

## Housing Your Collections Economically

Most collectors aren't particularly wealthy, so I thought some suggestions on how to house your collection more economically might be of some interest, especially since I've faced the problem, myself.

Of course, the most economical method of housing your covers would simply be to stack them in boxes and put the boxes in some out-of-the-way place, such as the garage. But, that doesn't work for a variety of reasons. For one thing, your covers won't last long if you're continually digging them out of boxes and pawing through them, as you'd invariably have to in order to find certain covers, match up what you have with what you've recently acquired, etc. And then, the collector in all of us wants those covers easily accessible, logically organized, and nicely displayed if possible. The problem is...to do so is usually prohibitively expensive, both in terms of cost and space.

It's certainly a matter of dollars and cents. Take plastic pages, for example. They're just too expensive to house all but smaller collections. If you have 20,000 or 30,000 covers...OK. But the average-sized collection (that's all your categories together) is over twice that number. The July/August 2007 Insta-Poll showed an average of 66,823, at least for the some 100 collectors participating in the survey. Even figuring only 20-strike pages, that works out to 4,176 plastic pages. At some \$15 per pack of 50, that's \$1,253...just for plastic pages.<sup>1</sup> And the chances are that you're not just going to need 20-strike pages, but 30s and 40s, as well, which hold fewer covers and, thus, would increase the overall cost even further. And there are a good many collectors who have well *over* 66,000 covers. What are you going to do if you have 100,000, 300,000, 500,000+ covers? Are you going to put them *all* in plastic pages? Not hardly!

Even if you use paper pages, which are considerably less expensive than plastic, almost all collectors inevitably put those pages in 3-ring binders, and *those* quickly add up to a pretty penny, as well! Say you have those 66,823 covers, and, like me, you want them in 3" binders. That's approximately 1,100 covers per album,<sup>2</sup> which means you'd need some 61 albums at \$10.98 each<sup>3</sup> for a grand total of \$720.01.<sup>4</sup> Ouch!

Just as important as cost is the matter of space. Where are you going to put those 61 binders? That's at least a couple of walls' worth of shelving space. In my own case, I've managed to fill two hobby rooms, a utility room, several closets, the cabinets in the study, under the bed, and a good part of the garage. What do you do if you don't have the room? How many times do we hear of collectors either down-sizing or liquidating their collections altogether because they've moved into smaller quarters?

Well, there *are* compromises that you, as a collector, can make here that will significantly ease the problems noted above. You can lessen your financial costs and required space while at the same time meeting your basic collecting needs, both practical and personal.

For example, even though I'd like to put all my covers in plastic pages, it's not practical for me, so I *purposely* put some categories in plastic, some in paper, and some in boxes or trays, according to how I prioritize them. Since it's normally the older covers that get damaged by the slotted paper pages (because those covers are thicker and often softer or have brittle strikers), all of my Oldies categories automatically go into plastic. By the same token, my categories that are made up of exclusively newer covers (such as Uniglos, Matchtones, Matchoramas, etc.) can go into paper pages. Such a compromise not only saves money, but allows you to maximize the resources you already have on hand. I.e., instead