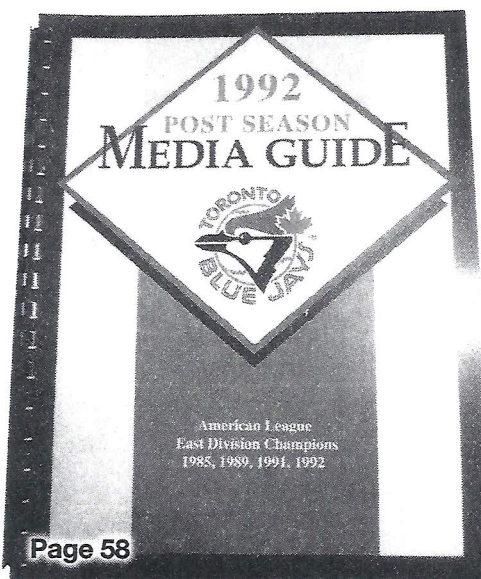




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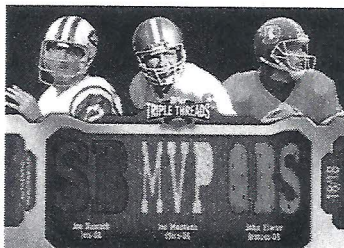
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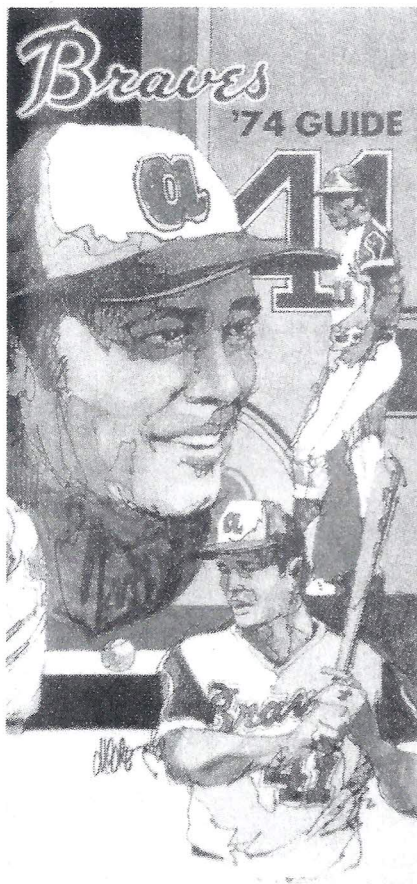
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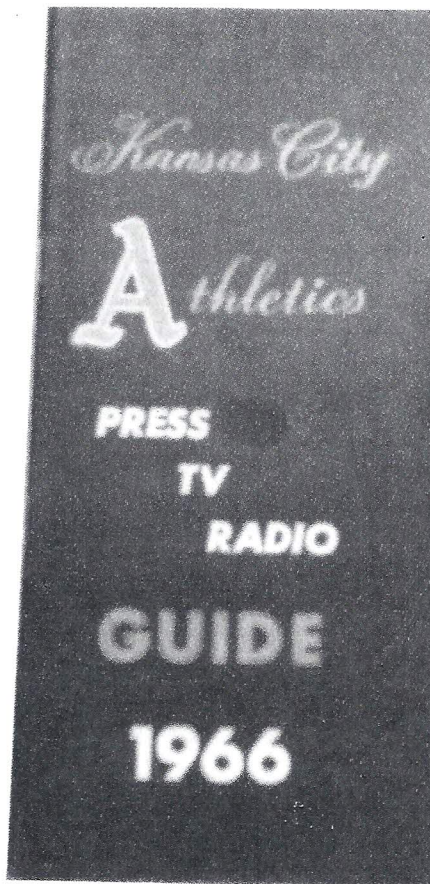


