

A WIDER

Definition of Scrapbooking

5 ways to think bigger

By Stacy Julian



Scrapbooks don't just have to be patterned papers with photos on them. Try taking a regular photo album and making that a scrapbook. Add photos and a journaling note. Embellish with ribbons for even more of a scrapbook feel.



Stacy Julian is founding editor of *Simple Scrapbooks* magazine and founder of BigPictureScrapbooking.com. Her guilt-free approach to scrapbooking has been liberating croppers for nearly a decade. Hear more from Stacy at the Memorytrends Trade Show in September.

I have recently added to my role as founding editor of *Simple Scrapbooks* magazine an exciting opportunity to teach scrapbooking workshops in an ongoing format – online. The Web site Big Picture Scrapbooking was established as an educational extension of the liberating philosophy that I shared in my book, *The Big Picture*. I have especially enjoyed the chance to help other women adapt a system of sorting, storing, and retrieving pictures that I call a “Library of Memories.”

Teaching this class in particular has confirmed for me again the fact that more often than not, scrapbookers are so overwhelmed by unrealistic expectations that they are unable to continue what they begin. In the end, we are today, still attempting to do with tens of thousands of photographs, what our mothers and grandmothers did with a few hundred, only we now have unlimited ideas and products that suggest the need to be completely creative



and ultra-organized, too!

What does this have to do with you, the local scrapbook store? Everything. If we cannot sustain the commitment and enthusiasm of our current consumers, we will not promote the growth of our industry, end of story (and end of store.)

In lesson three of my Library of Memories workshop, I show my students how to let go of the expectation to be “caught up.” In response, I receive many, many grateful e-mails. Here is one: “I wish every scrapbook store in America, and scrapbook aisle in a craft store, and every online store’s gallery could have this message playing on a continuous loop until it reached EVERYONE,” (Katy Coffey, Westerville, Ohio).

I’m concerned that, without realizing it, retailers’ efforts to display and sell product and visually stimulate consumers is underscoring the unspoken “expectations” that are so paralyzing.

I won’t pretend to understand the unique demands placed on you as a “Local Scrapbook Store,” but I will invite you to join me in a re-messaging campaign that I believe is absolutely key to rescuing and re-energizing scrapbookers – and no, you won’t need a sandwich board or a street corner.

Implementing just one or two of the following efforts

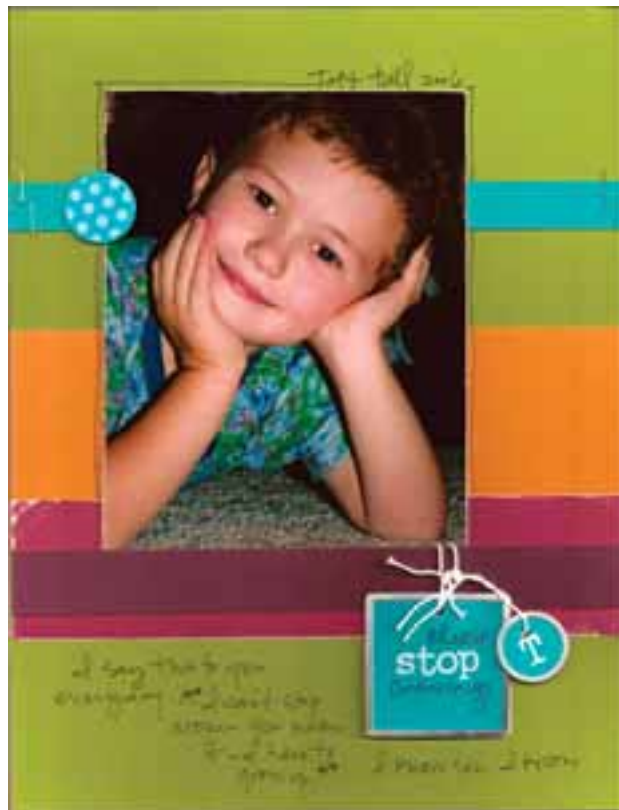
in your store will go a long way toward giving customers what they need – a wider definition of scrapbooking.

1. Display a variety of pages and projects in your store.

Anytime you pair a memory with a photo the result is a scrapbook. Scrapbooks, then, come in all sizes and shapes and should feature a variety of techniques that appeal to many skill levels. Talk a walk around your store; if you see mostly 12”x12” layouts elaborately embellished with the latest products, you are setting a clear and impossible expectation.

To successfully break down the barriers all scrapbookers face, store displays need to be a deliberate balance between do-able and diva. Make sure that you are supporting a broad definition of a “scrapbook” by showcasing not just individual layouts, but also theme albums, mini-books, and other inviting projects that can be completed in a weekend.

