

22 Mar 04

## Protecting paper documents in wet weather

History shows in times of long-term emergency situations, reference written information dives out of site. In wet weather books and paper begins to rot and fall apart so they get burned to cook with or to keep warm. We observe that things written in stone or on walls of caves tend to last the test of time. Nothing else lasts. If one engraves the information in copper or stainless steel then someone comes and uses it for cooking or armor as being more important. Digital information will only last as long as power and the computer can be kept working. Some tribes will resort to memorization and story telling as a way to keep the data alive. This has the disadvantage of alteration (changing the message) with time.

So how does one preserve the necessary reference materials to keep the next generation somewhat educated? Most of our important information is in the form of printed-paper. Will we spend the time to transcribe it to stone tablets? No. So the only alternative for right now is to selectively protect the printed-paper. How can this be done easily, practically and cheaply?

I recently found an item I feel is worth sharing. The rest of the items listed are typical of what is available.

Low's home improvement stores have a product sold in their carpet department that is used as a temporary protection for use on top of carpets. It is clear and has self-adhesive on one side. It feels like a clear Vinyl plastic. It comes in 24' by 50' (100 sq. ft.) and sells for \$11.93 a roll (\$.12/sq. ft.). Being wider and cheaper than what is sold in office stores I believe this to be the best alternate for maps (especially topographic) that are typically 22 inches wide. A bit tricky to apply when this big, but once on it is thin and flexible enough that the map can still be folded.

Office stores sell a 16'x10' roll of self adhesive clear plastic for lamination

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for \$11.00 or (\$.82/sq.ft.). This is harder to fold and doesn't fit the most common map size but would work for some things.

If one has 8.5"x11" as a common size then the cheapest way to go is to purchase economy "Sheet Protectors" at a price of between \$8.00 and \$12.00 per 100 sheets. These can be made near waterproof by taping closed the open end with scotch tape. Comparable cost is between \$.062/sq. ft. to \$.092 /sq. ft. In this case maps would be cut up to 8.5x11 size.

The only other viable alternative is 9"x12" self-adhesive clear lamination sheets that sell for \$21.00 for 50 sheets. This is \$.56/Sq. Ft.

Summary, if cost is an issue then stay with "Sheet Protectors" and for large sheets use the Vinyl carpet protector.

If one has books that will need to be protected then two possibilities exist. Cut it up and use "sheet protectors" or spray it with a fast drying clear sealer. Each two pages would need to be sprayed and let dry, possibly under a heat lamp to make the process faster.

Anyone else have any workable ideas on this subject?