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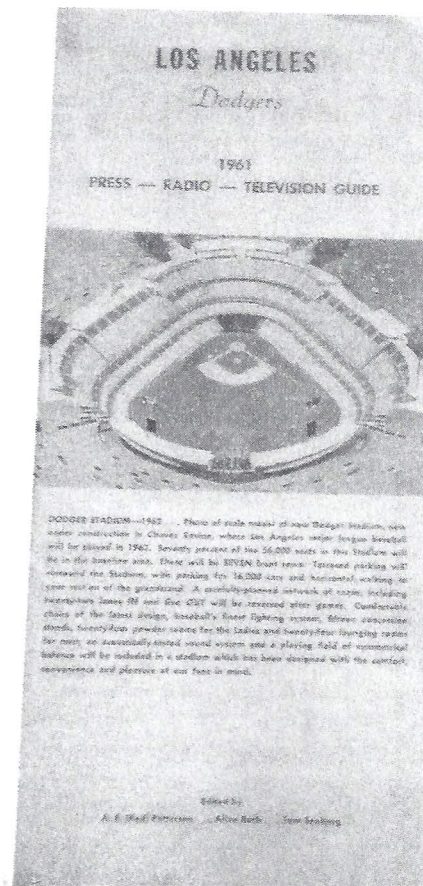




As the years went on, some media guides dressed up their cover, as seen with the watercolor artwork on this 1974 Atlanta Braves guide.



Many of the early guides were fairly plain with the intended audience clearly on display, such as with this 1966 Kansas City A's example.



The L.A. Dodgers got a new stadium in 1961, which made the cover of the team's press-radio-television guide.

A 'guide' to baseball

Media guides have a challenge in this digital media world, but collectors and fans continue to flip through the pages

By Richard Cuicchi

Once an essential tool of baseball media personnel, will major league club media guides eventually follow the path of other printed material? Printed newspapers, magazines and books appear to be on a course for extinction, given the predominance of digital information sources and information distribution technologies nowadays. These historically reliable methods of infor-

mation are rapidly being replaced by websites that contain or provide access to online, up-to-the-minute versions.

Many would now say printed media is an archaic method of information dissemination. It seems to reason the baseball media guides will ultimately follow suit. However, before we doom them for extinction, let's take a look at the evolution of media guides over the years.

As indicated by their original titles, "Press-TV-Radio Guides," these books were intended to address the audience of radio and TV broadcasters and newspaper sportswriters who routinely covered major league teams. Media

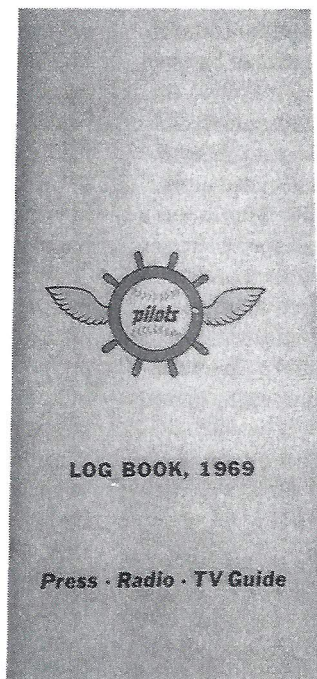
personnel used the guides as their primary source of the players' vital and personal information and other interesting facts, such as player name pronunciations (Ojeda = O-HEED-A). However, "Media Guide" eventually became the predominant name for the book by most teams. The Yankees, Orioles and Pirates used "Information Guide" starting in the late 1970s/early 1980s. However, as late as 1986, the Detroit Tigers' guide was still billed as "prepared expressly for Press/TV/Radio."

Dawn of the guides

The guides came into common use in the late 1950s and early 1960s as an evolution of team "roster cards" that many clubs produced in prior years. The roster cards usually consisted of a three-page foldout card that contained the basic biographical information about the club's player (e.g., full name, birthdate, birth city, hometown, height, weight) and last year's hitting or pitching statistics. It wasn't until the mid-to-late 1970s that the major league clubs began to target the guides to the general baseball fan, as well, as evidenced by some teams printing sales prices on the cover of the guides.

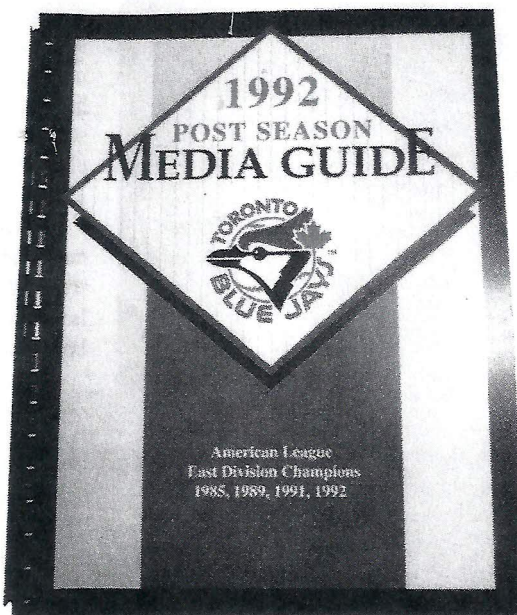
The media guides were usually prepared prior to spring training, but some clubs, such as the Chicago Cubs, produced multiple versions in the late 1950s through mid-1960s to account for changes in the roster. For late signees, other clubs sometimes issued loose-leaf inserts to the bound guides after they were sent to press.

