

Bookbinder finds an avenue for her in a dwindling trade

Robin L. Flanigan

With an interest in book design and publishing, Rachael Gootnick studied and later became an adjunct professor at Rochester Institute of Technology, where she had access to the latest trends in the industry.

Yet she felt little connection to the burgeoning digital age, with its electronic readers and iPads, and longed for a job in the more traditional print world.

“Trying to find my niche in a very small industry was difficult,” she said. “I knew I could settle for Web marketing or online publishing, because I have the skills for that, but it wouldn’t have been my passion.”

Through a former colleague, Gootnick met the owner of Booksmart Studio on North Goodman Street, and landed a job as a book production specialist. She’s responsible for book design, printing, hand crafting, and binding limited- and small-edition books.

From helping to choose typefaces and images to hand-sewing the binding and gluing pages, Gootnick feels more invested in a proc-



Rachael Gootnick last week at her home studio in Perinton. She finds satisfaction in book trade. SHAWN DOWD/ STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

RACHAEL GOOTNICK

Age: 24.

Residence: Perinton.

You admit to working in a “failing” industry, so where do you see yourself in 10 years? More and more people will adapt to e-readers and digital publishing, but I think there are going to be people my age and slightly older who will still have an appreciation for print — and I see myself aligning with them. You hear all these stories about how print is going to be dead, but I don’t see that happening. I don’t think it’s going to disappear completely.

ess than simply uploading a file to an online bookmaker. By the way, she still teaches graphic design and print pub-

lishing at RIT, too.

“I’m happy because I know I’m contributing to an industry that is essentially failing,” she ex-

plained. “I know that I’m making a difference, no matter how small it is.” That difference, she added, is evident on the faces of her customers, who are “overwhelmed with happiness” when they cradle their book in their hands for the first time. “If you know what you want to do, you can make your own opportunities,” she said. “You don’t have to let what’s popular or trendy dictate what path you take in life.”

Flanigan is a Rochester-area freelance writer.