It is your opportunity to visually prevent the assumption that scrapbooks should all be uniform in size and organization. A *Simple Scrapbooks* reader at a recent event told me she enjoys the variety of ideas in the magazine, but wants more ideas for her regular albums. Wow! We cannot perpetuate the idea



that there is one regular way to scrapbook. Does this mean other less traditional (and often more liberating) projects are somehow “irregular?” The truth is, large, very creative scrapbooks that require unusual attention to details like names and dates are not interesting to a majority of people and DO NOT communicate “You can do this!” to potential customers.

2. Support a Photo Album philosophy with crops and more.

It is absolutely unrealistic for anyone to think they can creatively scrapbook even half of the pictures they take. Encourage your customers to

Don't always think you have to scrapbook only major life events. Sometimes the little moments are the most touching and memorable.

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Scrapbook pages can be simple. There's no need to add a lot of embellishments or different colors. Try to think of the easiest way to scrapbook a favorite photo - then perhaps offer a class on simple scrapbooking!

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take advantage of traditional photo albums to house most of their pictures. This way, snapshots are available to family and friends for viewing, and a huge burden is lifted from the scrapbooker because she can more easily focus on putting color and perspective to her most favorite photos.

Sell a variety of photo albums in your store and invite your customers once a month to enjoy a “photo album crop” where everyone gathers with the goal of preserving LOTS of pictures, by slipping them into a pocket style album. Decorative touches can still be added, but the important thing is to help people lighten their load. There is nothing more motivating than the feeling that you are making

progress with piles and piles of pictures.

3. Teach an ongoing “Photos I Love” class.

A widely accepted belief about scrapbooking is that one would feel successful if one were current or “caught up” with their pictures. This is not true. Satisfaction comes from revealing and recording the sentiment behind photographs, not just from dutifully decorating and displaying them.

I wish every scrapbooker could be given the opportunity to create a Photos I Love album. This album is generally set up in a non-intimidating format (8”x8”) and features authentic feelings for a small fraction of pictures. The result is a very rewarding sense of accomplishment.

Please help me spread the word that scrapbooking isn’t about the pictures. The goal isn’t dozens of albums, but rather the opportunity to convey through pictures and words individual experiences and emotion. Give your customers a time and place to focus more on expression (the stories) and less on execution (the techniques.) Doing so will directly address the anxiety that so many feel about scrapbooking. (Learn more about the concept of Photos I Love in my books *Simple*

Scrapbooks (published by Creating Keepsakes Books in 2000) and *The Big Picture*.

4. Assemble a welcome packet to give to new scrapbookers.

We simply cannot risk losing a potential scrapbooker, on her first foray into a retail store, to the inevitable impression that this hobby requires time, money, and creativity she doesn’t have. Train your staff to target new customers with a welcome letter and other customized “goodies” that will encourage and empower them.

A note written specifically to them that focuses on the rewards of memory keeping and promises personal attention will almost guarantee their return. Include items like a frequent shopping card and a class schedule with coupon to attend their first hands-on class free of charge. Be honest and upfront with the obstacles they are sure to face, and let them know that your store is the caring community they will need.

Don’t be afraid to tell customers why you opened your store. Share with them your passion and your commitment to giving them something they will never find in a big box or retail chain.

Imagine the guts it takes to venture into a scrapbook store today! Reward this courage with the assurance that you will be their No. 1 resource for inspiration,

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instruction and personalized attention.

5. Make time for your own scrapbooks.

OK, let's talk about passion for a minute. And be prepared, because this is where I am going to reprimand you if you are NOT currently making time to scrapbook. Trust me when I say I know how challenging it is to make the time, but make the time you must. Bottom line, you cannot successfully sell or teach others what you are not personally committed to doing.

As a storeowner, you absolutely need to be an example of someone who is "winning the war." It is an exhausting battle to balance

it all, but you will find a renewable resource of energy in your unwillingness to give up what motivated to open your store in the first place.

Unfortunately, it is relatively easy to lose sight of the challenges your customers face, if you are just focused on inventory, POP, and the other details of retail.

The very best way to strengthen your intuition for purchasing and promoting product and providing a profitable environment is to scrapbook YOURSELF.

That's it. Five things that I believe will help you help your customers. I want you to know that paralyzing paradigms associated with scrapbooking can be miracu-

lously cured with a good dose of permission and a realistic and flexible plan.

If we join together to broaden the definition of scrapbooking, we will both sustain and grow the hobby we love. I have no doubt the future is bright, but we need new messaging for a new millennium.

I'm thrilled that *Memorytrends* is now its own magazine and that the editors are committed to finding and sharing solutions to the challenges we face. I am committed to working with them to support you and help provide the ongoing education and re-education we need to keep consumers focused on what matters most. ■

EDITOR'S NOTE

Widening the definition of scrapbooking is perhaps the most important step in building a stronger scrapbook market.

In coming issues of *Memorytrends*, we'll bring you practical ideas and tangible solutions for opening your customers and your store to new styles of recording memories with the products you already sell.

We simply MUST make memorykeeping a hobby more accessible to all. Please join us.

-Beth Hess, editor