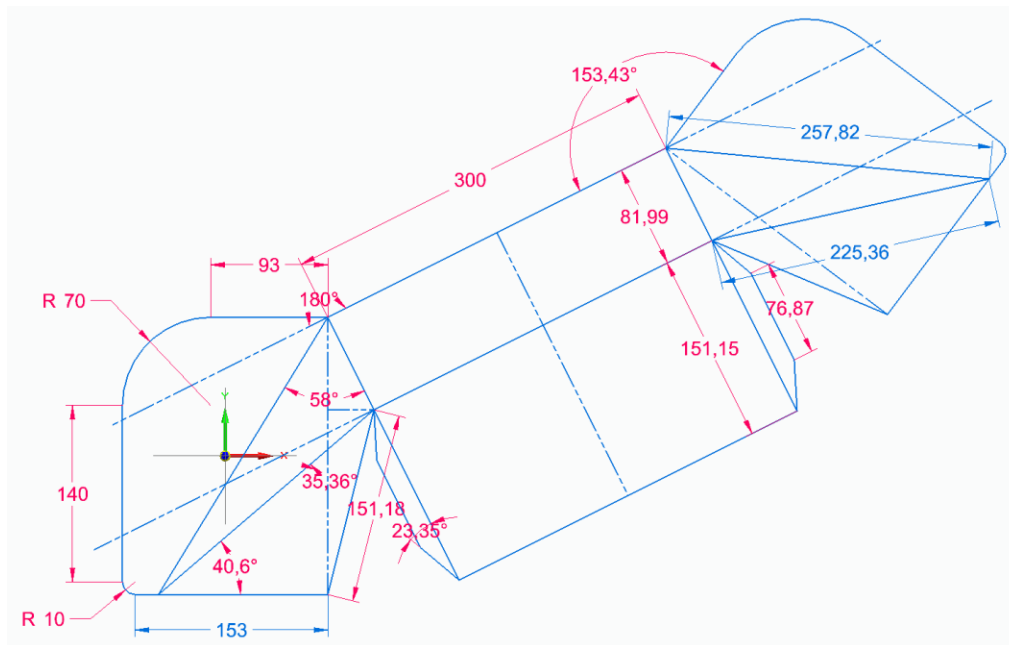


Figure 22: Third Layer Open Layout

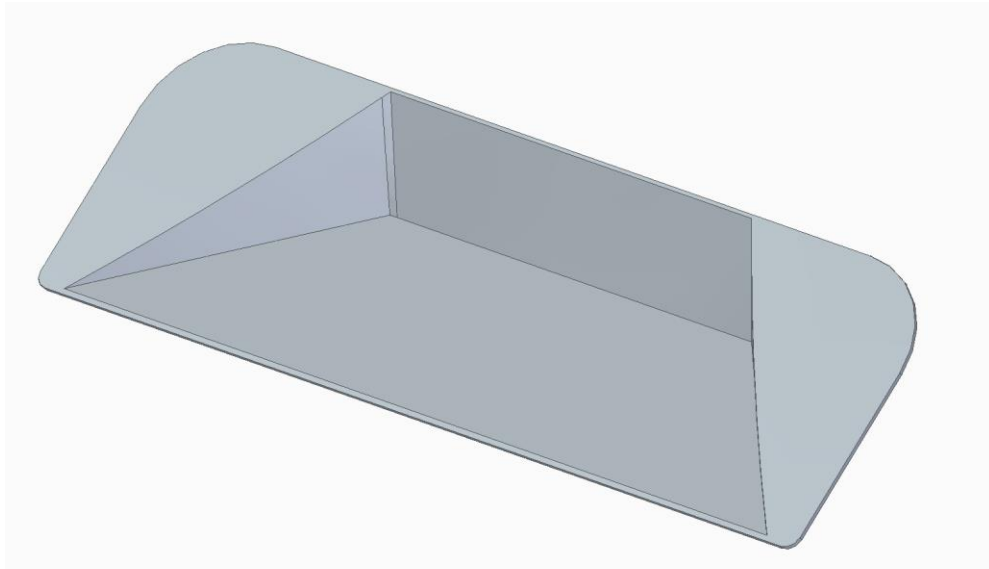


Figure 25: Third Layer Perspective View



Figure 24: Third Layer Side View

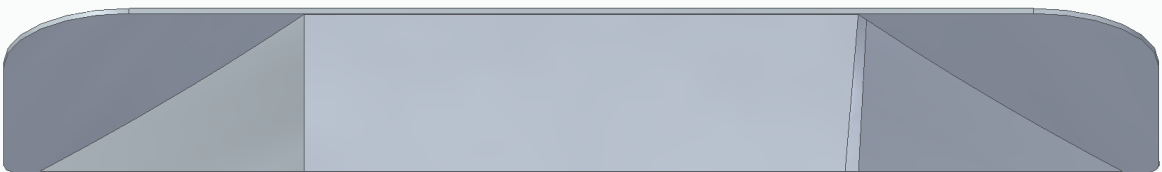


Figure 23: Third Layer Back View

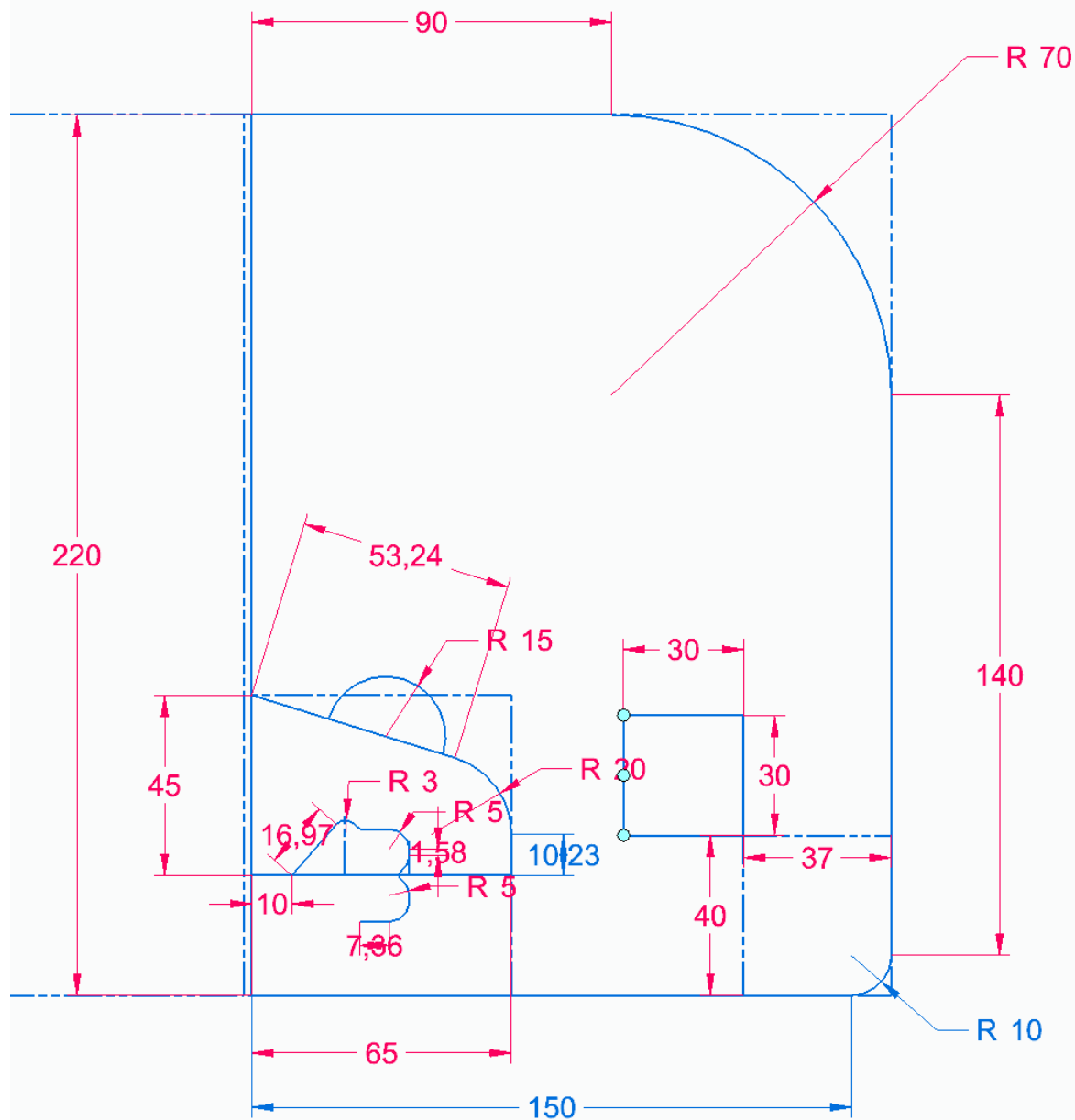


Figure 26: Fourth Layer Technical Drawing

During the process of making various models of the product it came to my attention that the arms of the products kept trying to close due to the pressure of the books themselves, hence the additional layer of the support came about. Through trial and error, having a support that comes out from the same material was the most cost effective, and fit in with the design most seamlessly.

Results



This is the previous version without the arm holders of the product. After much prototyping and development, the final version is in the following photo. It is visible that the much detail could be seen from the rendered visual.

I wanted to encapsulate the warm of a library in the render. The cozy textured atmosphere where the product could shine.

