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## Albums: How Many, What

Although most collectors have switched to plastic pages these days, most still use 3-ring binders to house them, although a lot of us, especially those that have been in the hobby for a considerable time, probably have an assortment of different types of albums...the simple result of what's happened to come our way over the years. 90% of my collection is in 3-ring binders, but at one point I also had about 15 of the old Beechcraft albums, as well as four *huge* oversized albums with hand-sewn pages (each album holding some 5,000 covers!).

And, now that I actually have a couple of hobby rooms with most of my albums lining wall-to-wall shelves, I've become much more aware that my 3-ring binders are a rather shoddy hodge-podge of different sizes, different colors, and different conditions, the latter ranging from other collectors' beat up cast-offs to brand new, I-purchased-them-myself albums. All together, they present a riot of conflicting types, colors, widths, depths, etc. My orderly mind craves uniformity! Someday I'd like to get everything into all-black, 3" 3-ring binders....but those babies aren't cheap!...and I need *a lot* of them!

I remember when I first started seriously looking to buy new binders at my local Staples store a couple of years ago [*a big computer-stationery chain*]. I scanned the shelves, pulled out a nice-looking, black, 3" 3-ring binder, and then went into 'sticker shock' as I noticed it was \$12.98!! *\$12.98 for a binder??* I thought to myself! I kept turning it over in my hand, looking for the manufacturer's label so I could see exactly how much platinum they used to make this binder! *\$12.98 for a binder?? Come on! I bought binders for pocket change all the time when I was in school....well, OK, that was a few decades ago....but \$12.98 for a binder??....and that wasn't even the top of the line!* I did seem to notice that the prices seemed to escalate proportionally with the size, at least for the smaller sizes, starting off with the 1/2" binders for under a dollar. But it also seemed that the buyer was expected to pay a 'premium' for the largest sizes, out of proportion to what was being asked for the others. Granted, there are different price levels even within the same sized binders, depending on whether or not you're looking at the 'deluxe' version (i.e., you can get binders with or without the plastic label holder on the spine). Still, they're expensive!

So, I thought I'd kick the problem around with you, and, since many of you must be experiencing the same dilemma, I made it the topic of an RMS *Insta-Poll* to gather some overall data.

From the information shown on the opposite page, we can see, first off, that although a few collectors don't use albums at all, the great majority do, but that's hardly surprising. And, only one reporting collector still used hand-sewn pages. That left the remaining 58 collectors, or 92%, craving 3-ring binders!



Out of the various sizes of 3-ring binders shown here, the 3" binder (my own particular favorite) was the most popular., with the 2" size coming in second. Apparently the 4" and 5" sizes were either too big or just too expensive to be practical for most. The smaller sizes (1" and 1/2") are certainly being used, but significantly less frequently than

## Kind, And How much?

<u>How Many?</u>	<u>What Kind?</u>	<u>How Much?</u>	<u>From Where?</u>
-As many as possible: 9	-1": 7	-Free: 14 <sup>2</sup>	-Flea markets: 4
	-1½": 8	-.25¢: 10 <sup>3</sup>	-Yard sales: 5
the larger sizes. I've	-2": 14	-.50¢: 9	-Club auctions: 5
always found that the	-2½": 4	-.75¢: 5	-Through work: 8
smaller sizes were just <i>too</i>	-3": 20	-\$1.00: 11	-Swap shops: 1
small to mess around	-4": 10	-\$1.50: 1	-Thrift stores: 5
with, but I suppose they	-5": 1	-\$2.00: 6	-Chain store: 23 <sup>5</sup>
would be ideal for a	-Special: 1 <sup>1</sup>	-\$3.00: 6	-Card shows: 1
collector's very small	-All sizes: 8	-\$4.00: 5	-Hobymaster: 4
categories, and they have	-Hand-sewn: 1	-\$5.00: 4	-Other collectors: 3
the advantage of being	-No albums: 4	-\$6.00: 2	-Secret source: 2
easier to handle. Putting	Any color: 6	-\$7.00: 3	-Specialized stores: 1
such a small collection in	Black: 1	-\$8.00: 3	-Convention freebies: 1
a 3" binder would mean a	White: 2	-\$12.00: 4	-Used office supplies: 8
lot of wasted space... although I get around that problem by simply putting all my ultra-small categories together, housed in 3" albums and labeled as "Small Categories."		-\$16.00: 1	-Jobber/redistributor: 1
		-\$30.00: 1 <sup>4</sup>	

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Most collectors who responded didn't indicate and color preference, but the majority of those who did said that they'd take any color. Other than that, only black and white preferences were mentioned.

Where collectors obtained their binders was interesting. The most common source, by far, was the local chain store (Home Depot, Staples, and the like), but I was surprised by the percentage that got their binders from their places of work (I thought I was rather unique in that regard. It turns out that I'm not!). The "Used office supplies" category referred to 'going-out-of-business' sales, etc. Club auctions, yard sales, and flea markets also proved to be fairly popular outlets.

As far as prices were concerned, the largest number of collectors not surprisingly opted for free albums. How does one get 'free' albums? From work, and from other collectors, for the most part. Also, if you're going for free albums, color, size, and condition have to be secondary concerns. Most of the lower prices noted above were to be found through flea markets, yard sales, and auctions. Once you're probably past the \$1.50 mark, you're probably talking various sized albums from retail stores. Just to get an update on local 3" binders, I stopped off at Staples just as I was writing this—\$11-\$14.

<sup>1</sup>=specialized albums (for full-books, for example)

<sup>2</sup>= most of these came from work (discarded, etc)

<sup>3</sup>=most of the lower prices came from yard sales, flea markets, thrift shops, etc. (used)

<sup>4</sup>=this was for specialized albums

<sup>5</sup>=most said they watch for sales (Staples, Sam's Club, Costco, etc.)