

# Turning Over a New Page with Old Books

LABIBA MUSTABINA

Considering that we're still in the first weeks of a new year, there's probably a lot of optimistic folks "turning over a new page" in life. I bet that involves getting more organised, recycling more and all sorts of resolutions. Then again, we barely remember the pages we've literally turned over.

I'm talking about all those hardcover books stacked on your shelf probably since ancient times, turning to debris. If you intend on salvaging what remains of these beloved embodiments of memories and stories, try these out:

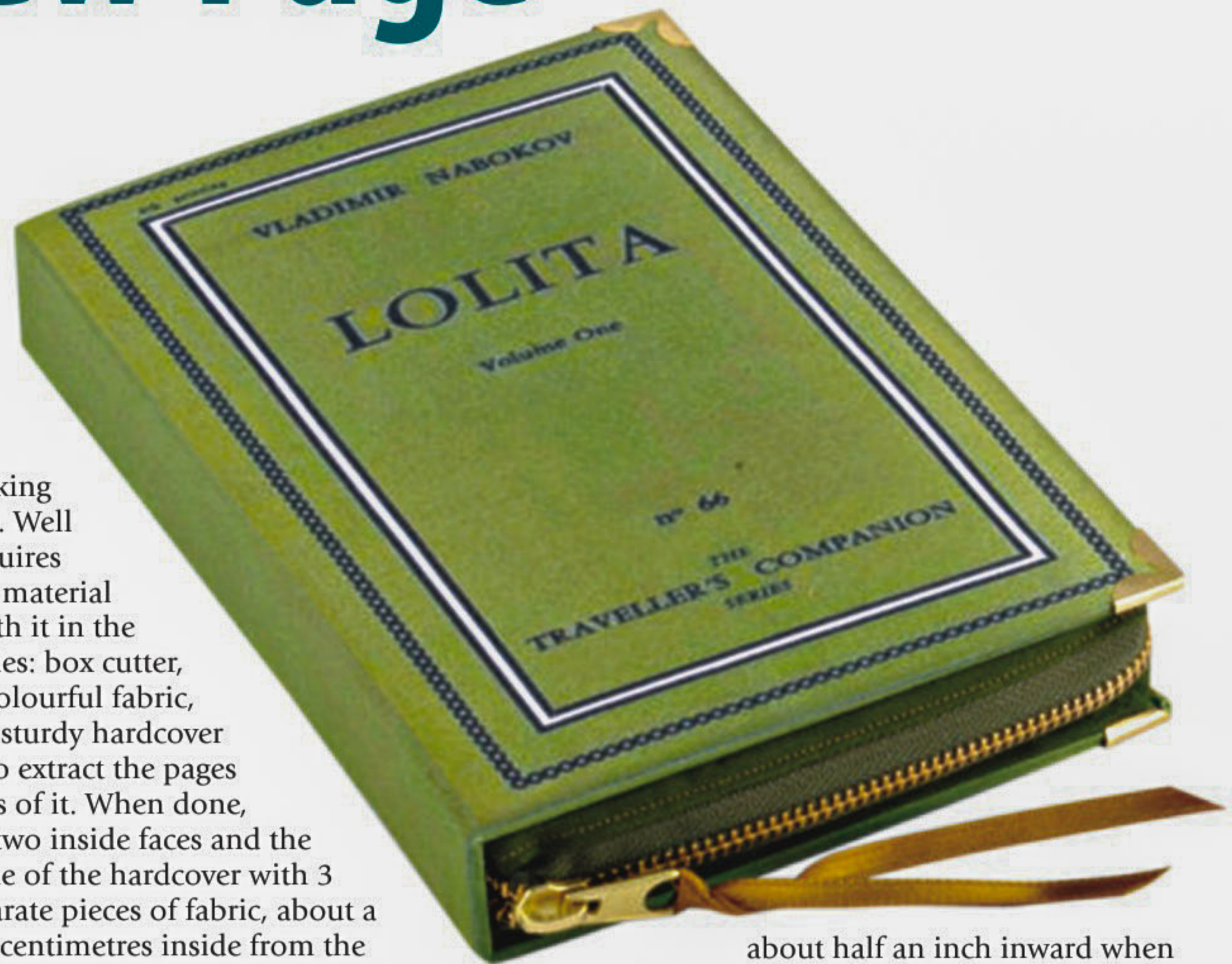
## BOOKMARKS

The easiest part to salvage from a tattered hardcover is the spine. It is a matter of simply cutting out the sides of the hardcover and the remainder of the pages from the book, only leaving the spine. Seal the edges of the spine with some clear tape for finesse, except for leather bound spines which would need a polishing. Create a hole about an inch from the top of the spine and find the most vintage looking ribbon. Sling the ribbon through and secure in a double knot or even a bow if you'd like. Believe me, you wouldn't be able to find a more gorgeous and precious bookmark even if you sought the world for it.