From the beginning, the guides contained biographical and statistical information about a team's manager, coaches and the players on the 40-man rosters. They expanded on the roster card model by presenting player entries that were usually comprised of their personal

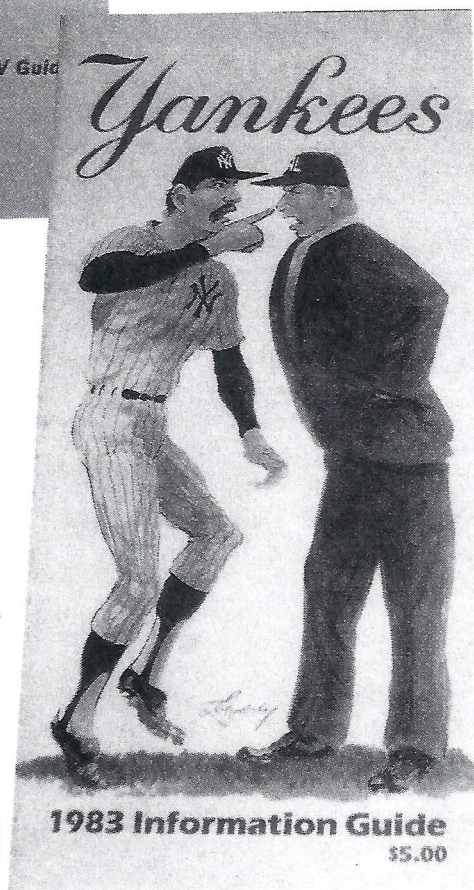


This is the media guide for the only year the Seattle Pilots were in existence (far left). By 1970, the team was headed to Milwaukee, although the guide still called the team the Pilots.

Below: Calling them like they see them: Billy Martin stating his case in a caricature drawing, and the Yankees using the term "information guide" in 1983.



This is the type of media guide fans want to see, because it means the team, in this case the 1992 Toronto Blue Jays, have a shot at the World Series.



biographical data; the scout who signed the player; yearly hitting or pitching statistics, including both minor and major league clubs; player transactions, including signings, trades and appearances on disabled lists; and postseason and All-Star appearances.

Most teams started presenting brief biographies of each player by the mid-1960s. The biographies contained personal background information for players,

Like reading a telephone book

How big did some of the Major League Baseball media guides get? The 2006 Boston Red Sox media guide hit 663 pages. And that was before they won the World Series.

The 2009 N.Y. Mets produced a guide that resulted in 659 pages.

although they varied by team. However, it appeared as though the players were given a standard form to fill out by team officials for various pre-defined categories of information.

Typical categories included high school and college attended by the player; military service (this was particularly prevalent during the Vietnam War years, with many players having served in reserve units); participation in amateur baseball leagues such as Little League, Babe Ruth and American Legion; other

sports played in high school or college; hobbies and interests outside of baseball; and offseason jobs held.

It was through the media guide that we discovered such interesting facts as pitcher Skip Lockwood attended eight different universities, Billy Martin was a "goodwill representative" for Minneapolis Brewing Co. and catcher Russ Nixon specialized in raising Arabian horses.

Additional personal information in the bios sometimes included the player's favorite athlete, other major league players

with whom he played amateur and college baseball, awards and honors attained in baseball and charitable organizations and benefits supported. The major league media guide became the primary source of information about a player's relatives in professional baseball, something that remains to this day.

In addition to the individual player profiles, the guides presented a considerable amount of data about the team's performance in the prior year. Examples included recaps of day-by-day scores of games played, including pitcher opponents; player and team statistics against opposing teams; and the league's leaders in the various pitching and hitting categories.

Furthermore, the guides contained historical records and facts about the team and its players, including such items as no-hitters by the team; no-hitters against team; 20-game winners; .300 season hitters; year-by-year club standings, managers and attendance; year-by-year batting and pitching leaders; individual season records for batters and pitchers; club season records; and all-time batting and pitching leaders.

