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Photographic Materials and Albums

Most philatelists have photographs, slides, negatives, and related photographic items. Most materials used for storage, especially plastics, have been discussed previously.

Some of the commercial albums available over the past few years have been a disaster to those who used them. Soft, plasticized PVC (polyvinyl chloride) is still made into products and sold as ideal for photographic storage, although it has been condemned for decades as a proven unsafe material. Phthalate plasticizers migrate from PVC and form yellow oily droplets on slides. Slides and films stored in PVC pockets or enclosures will have a waxy film on their surface. These are carboxylate salts of a type used as heat stabilizers in PVC.

Avoid using so-called "magnetic albums," which are adhesive-coated pages wrapped in a plastic cover. The adhesive coating will, over time, develop permanency. Since some photographic materials are alkaline-sensitive, it is advisable to use neutral pH rather than buffered storage material for storing photographs.

Other materials commonly used in conjunction with photographic albums but which are to be avoided by the philatelist include: cellophane adhesive tapes, white glues, rubber cement, ballpoint pens, typewriting on photos or valuable papers, paper clips, and rubber bands. All are potentially harmful to philatelic materials.

Polyester film (Mylar or Melinex), available in rolls or prepared folders, sleeves, and envelopes, is a recommended material. Covers and postcards with media such as charcoal, chalk or pastel should not be stored in Mylar or Melinex since the polyester film can pick up and hold an electrostatic charge. These media may offset onto the polyester film as a result.

Today, we notice vast improvements in the use of acid-free materials in photographic albums. Because of the use of better materials, the price of albums has escalated. The public has become aware of the harmful effect that materials do to their photographs. As a result, manufacturers are striving to provide more acceptable **merchandise**.