

The Case For Plastic Pages

Being on summer vacation, this is the traditional time when I do a lot of work on my collections: going through what's accumulated in the last several months, sorting, seeing what I need and what are dupes, updating my lists, etc. Well, the same thing happened this time that has happened every time I work on my collections—I noticed that some of my covers, especially when being put in or taken out of albums, get damaged. Each time I swear [*politely, of course*] and pledge to do something about it.

Most of my covers are mounted on either the pre-slit pages or on hand-sewn pages...and each tends to damage covers in a different way. The pre-slit (slotted) pages often tear up the corners of the covers where they are inserted into the slot, and trying to get an old cover with a brittle cover into such a page is a dicey situation any way you look at it. When you're sifting through loose covers, and you see those nicks on the sides of the striker, that's where the page's slit has cut into it.

The hand-sewn pages, on the other hand, tend to rip up the sides of the cover as the thread or whatever was used rubs against the sides as the cover is put in or taken out, especially if the apportioned space is a snug fit or if, once again, you're dealing with an older cover that has lost its 'stiffness' and its original slick texture. All those pages are capable of inflicting such damage, although how much and how often depends on what material was used to sew the pages. My Navy Ships, for example, are on pages sewn with very thin (and sharp!) thread. I have to be VERY careful every time I move any of those covers. My Military covers are also on sewn pages, but those pages have been sewn with a much heavier semi-elastic material. They're noticeably easier to work with, but the potential for damaging a cover is always there.

Plastic pages don't do any of this. Although, certainly, you have to be careful when putting the covers into the plastic pockets or taking them out. And, you should always use 'spatula-type' tweezers in any case. There are some drawbacks to plastic, to be sure—a plastic page is heavier than a paper page; hence, your albums are going to be heavier; and, you're not going to be able to fit quite as many plastic pages into that album, because they're thicker. But, to my mind, those are minor considerations compared to ultimately damaging your covers.

The point is, the surrounding plastic *protects* the covers. Plus, unlike the other type of pages, covers here aren't going to fall out, they're not going to get hung up and catch on the adjacent page, and you can handle the pages all you want without actually touching the covers themselves.

And that, boys and girls, is why I, like so many others, having been moving to plastic pages over the last several years. Newer collectors, with smaller collections, can go right to the plastic pages in the first place, or at least make the switch over all at once. I, on the other hand, as a veteran collector [*20 years in the hobby is long enough to qualify as a 'veteran', right?*], with a larger collection, have to do it in stages (because of the cost). My first priority was to put my older treasures in plastic (my DQs, Federals, Crowns, etc.), and now I'm switching my Navy Ships and Military. Then I'll go on to something else.

As plastic pages have become more popular with collectors, more sources have become available, and several of the clubs within the hobby now act as outlets...and...[what a coincidence!] our own dearly beloved Sierra-Diablo is now such a distributor. Doing some quick math, S-D pages are about 25¢ each (not including postage). That's pretty cheap. Plus, they're lighter, making them easier to use than the heavier, stiffer plastic pages. If you haven't made the switch yet, consider S-D pages first!