With variations by clubs, guides often contained information such as spring training schedules, scouts' addresses, hotels in each city where the teams would be housed and miscellaneous baseball definitions and rules.

Evolution of baseball media guides

Minor league players in a Major League Baseball organization began to be included in team media guides in the mid-1980s, although the Mets did not start including them until 1998 and the Blue Jays waited until 2000. These inclusions are one of the primary reasons for increased number of pages in the guides.

The Twins started using player photos in their biography sections in 1974, earlier than most clubs, although the Tigers did not start until 1986.

Product advertisements have surprisingly been absent from media guides over the years. In later years as the guides were targeted more to fans, some companies such as breweries and sporting goods companies managed to get space on the inside cover pages. However, in 1967, the San Francisco Giants guide predominantly showed The Bank of California on its cover as a team sponsor.

The Seattle Pilots produced two media guides even though they were in operation for only one year, in 1969. Their 1970 guide was produced before it was decided to move the franchise to Milwaukee for that season.

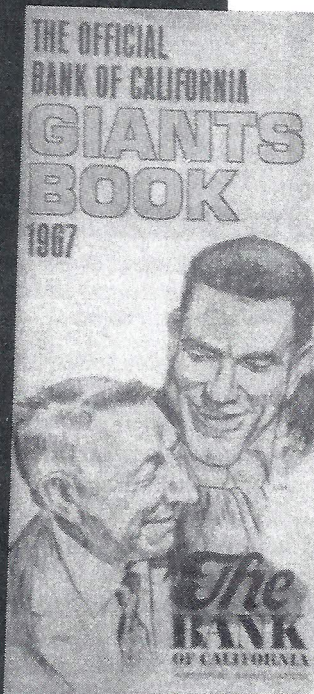
Some clubs produced postseason media guides when they were competing in the playoffs. They were generally new editions – not updates of the regular season guides – that contained team and player results of the season just completed.

Based on some recent queries of dealers' websites, indicative pricing for some of the older "first year" media guides include the following:

- 1953 Milwaukee Braves, \$300
- 1955 Kansas City A's, \$195
- 1956 Baltimore Orioles, \$190
- 1958 Los Angeles Dodgers, \$135
- 1961 Los Angeles Angels, \$250
- 1962 New York Mets, \$650
- 1968 Oakland A's, \$125
- 1972 Texas Rangers, \$95
- 1977 Toronto Blue Jays, \$45.

Indicative pricing for selected "last year" guides:

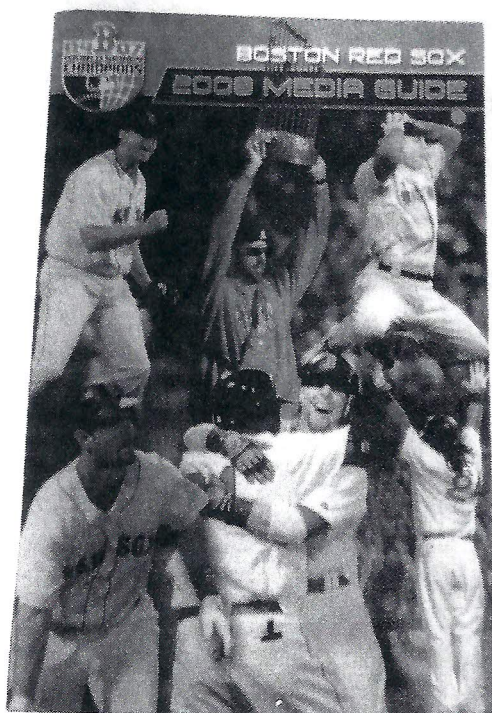
- 1952 Boston Braves, \$300
- 1957 New York Giants, \$250
- 1965 Los Angeles Angels, \$60
- 1967 Kansas City A's, \$95.



With time comes growth
Like the game itself, major league media guides evolved in time. By 1979, the guides started to present the players' season-by-season highlights, which became more detailed. For example, Hank Aaron's individual profile and career statistics consisted of two pages at the end of his career in 1975, while Ken Griffey Jr.'s profile and stats occupied 13 pages at the end of his career in 2010.

In the mid-1980s, the guides expanded the number of individ-

Some media guides offered advertising in its pages, including this 1967 Giants book that had an ad for a bank on its cover.



