



Displaying Your Collection

The ISCA Getting Started Collecting Series

You have finally accumulated an impressive collection, but it sits at home unseen and unappreciated. Taking the time to display your collection is not only personally rewarding, it will generate interest and enthusiasm in the hobby as well.

You will want to take care in how you mount and display your collection. After all, it took a lot of hard work, time and resources to acquire everything and you don't want to ruin your investment. Do not use staples, pins, glue, cellophane or masking tape to mount your patches as you run the risk of staining or marking them. Keep your displays out of the sun if possible, as prolonged exposure to the sun will bleach the colors out of most things and make paper items yellow and brittle. Be aware of your surroundings and the impact they may have on your display. For example, having your display boards resting on the dirt, or near food, or too close to traffic where someone might accidentally kick them is a bad idea. Look for a table or wall space where you can mount your display at eye level. Create easily readable labels to mark each item in your display, and remember to add an overall title or theme, as well as your name. You may also want to take some space to post a short paragraph describing the collection so people can read and learn about your display. Once you have your display up, always keep your eye on it. Theft is not a major problem at Scouting events, but it does occasionally happen, so it is prudent to be watchful.

The most professional looking displays are those in large aluminum sectional frames with Plexiglas, but these can get quite expensive. Look for sales, or discarded poster frames at work or school. When mounting your patches, add some colored paper or felt for a nice uniform background that will complement the colors of the patches in your display. The thickness of the mounting board against the Plexiglas will often keep the patches in place, but if you need a little tape to keep them from slipping, consider putting a piece of water based, acid-free, low-tack tape like Filmoplast P90 on the back, then using double-stick tape between that and the mounting board. If you have an especially fragile or valuable patch made of silk or felt that might be ruined by a piece of tape, put the patch into an archival plastic sleeve or holder first, then use the double-stick tape to hold it in place.

A less expensive alternative to the sectional frame is to use standard 24" x 36" poster size frames. (European size will be 70 x 100cm.) A *very* inexpensive option is to use a piece of foam core board or cardboard from a discarded refrigerator box. Cut it to the size you want and cover it with adhesive shelf paper for a neutral background. Mount your patches on the board, and then cover the entire board with clear vinyl sheeting (8-12g) that can be found

in any fabric-yardage store. Wrap the plastic neatly around the front and tape it closed in the back. This method also works well for showing and protecting felt pennants.

If you would like to display a three-dimensional object such as a medal or pocket knife, use a foam cushioned shadow box display case similar to the BoxWare cases available from Streamwood. You can also use professional display cases with a hinged glass top where large items such as books, canteens, first aid kits, etc. can be arranged for viewing.

You've been wanting to display your collection, but it isn't complete yet, so . . . So what? Show what you have and leave a space for the missing item. By displaying your collection even when it's incomplete, you increase the chances of someone discovering that they can help you out by filling in the hole. Even when you think you have a complete collection, you may be surprised to find a person approach you saying, "I have one that you don't have in your collection." If you didn't take the time to display your items, you never would have found out about the missing piece.

Where should you show your displays? Trade-O-Rees are the natural place, but there are many other opportunities to provide exposure for your special items. Think about bringing your display to district roundtables, district or council dinners, the Scout-O-Rama, summer camp, OA lodge functions, OA conclaves, county fairs, and the local city or county historical museum.

-- David Miura