



Dear Dr. Book

Dear Dr. Book,

I have a sizable collection of maps that I use when I hike the Rocky Mountain backcountry. My maps always take a beating and are now getting very ragged. Is there a way to protect my new maps from damage and to repair my old maps? Thanks!

A Rocky Mountain Hiker

Dear Rocky Mountain Hiker,

Lamination and encapsulation can protect your maps during trips to the mountains or for home storage. Both methods are appropriate for folded or rolled maps. However, it is important to know the differences between the two techniques.

Lamination is an excellent method to use on a map that is handled frequently. Lamination is the direct application of clear plastic to one or both sides of a paper document. Driver licenses and identification cards are commonly laminated. The major disadvantage is that the adhesive is *permanent!* The plasticized covering cannot be removed without damaging the document. A map that is valuable or hard to replace should never be laminated; make a copy of the map and laminate the copy. If the laminated copy is damaged, it can be replaced with another copy while the original map remains pristine.

Encapsulation is a more preservation-friendly method of protecting your maps. Encapsulation is the enclosure of a document between two sheets of clear, inert film. The edges of the film are sewn, welded, or held together with double-sided tape. The film does not adhere directly to the map, and the printing on the map will not be transferred to the film. The map is easily removed from the enclosure through careful cutting in the space between the film edge and the map. Any map of the same size can be reinserted in the enclosure and the edges can be resealed. The most commonly used film, Mylar, is available at art supply stores. You might construct several Mylar envelopes to fit common map sizes and simply insert your map of choice for each hiking trip. Copying the original map and encapsulating the copy is still a good option.

Taking into consideration the pros and cons of the two techniques, you can use either of them on your brittle, fragile and/or damaged maps. The map will not be damaged further and will not need additional repairs. Even a map in several sections can be encapsulated as the static charge within the enclosure keeps the map pieces in order.

When buying new maps for your collection, look for those that are divided into sections and encased with a plasticized material. These maps are easily folded to show the desired area and are protected against moisture and grime. I have seen state maps constructed in this manner.

For information on preservation topics, please write to "Dear Dr. Book" in care of the *University Libraries Newsletter*, Colorado State University Libraries, Fort Collins, CO 80523 or visit the Libraries Preservation Services Web site at: <http://lib.colostate.edu/preserv/>.

