

Making Your Own Albums

You know, in the o-o-o-o-l-d days [*long before I was around*], many collectors used to make their own albums (covers and pages). Most collectors today run across examples of hand-sewn pages from time to time. I do, and it never ceases to amaze me to think of all the time, effort, and patience that such work took (actually, I know of at least a couple of contemporary collectors who still doggedly carry on that tradition). But, with the advent of the slit, or pre-cut, page, the practice has just about died out. But, that shouldn't stop you from considering making your own albums. After all, what is an album? A front and back cover with a bunch of pages in between! You could handle that.

But, first things first. Why would you *want* to make your own albums in the first place? Well, on a practical level, it's cheaper, and it lets you tailor your albums to your specific needs. For example, I have some 4,500 Elks covers in my collection. Ordinarily, that would mean that I would have to house them in several three-ring binders, but I opted for a custom made album, and now they're all housed in one. On a more altruistic level, making your own albums lets you be more creative and gives you the opportunity to follow up on all those little ideas that have occurred to you about what albums should have and shouldn't.. And, there are a variety of approaches you might be interested in taking: 1) you could make both the covers and the pages, yourself; 2) you could make the covers and buy the pages; or 3) you could buy the covers and make the pages [*of course, you could also just buy everything, but then you wouldn't be making your own albums, so I'm leaving that option out!*].

If you're going to opt for buying the covers, you're most probably going to get a three-ring binder. They're fine; they open easily, are convenient, and fit neatly onto shelves for easy storage or display. The big disadvantage of binders, however, is that they're limited in the number of pages they can hold. Many of mine are "wedge-shaped" because I have too many pages crammed into them. Why? Because you invariably reach a point where the collection has to spill over into another album and you don't have another matching album to add (another disadvantage...*or is that just a personal hang-up I have? My albums have to match!*).

If you're going to make your own, you have a lot more freedom. I'm thinking especially of the "photo album" type which has completely removable covers. They're either tied together with cord going through the holes in the sheets or fastened together with special elongated screws. This type of album is usually quite larger than the binder type and is odd-sized, so they're probably not going to fit on shelves (I have three that are 14"x26" and hold 7,000 covers each!). Indeed, although this is a disadvantage in storing such albums, the advantage of this type of album is that since the front and back covers are not permanently joined, the resulting album is expandable...to the point where you can't lift it any more!

It's easy to make your own covers. All you need are two pieces of hard cardboard which you can then cover with whatever you want (decorative paper, shelving paper, vinyl, etc.). A hardware store can furnish you with the elongated screws if you've decided not to use cord for the binding. Since you're using your own creative talents, here, the sky's the limit. You can do all sorts of things: beautiful labels, decorative borders, etc.

If you like to keep track of how many covers you have in each of your collections, just affix a page to the inside front cover of the first album in each collection and note the total number of covers for that collection on that tally page. Then, each time you add covers to that collection, you can easily note the new total there. Remember, also, that you'll have to crease the front cover so that it will open easily.