As the years have gone on, the books have gotten bigger, more colorful and with plenty of information on the team's stars.

ual biographical profiles to include key club executives; minor league managers, coaches and instructors; medical staff, trainers and clubhouse personnel; and the radio and TV broadcast teams.

The physical dimensions of the guides have been relatively consistent over the years. Initially, they were most commonly in the range of 9 inches tall by 4 inches wide. However, the Reds, Cubs and Cardinals deviated from this standard for short periods of time, coming out with versions shorter in height. The Padres also deviated in 1999 when they produced an 8½-by-11-inch version. The standard changed in 2001, when the guides, having expanded considerably in number of pages, were produced 9 inches tall and 6 inches wide.

The guides have always had paperback covers. In the early years, they were comprised of center-stapled pages when the content was relatively small. By the mid-1980s, as the number of pages expanded, they started to use standard paperback book bindings. However, many of the guides were very inflexible (appearing to be too tightly bound), so that it was difficult to keep the guides open to a specific page. Consequently, a few clubs

solved that problem by producing spiral-bound versions of their guides for several years, including the Mets, Giants, Diamondbacks, Phillies and Rays.

Cover shots

As you might expect, the covers for the guides changed dramatically over the years. Initially, they were fairly bland in design and appearance, with little use of color other than the team's standard colors, as well as limited use of photos and graphics. The Braves had an especially appealing set of covers for several years, as they featured water-color paintings of select players.

Over time, the covers changed as teams began to market the guides to the fans, and hence started to feature star players and special team events such as club anniversaries and World Series championships. Nowadays, each club has a very attractive cover for its guide.

Initially, the number of pages in the guides was in the 40-60 page range. By 1981, they were typically more than 100 pages. By 1989, 200-plus page guides were fairly prevalent, and by 1997, 300-plus page guides were common. The Red Sox hold the record for largest guide with 663 pages in 2006. The Mets come in a close second with 659 pages in 2009.

Collecting media guides

Baseball media guides are certainly not on the same popularity scale of collecting as baseball cards, magazines, year-books, autographed baseballs and other memorabilia. Yet, they still have their special niche among collectors.

Below are some general pricing guidelines, although there are surely exceptions to each of these.

- Guides before 1970 are generally the most expensive as a rule (greater than \$40, some in the hundreds – see sidebar). As you might guess, availability is limited because the media audience was targeted as described above.

- After 1980, \$3-\$10 might get you any guide (in Excellent condition), except for the Yankees or Red Sox. Guides for years the clubs won World Series are generally more expensive.

- Guides for the first or last year of a franchise are more sought after and command a higher price.

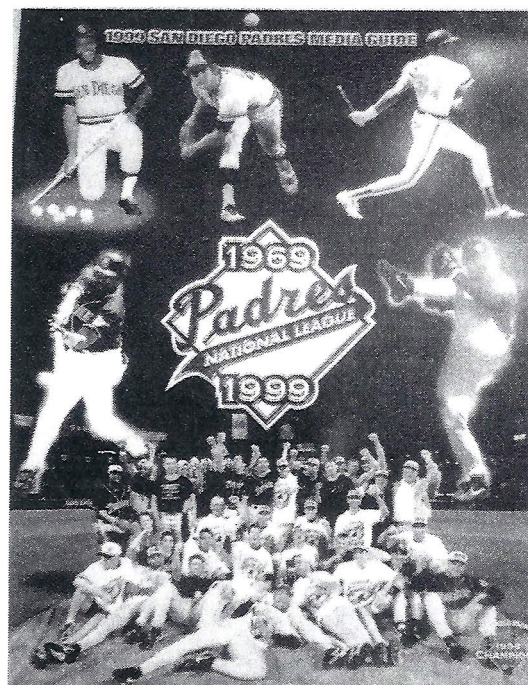
- Prices for current-year guides range from \$15-\$20, but will often decline the year after production.

What's next?

So, what does the future hold for baseball media guides? They've been a staple of the sport for better than 50 years. It's not likely that media guides will disappear altogether, but they might take a different form than we've known in the past. For instance, you might be able to download your favorite team's media guide to a Kindle or Nook device.

It's a sure bet that the major league clubs, and Major League Baseball in general, will continue to be creative in how they market the guides to their fans. In any case, current collectors may want to hold on to their older guides, as a direct link to the past. ♦

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This 1999 San Diego Padres media guide was one of the few 8-by-11-inch guides produced.