

## Discoloration

Big word...simple problem. Normally, with reference to covers, discoloration refers to parts of the cover's outside surface which have faded due to having been exposed to strong light over an extended period. Once that happens, the cover is ruined.

You run across such covers now and again. One side of the cover is a brilliant blue, while the other side looks bleached out...because the latter side was the side exposed to light.

As with many collectors, I would assume, I have covers all over my house...in closets, under beds, boxes in the utility room, and so forth. In one former bedroom, now converted to a second hobby room, I have some trays set out on top of the bookcases, and those trays are right by the windows. I work with those particular covers perhaps once a week, so that's why I haven't just stored them away. In any event, the loose covers in those caddies and trays would eventually begin to fade because of the outside light coming in.

But, because I'm aware of the potential problem, I take preventive measures. I make sure the blinds are angled so that direct sunlight never falls on those covers; I move the trays and caddies occasionally; and I make sure that all the covers are always face down, so that the outside surfaces don't get *any* of the light. And, I do the same thing in my classroom, for exactly the same reason. I always close the room curtains at the end of the day in order to at least slow down the eventual fading of my bulletin board materials, all the stuff hanging on the walls, etc.

Of course, if I had all those covers packed closely together so that they were standing on their side edges, facing away from the light, I probably wouldn't have any problem, but I have them loose for easy identification and handling.

While sunlight is by far the usual factor causing discoloration, there are certainly other agents to be on guard against. Hmmmmm, let's see....How about the time I spilled a glass of wine all over a nice set of covers from a San Francisco restaurant--*Ruined!--Stained forever!--Discoloration!--Ouch!* [*That was better than the glass of wine I knocked over onto my laptop, though. That one cost me \$\$\$*] [*And, no, I'm not an alcoholic!*]

The main thing here, then, is that it's all just a matter of storage. If you're not going to be using those covers frequently, then they should be stored in such a manner that they're not exposed to sunlight [*or wine!*]. And, that goes for all covers, not just those loose ones. How about the ones you have stored in plastic pages and housed in albums? What would happen if you had been working in one of those albums and had left it open on your desk---in strong outdoor light--for an extended period of time? *Ohhhh, discoloration!* Of course, depending on the amount of light, that might take a week, a month, or whatever...but, again, why take chances?

And, by the way, what would that strong light do to the plastic pages, themselves? I imagine direct sunlight, given enough time, might turn those pages brittle. Yes? No?

I suppose that it's hardly surprising that sunlight could really do all this. After all, we all know what sunlight can do *us* if *we're* out in it too long. *We* begin to discolor!