## VINTAGE BOOK CLUTCH

The dreamiest thing to be able to do would be to carry about your favourite book and all the while making a fashion statement with it. Well then, so be it. This DIY requires some patience and a lot of material but rest assured it's all worth it in the end. Gather up your supplies: box cutter, glue gun, 1 yard of thick, colourful fabric, and a zipper. You'll need a sturdy hardcover for this and firstly have to extract the pages



from the bindings of it. When done, cover the two inside faces and the spine of the hardcover with 3 separate pieces of fabric, about a few centimetres inside from the edge. Next, grab a measuring tape and measure around the perimeter of the book on the side that it opens. Cut out 2 strips of fabric, each 4 inches longer than the perimeter and about 2 inches wide. Place the zipper in the centre and sew the two long strips on either side. What you should have now is a long zipper-fabric strip that covers the entire perimeter of the book's open edges.

Now, remember the 4 excess inches we had left on the strip? Laying the book open on its spine, start by hot gluing the excess - 2 inches on each side. Fold

about half an inch inward when continuing to hot glue the strip on one of the inside faces of the book cover. When done, open the zipper up and glue the unglued strip of fabric on the other side of the zipper to the other inside face of the book. You can use 2-inch squares of fabric and hot glue them to the places on the spine where you started and ended gluing the zipper-fabric strip. Let all the glue set and make everyone jealous with one of a kind, bibliophilic style statement.

Labiba Mustabina is a biochemist in the making. A tree hugger, she also claims to be a closet artist. You can reach her at [labiba.wish@gmail.com](mailto:labiba.wish@gmail.com)

# POKA: Promoting organic vegetable production ecosystem

ABU FATEH MOHAMMED ZAKARIA

"Poka" is a Bangla word for insects. It is also the name of a social enterprise initiative taken by three young entrepreneurs. The lead entrepreneur, Md Mehedi Hasan, explained the reason behind choosing the name.

"We belong to a bohemian group of youth and the society perceive us as a burden since people think we can never benefit the society and compare us with insects," he said. There are insects, however, that are friendly for the environment and this project is an example of making positive change in the community through the idea of creating a platform for growing and selling organic vegetables, to help establish an ecosystem for supporting organic vegetable production.

As a social enterprise, "Poka" aims to mitigate health hazards caused by consumption of vegetables cultivated using chemical pesticide. It also intends to decrease environmental vulnerability created by using such chemicals. Another objective was to create access to the market for marginalised farmers who are deprived of their rightful profit. To achieve the target, the group plans to arrange trainings for farmers on how to grow organic vegetables as many farmers lack sufficient knowledge about organic



farming. They are trying to engage government institutes who work for agricultural development. They have initially completed training for young people who will be cascading the lessons to the farmers.

According to plan, they will liaise with chain shops, hotels and hospitals who will buy the organic vegetables grown by the farmers trained from Poka. A marketplace will develop where farmers will be able to sell their products at a fair price. Poka will re-invest a certain portion of

profit generated to expand the network of farmers and buyers. Simultaneously, they will be able to protect the community from health hazards and water, soil and air pollution.

Md Mehedi Hasan, Arfanul Haque and Kazi Mohammed Hasibul Haque participated in a social enterprise competition called "Innovate, Incubate & Grow" (IIG) organised by the British Council. The experience enhanced their confidence and knowledge to start their own. This is

reflected in Hasibul's word as he said, "Our dreams were in bits and pieces but suddenly we solved a jigsaw puzzle and gave it a shape when we stepped on the platform of the IIG programme." It indeed enhanced the social and environmental problem-solving skills of these young entrepreneurs through sustainable business model.

Though Poka initially started work with great enthusiasm, they had to slow down after the ground work. They faced challenge regarding time and fund management. They are holding talks with local organisations to market their products, and the rate of progress has been encouraging. Their community in Jhenaidah, which had initially written them off, now regard them as innovative light bearers for the development of organic farming, and regularly seek advice from them.

Another reason for choosing the name "Poka" was using environment-friendly insects instead of chemicals while farming. Their plan of implementing project of vermicomposting indicates they have done proper justice to this name. As some insects are friends of the environment, these youth are working to make positive changes in the society. Now the people's perception has changed seeing how efficiently they are trying to utilise assets around them.