

Preparing reference material

As modelers we often spend many hours on the preparation and building of our models in an effort to finish them to the best possible standard that we can, in the hope that we have produced a prize winning competition entry. Quite often this process will have involved a considerable amount of research, especially when we want to recreate a particular subject or scene. With the advent of the Internet we now have a resource that not only enables us to access the relevant subject matter, but it also allows us to collect large amounts of reference material in the process.

For most of us the ultimate goal is just to be able to complete our model, however, it is at this point that we should also look at the reference material we have gathered and consider the most appropriate way to present it. Especially if the intention is to enter the model into a competition. From my own personal experience, most modelers don't place enough emphasis on preparing their accompanying reference material and as a consequence, it is often insufficient to either assist or influence the judge's decision. Unfortunately, we are also seeing a new trend emerging amongst some modeling club competitions where reference material is either no longer required or even accepted. Whether this is just a change in the way they are judging their competitions or has been brought about because modelers have not put enough effort into preparing their reference material in the past, is unknown. However, it is reassuring to know that there are still enough competitions around where reference material, as part of the judging criteria, is still required.

At most competitions models are usually judged on five standard criteria – Construction, Attention to Detail, Finish, Accuracy to Reference and Realism. Although 'Accuracy to Reference' only constitutes 10% of a model's overall score this does not mean that the emphasis on preparing good reference material should be ignored. More often than not it is only a few points that separates 1st, 2nd and 3rd place and it is often the reference material that has been provided, which has influenced the judge's final decision. Therefore, in comparison to the amount of time we spend on building and finishing our models, the time spent on preparing good reference material should be seen as an easy 10 points, especially as it could make all the difference at a competition.

So how do you go about preparing your reference material?

The first step is to identify what reference material must be provided, such as the instruction sheet for the kit and those for any other after market products such as etched metal, resin and decals. The next step is to then decide what additional reference material should be provided, remembering that this will assist with the judging of your model and should have the potential to influence the judge's decision. This reference material may consist of artwork, profiles or photographs as well as any notes or brief descriptions. Wherever possible though this should be provided in a manner that is simple and easy to follow and should not just consist of a pile of books placed onto the table next to your model. Once all of the appropriate reference material has been identified it is then essential to look at how you are going to present it, so that it contains all of the relevant information and will be easy for the judges to follow. Quite often I have seen modelers turning up at a competition with their models in one hand and large amounts of reference material in the other. This reference material will usually consist of the requisite instruction sheets, numerous books with appropriately marked pages and possibly some hand written or typed sheets containing notes on additions or modifications. Unfortunately though, this

material is often provided with little thought to presentation and with the attitude that, 'the more reference material I provide the better my chances'. However, no amount of reference material will ever guarantee you a placing at a competition and when reference material is provided in this manner it is often difficult for the judges to interpret or understand, making the task of judging your model all the more difficult.

So how much reference material should you provide?

As a general rule, for an 'Out of the Box' model the kit instruction sheet alone will be sufficient.

For an 'Enhanced' model the kit instruction sheet as well as the instruction sheet for any after market decals plus a hand written or typed page containing a brief description of the items that have been enhanced (as allowed under the enhanced rules), is generally regarded as sufficient.

For a 'Modified' model the kit instruction sheet as well as the instruction sheets for any after market items such as an etched metal set, resin detail set or decals is often considered sufficient. However, additional material in the form of research notes, a hand written or typed page containing a brief description of those items that have been added or modified, and any artwork, profiles or photographs that may help to verify your choice of colour scheme or markings, can also be included.

Although the reference material stated above is generally considered by most to be sufficient for the three category types found at the most modeling competitions, it should only be regarded as a guide and is based upon my own personal experience and that of others. However, should you choose to follow these guidelines you may discover that you have either provided too much, or possibly not enough reference material with your models in the past.

So how do you put it all together?

Probably the biggest challenge for most modelers is once they understand what reference material is required, they then need to put it all together and present it in a format that has the potential to guide and inform the judge's, as well as influence their decision.

I have seen this done very effectively by quite a few modelers in a number of different ways and as a result I have now adopted some of their techniques in the presentation of my own reference material. The best examples I have seen are usually presented in a clear refillable display book, which are available from most good stationery outlets. Into the first clear pocket of the binder the modeler has placed a Cover page giving the model's name and any other relevant details with an accompanying photograph. Into the next clear pocket the modeler has then placed all of the relevant instruction sheets both for the kit and any after market products. Into the following clear pockets the modeler has then placed pages containing reduced size photos of their model, taken during the various construction and modification stages to show specific items, as well as additional real life photos. A short description with additional markers (arrows and circles) to highlight specific points of interest then accompanied each photo or set of photos. The method they chose of presenting their reference material was not only simple and concise but also very effective and provided the judge's with all of the information they required, to judge their model.

As an alternative though, if you don't have access to any real photographs or you don't want to take any photographs yourself, you can still use the clear refillable display book either with or without a Cover page. You can then place all of your instruction sheets, for both the kit and any after market products, into the first available clear pocket of the binder. In the following clear pocket it is then advisable to place either a hand written or typed page giving brief bullet point descriptions of those items that have been enhanced, modified or added to your model. Remember to keep these brief, concise and to the point. In addition any artwork, profiles or photos, which you have access to and were used as reference material, can then be included into the remaining clear pockets within the binder. However, if you have used artwork, profiles or photos that are contained within a number of books you should either photocopy these, or if you have access to a computer have them scanned and printed and include them into the additional clear pockets within the binder.

This last aspect is becoming even more important as we begin to see changes occurring at modeling competitions where books will no longer be accepted as reference material and cannot be placed onto the competition tables with your models. It will, therefore, become even more imperative for the modeler to present his reference material in one of the above formats. The reason for this is to provide both the modelers and the general public with the best possible opportunity to appreciate our hobby as well as the skills and talents of our fellow modelers. This change will also remove the clutter that often exists at competitions, due to large amounts of reference material, which often detract from the models that are on display and are there for all to admire.

So, there you have it. Hopefully this will help you as a modeler to prepare and present your reference material in a much better way.