

The Evolution Of The Page

...that's the page you put you covers on. It's changed quite a bit since the onset of the hobby, thanks to technology. In the dim recesses of time (before RMS), people mounted covers in a variety of ways: glued them in albums, tacked them up on bulletin boards, etc. As the hobby, itself, evolved into a formal organization, more formal standards appeared as "accepted" ways of mounting covers.

Then came the golden age of the 'sewn pages.' I shake my head in admiration for the time and effort collectors spent in hand-sewing pages that would be tailored to their needs (a few people still make them, I understand). Usually, thread was used, but sometimes fishing line and other materials, as well—elastic, for example. The pages were normally much larger than today's pages...large photo album pages or even bigger. The pages, themselves, were heavy construction paper grade. I have several albums with hand-sewn pages, myself, some of which will hold several thousand covers each! The disadvantages of sewn pages, aside from the time and effort required to make them, were that the thread often tears up the sides of the cover as it's being put in or taken out (especially if the cover is in less than perfect condition to start with), the pages become brittle over the years, and the thread commonly breaks with time.

More and more collectors turned to the early commercial matchcover albums that were by then appearing on the scene. Of these, the Beachcraft albums were the most well-known. About the size of 1" 3-ring binders, they house pre-cut pages, that were available in a variety of sizes. The most obvious drawback to the Beachcraft albums and pages was that instead of having 3-rings, the albums had 22! Thus it was basically impractical to use any other pages in those albums, and it was a hassle using those pages anywhere else. Plus, the albums do not hold many pages, the pages became brittle over time, and the problem with all pre-cut pages...they often damage the cover's corners as the cover is being put in or taken out. I have a number of Beachcraft albums that I have been given over the years, and, being the frugal person I am, I still use them.

As an alternative, some collectors tuned to newer photo albums, putting the covers in with pre-gummed photo corners, but the disadvantages with this method soon became apparent as well: time-consuming, the photo corners often fall off, and the photo corners make for 'lumpy' pages. Much later, the even 'newer' self-adhesive photo album pages were tried, but they proved to be very expensive and impractical.

Eventually, club/collector-produced pre-cut pages became the mainstay of the hobby, at least for awhile. Collectors such as Warren Marshall, CA, made their own master cutting dies and took them to a local printer to get their own pre-cut pages made. In Warren's case, he later donated those dies to Sierra-Diablo, and the club sold pre-cut pages for a number of years, as did Long Beach, and a few other sources within the hobby.

Disadvantages: cover corners still got damaged, and no two pages from different sources matched (different colors, different grades of paper, etc.). Also, a big drawback to all pre-cut pages is that once the cover is mounted on the page, you can only see one side of the cover.

The latest page option has proved to be the best—the plastic (polyvinyl) page. There are a few disadvantages to this type of page: the cost is more than double that of the pre-cut, paper page, an album of plastic pages tends to be a very heavy album, and, at least on the earlier plastic pages, they tend to be 'stiff' at cooler temperatures. Still, the advantages are more important.

The polyvinyl page allows the covers to be inserted into individual pockets, not slots, without damage. The covers are then completely covered and protected (Junior may even eat a peanut butter and jelly sandwich directly over your pages with no worry), yet they are completely visible...on both sides! Covers may thus be thoroughly examined by owners and admirers alike without even being touched! There was a brief, initial scare about some plastic pages containing PVC, which could actually damage covers over time, but I don't know of any manufacturers who produce such pages today. Despite the cost, plastic pages quickly became so popular that most sources stopped producing the pre-cut pages. As of this writing, I believe the only source left within the hobby for pre-cut pages is Larry Ziegler, in Canada.

Sources for plastic pages, have increased with their popularity, and today there are several:

- Matchbook Caddy Co., 14262 Suffolk St., Westminster, CA 92683
- Hobbymaster, 221 Yoho Dr., Anoka, MN 55303-1902
- Lin Terry, 59 E. Madison Ave., Dumont, NJ 07268 (201-385-4706)
- Kit Barry, 109 Main St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
- Century Photo Products & Access., 205 S. Puente St., Brea, CA 92621 (1-800-767-0777)
- Lone Star Matchcover Club, ATTN: LaJuan Melendy, 6600 N. Eldridge Pkwy., Houston, TX 77041