

## Surface

Ever stop and ponder the various different ways that cover surfaces are finished. No? Well, I can't say that I'm surprised. I suspect that's probably something only we hobby writers would ponder [*we're very big on pondering*].

The normal finish [*we'll call it 'standard'*] for covers, creative innovations aside, has changed over the years with the improvement of technology. Basically, though, we're talking about a flat surface that ranges from either being not shiny at all to shiny [*but not enhanced*]. Today's standard finish is really slick and shiny. But, that's just our starting point...

In the 1930's, companies such as Federal and Match Corp. began applying an additional layer of some liquid to the outside of *some* covers to produce a **glazed** finish. You can see this on a number of Pre-War Military covers, for example. It appears that use of this type of finish only lasted a few years, since Universal apparently had come out with a better process by the late 1930s, resulting in the "Mirro-Gloss" cover.

The Mirro-Gloss finish was accomplished by applying a very thin sheet of plastic over the outside of the cover, producing a very **glossy** finish...much to the bane of collectors...because on many of these covers, as they age and have been handled more and more, that layer of plastic begins to either peel away (usually at the corners, first) or form air bubbles underneath...either way resulting in a damaged cover. Lion Match Co., notably on some of its 30-STICK and 21-FEATURE covers, used a similar process. In much more modern times, Universal, Lion, and Diamond, among others, produced the same glossy result without that layer of plastic. I currently have 1,991 of the Mirro-Gloss covers, so this wasn't some short-lived, rarely seen phenomenon.

Also around the late 1930's, the **metallic** finish was introduced. Here, as the name suggests, the cover 'appears' to be made out of metal. Although not popular today as a collecting category (although I've never understood why--perhaps because of the notable absence of nice graphics), they were certainly popular with advertisers, as the varieties of metallic covers abound and the covers, themselves, tally in the thousands, I'm sure. As you would expect, they were produced mainly in the gold and silver versions, but there are certainly other colors to be seen here, as well. This type of finish also has a serious drawback for collectors. If one can manage to find specimens in pristine condition, they're pretty flashy covers. However, *because* of the finish, the ones that *aren't* pristine tend to show every crease, bend, and wrinkle.

Then we have **raised-ink**, an innovation which goes back at least to the 1930's, as well. In this type of finish, the text, graphics, or both, are done with extra ink, thus raising that text or graphic to produce what in effect is a 3-D cover. I ignored such covers for most of my collecting career, but they can actually be extraordinarily beautiful covers--those brilliant silver designs against a black background, for example--and so [*yes, I'm afraid so*] I've started collecting them, myself. The raised-ink most commonly comes in the silver and gold metallic colors, but it can be seen in any colored ink. I don't have any reported stats on this type, but they number in the thousands, definitely!

The rest of the finishing variations that I can think of are all of much more recent vintage--Foilite, Jute, Uniglo, Filigree, Florentine, Satin, and Pearltone. "**Foilite**" was Universal's trademark for its foil-printed covers, where text or graphics were printed in dazzling metallic foil in a variety of covers. The Foilite was introduced in 1964, but it wasn't long before competing manufacturers jumped on the band

# Finishes

wagon and began producing Foilite-like covers, themselves. There were 11,676 listed as of 2001 (Foilites), and Verna Troxel, WA, reported having 7,000 in her collection back in 1993.

**Cameo**, another Universal trademark, first appeared in 1965. Here, the surface was debossed (the design and/or text depressed) into the cover. This proved to be a very popular 'Fancy'. 7,497 listed as of May 1983. (No one's maintained the list since then)

**Embossed** covers were the opposite of debossed, featuring a raised design/text from the inside being pushed up; this is also a very large category; Mel Garrett's, KS, collection numbered 12,210 in 6/93.

The **Filigree**, another Universal creation, was distinctly different from the standard finish of covers. Appearing in 1969, it featured a raised, plastic-bubbled surface, giving the cover a pebble-like texture when you run your finger over it. The normal pattern of the bubbled surface was no pattern at all. This is also a large category. Helen Hollmann, PA, had 10,104 as of July 2005.

Yet another Universal finish was the **Florentine**, a cover that featured a design pattern enhanced, usually by raised-ink, but there are some Florentines that are Filigrees. These latter covers feature the distinctive and very definite Florentine patterns, but the patterns here are not done with raised-ink, but rather the Filigree bubbling. I have a number of examples in my own collection. John Williams had 165 listed waaaaaaaaay back in 1993, but Everett Hoy, OH, had already reported having 300 as of October 1988. I've been picking up Florentines for some 25 years, and I don't even have half that number!

The **Uniglo** was something *really* different! This was Universal's trademark for its covers with a deep, oily texture. It was a pretty radical departure from the standard finish. First appearing in 1972, they were very popular with customers and collectors alike. Diamond later produced its own version, but it was never as nice as the real thing. In 1985, as a cost-cutting measure, Universal came out with the Uniglo II, a thinner, cheaper version. Dorothy Fry had 10,830 listed as of May 2009.

And Universal certainly wasn't finished. The company introduced the **Satin**, which also goes back to the 1970s, since I have front-striker examples. The Satin finish consisted of satin threads (or-satin-like threads) covering the outside, giving the cover a cloth-like appearance. They were particularly popular on Christmas covers. The downside is that a significant number of such covers eventually have some of the threads begin to pull away from the surface...producing a pretty ratty-looking cover. I have 1,038, but that figure includes Satin-like covers from other manufacturers, as well.

**Pearlton** was actually a Superior Match Co. trademark for its covers with fine horizontal ridges running the width of the cover [*not to be confused with Satin*], but I don't know anyone who collects in this category who actually restricts himself to *just* the Superior covers. Universal, and perhaps a couple of the other companies, also produced Pearlton types, and collectors normally just lump them all together. Claude Aube's, CAN, collection numbered 478 in October 1987.

The latest, and I believe the last, innovation in surface finishes was the **Jute**. I'm not sure if that name comes from Atlas, the producer, or from the hobby. It describes covers that feature a recycled paper, shopping bag-type appearance; often used in conjunction with foil text or designs. As a color, they're almost exclusively a shopping bag brown, and never shiny, but I do have a few examples of other colors. There were 257 listed as of 2001. [*pics don't show surface finishes...hence, no pics!*]