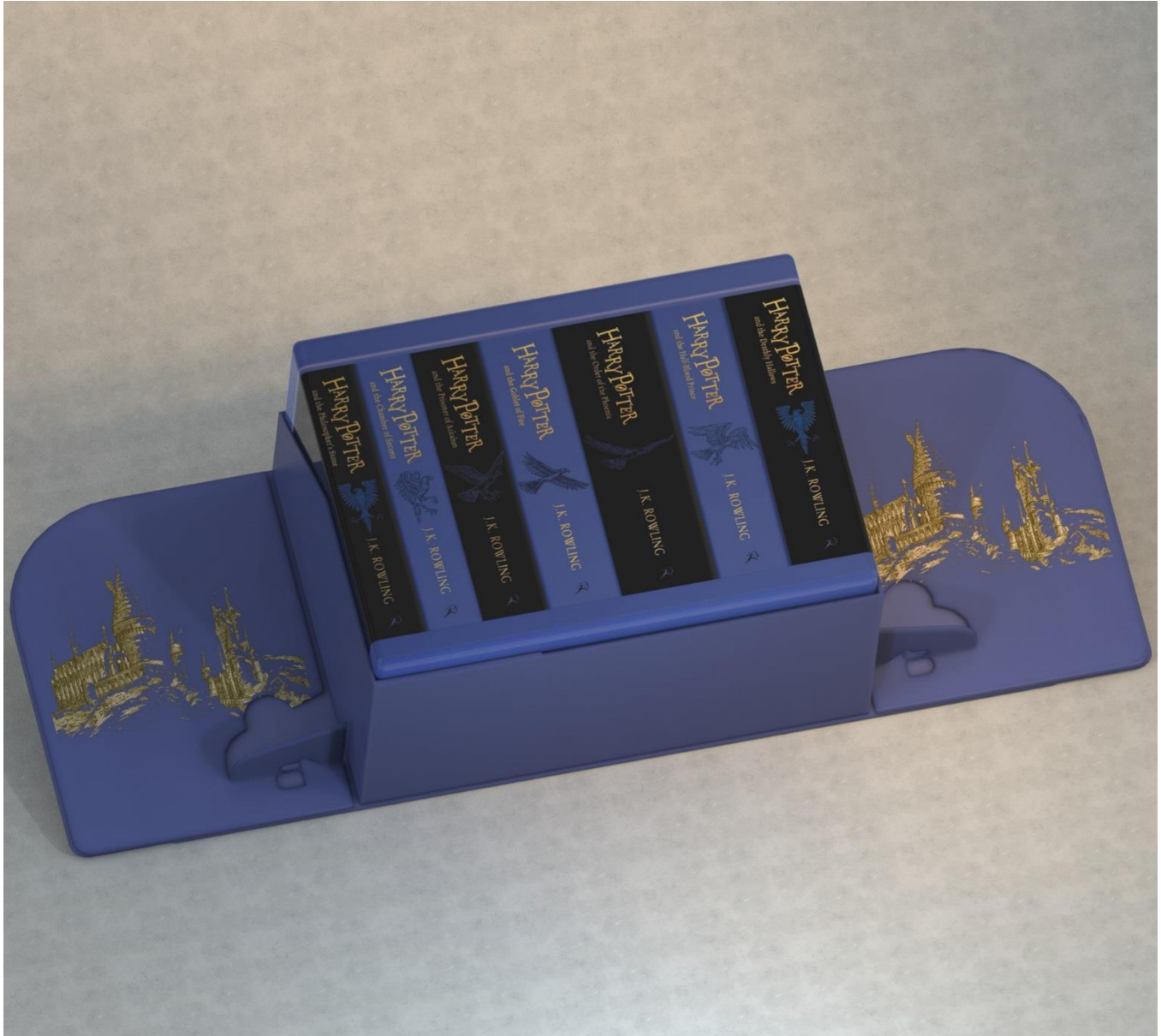


Figure 27: Final 3D Render

The above figure showcases the final rendered look of the set book cover. Taking inspiration from the official Bloomsbury Ravenclaw House Edition set, the iconic Ravenclaw royal blue as well as the luxurious gold accents have been included in the design (bloomsbury.com, n.d.).

7. Discussion

Limitations

Due to the main design being directly inspired by a single design made by Sir Glenn C. Henry, there were scarce information and documentation of his body of work. Furthermore, comparable design forms were insufficient in the media and retail sector for a plentiful search to be conducted. Throughout the research paper, some forms of social media will be cited in the bibliography as they are one of the few recording and documenting's of Henry's designs.

8. Conclusion

Ideas and inspirations can transcend time. From a couple of book covers published in the mid-2000s to a social media content reaching millions of fascinated individuals in awe of Glencraft Products Co.'s product, for which in the future we may be sure to see many more designs of such nature.

As design is a repetitive cycle bettering each time, I too shall better the Set book cover designs and hopefully have a product in the upcoming decade.

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Letterform Archive (@letterformarchive) TikTok | Watch Letterform Archive's Newest TikTok

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<https://www.tiktok.com/@letterformarchive>

Merriam-Webster [@MerriamWebster]. (2022, September 13). @john_overholt *We have one!*

Or, we had one; our Seventh Collegiate, which was based on the 1961 Unabridged. Sad to say they are hard to find. <https://t.co/oWEZ5Om9rr> [Tweet]. Twitter.

<https://twitter.com/MerriamWebster/status/1569743585079336968>

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&type=200&id=5708588&tab=idegennyelvu](https://bookline.hu/product/home.action?_v=Rowling_J_K_Harry_Potter_Ravenclaw_H&type=200&id=5708588&tab=idegennyelvu)