

Paper vs. Plastic

Plastic pages began appearing in the hobby in the late 1980s. By the early 2000's, they had supplanted the hobby's traditional reliance on paper pages, especially slotted paper pages since, by then, very few collectors were still making hand-sewn pages anymore.

Even today, though, *both* paper and plastic pages still abound within the hobby, and, based on an RMS *Insta-Poll* most collectors currently have their collections housed in a combination of both. Obviously, each must have its own advantages and disadvantages.

After staring at a plastic page for a couple of minutes, the chart to the right shows all the advantages and disadvantages I could think of.

Paper pages cost less, which is a bid advantage in itself. They're thinner, which means you can fit more pages in an album. They're available in more cover sizes than plastic pages (i.e., 10s, American Ace, etc.). Most paper pages are slotted to exactly fit the particular size of cover, hence a better fit, whereas the pockets in 30s and 40s size plastic pages are too big for the covers. Paper pages are also lighter weight, which in turn means the album is lighter.

<u>Paper</u>	<u>Plastic</u>
+Cheaper	+Transparent
+Thinner	+Easier mounting
+More sizes	+More protective
+Better cover fit	+Less mounting damage
+Lighter weight	-Pages stiffen in cold
-Not made anymore	

Plastic pages are transparent, allowing both sides of a cover to be seen (as long as only one cover is in a pocket. And, it's soooooo much easier to slide the cover into the plastic pocket rather than fit it into the slots of a paper page, and that eliminates most of the danger of damaging your covers. Obviously, those plastic pockets also afford more protection for your covers, as well (although initially there was a PVC scare associated with plastic pages, that's certainly not a problem these days [if it ever *was* a problem]).

An annoying problem with plastic pages, however (just because they're plastic) is that they stiffen up in cold weather. If you don't happen to keep your hobby room, storage area, or whatever, heated in the winter, you're in for a surprise! That's one of the reasons I stopped using Matchcover Caddy pages. They're too thick and heavy to begin with...and all the worse when they're cold.

Although, numerically, paper pages seem to have the most advantages, most collectors would agree that plastic pages offer the *bigger* advantages. Still, perhaps the most important disadvantage of paper pages is that they're simply not made anymore. But...they're still available as *used* pages. And, if you *are* going to opt for the paper pages, now's the time to get them as more and more collectors switch over to plastic. Just ask around; you'll also see them advertised from time to time.

There are several makes of plastic pages to be had today that are available from various commercial outlets. Personally, I recommend Bettervue pages, available from Wayne Eadie, 38 Fairmount Rd., Goldens Bridge, NY 10526 914-232-7247 eadieenterprises@gmail.com. I should point out, however, that I haven't examined every type of plastic page that's out there.

In closing, as a rule for both paper and plastic pages, they fit 8 20s to a page (1 side), 6 30s to a page, and 4 40s to a page, but I have seen plastic pages with 10 20s pockets, for example, so there are some variations available.