



Trashmagination Podcast #66 – Holiday Cards

Welcome to Trashmagination, a podcast about reimagining trash. I'm Carla Brown.

In today's episode, we're going to talk about creative reuse of holiday cards. Here's a quiz to test your knowledge about holiday and greeting cards:

True or False – All holiday cards can go in the paper recycling.

The answer is false. Here are some examples of holiday cards that should not go in the paper recycling:

- Cards with foil or glitter, felt or fabric cut-outs on them
- Cards printed on photo paper
- Cards with battery-operated devices that play music or sounds or light up with LED lights

Multiple Choice – Americans purchase this many greeting cards per year:

- 1 billion
- 3 billion
- 7 billion
- 10 billion

The answer is 7 billion cards per year in the US alone, according to the Greeting Card Association in 2018¹.

True or False – There is no way to reuse holiday cards except to make crafts from them.

False – There are organizations who accept the fronts of cards in order to make them into new cards.

True or False – Holiday cards can be a source of e-waste or tech waste.

True – If they contain a small circuit board to play a song or light an LED, those components need to be recycled at an e-waste vendor. Sometimes they also contain batteries, which often need to be recycled by a specific program in your community. Or maybe you can use them in your watch or hearing aid! So in today's episode, we'll talk about places where you can send your holiday cards for creative reuse as well as fun projects you can make with your recycled cards. We'll also talk about ways to display your holiday cards that creatively reuses materials. And finally, we'll talk about how vintage holiday cards can be valuable.

Where to Send Recycled Holiday Cards

There are programs that take the front of your cards and re-make them into new ones. The best known program is run by St. Jude's Hospital in Nevada [<https://stjudesranch.org/recycled-card-program/>]. I will link to the program page which includes the address. This is a job creation program from teens at the hospital. Note that they do not take cards from Hallmark, American Greetings or Disney.

St. Jude's Instagram post to re-share & embed - <https://www.instagram.com/p/BrRbLyHPvZ/>

¹ <https://www.thesprucecrafts.com/greeting-card-industry-facts-and-figures-2905385>

Sainsbury's in the UK has an annual holiday card collection program from the end of December and to mid-January [<https://www.fsc-uk.org/en-uk/newsroom/id/488>]. They have been doing this program for quite a few years. Based on card donations, they make a financial donation to the Forest Stewardship Council UK. In 2017, they gathered 98 tonnes of holiday cards². They also take wrapping paper.

Sainsbury's Instagram post to embed and share - <https://www.instagram.com/p/BO2U8acFbDz/>

In the United Kingdom, there is a program called Community Cards where seniors make new cards from old ones and sell them for 50 pence each at community centers [<http://communitycards.org.uk/>]. This program has made almost 15,000 pounds since 2013

There is a program called Cards for Soldiers which sends handmade, blank cards and signed Christmas, thank you, and get well cards to deployed units or service members overseas for the soldiers to use to write to family and friends [<https://greetingcardsforsoldiers.blogspot.com/>]. You can take your used holiday or other greeting cards and re-make them into blank ones, then send them to Cards for Soldiers. They ask you to supply an envelope for each card or a donation. They specify that no glitter is allowed because it can fall off on to soldiers and make them more visible at night in battle.

You can also donate your cards to people who offer recycled art workshops. These might include your local creative reuse stores. An organization called Earth Inspired Crafts and Education in Allen, Texas runs workshops with projects based on recycled cards [<http://earthinspiredcrafts.com/about/>]. You can check with your local art teachers and day care centers to see if they'd like the front of your cards for crafting.

While most holiday and greeting cards do not have any monetary value, you might find a market for vintage cards. I'll link to articles about it, including what types of cards are in demand by collectors.

- <https://mapleleafmommy.com/mom-life/five-oddball-things-you-can-sell-online/>
- <https://janvierroad.wordpress.com/2013/04/17/are-vintage-greeting-cards-worth-anything-yes-and-no/>

Holiday and greeting cards can also sometimes be valuable by family historians or genealogists. They can look at the notes in the cards for clues about family connections. They can be nice additions to a family scrapbook.

Crafts to Make with Holiday Cards

Next I'll share project ideas for what you can make with your holiday cards. All of these projects are featured on the Trashmagination Pinterest board [<https://www.pinterest.com/Trashmagination/holiday-and-other-greeting-cards/>].

The most commonly suggested idea for creatively reusing holiday cards is to make gift labels. Here's a fun variation on this idea. You could cut the gift cards in the shapes of large letters or monograms. In our family, each of us have a name that starts with a different letter so we can tell at a glance who should receive the gift [<https://www.marthastewart.com/276934/recycled-christmas-card-crafts?slide=3398790>].

Some people use holiday cards to actually wrap their presents. There are many tutorials to fold them into little gift boxes [<https://m.wikihow.com/Make-a-Gift-Pouch-from-a-Greeting-Card>].

Other great holiday decorations including garlands, wreaths, ornaments and placemats. My favorite holiday card garland involves cutting circles from the cards and then gluing them into globe shapes around a string [<https://partyplanningcenter.blogspot.com/2011/12/recycled-paper-christmas-decorations.html>].

My favorite wreath idea involves cutting holly shapes from cards and then attaching them to a circular shape [<https://craftsy.blogspot.com/2011/12/christmas-card-wreath.html>].

² <https://www.northumberlandgazette.co.uk/news/sainsbury-s-urges-people-to-recycle-cards-to-help-forests-1-8938714>

Another fun holiday idea is to make the cards into little houses and then sit them on a mantle or shelf. You cut out the windows, and put in holiday lights. It looks magical [https://www.bhg.com/christmas/crafts/christmas-card-projects/?slideId=slide_fb2936a0-9ba2-47c5-bff2-0b769dc954d3#slide_fb2936a0-9ba2-47c5-bff2-0b769dc954d3]

Wreath Ideas

- Star wreath - <http://littlebirdiesecrets.blogspot.com/2010/12/last-mintue-christmas-decorations-3d.html>
- Holly leaf wreath - <https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/holidays/christmas-ideas/g1943/christmas-wreath-projects/?slide=5>
- Holly leaf wreath - <https://craftysy.blogspot.com/2011/12/christmas-card-wreath.html>
- Circle wreath - https://www.bhg.com/christmas/cards/christmas-card-display-ideas/?slideId=slide_c059611f-0eeb-44af-88ec-724e25447eaf#slide_c059611f-0eeb-44af-88ec-724e25447eaf

Ornament or Gift Decoration Ideas

- Globe ornaments - <http://www.keepingwiththetimes.com/handmade-christmas-globe-ornaments/>
- 3D Ornament - https://www.bhg.com/christmas/crafts/christmas-card-projects/?slideId=slide_59ce6c45-1b96-491f-bb97-394d1ced7582#slide_59ce6c45-1b96-491f-bb97-394d1ced7582
- Pinecone ornament - https://www.bhg.com/christmas/crafts/christmas-card-projects/?slideId=slide_92da9f24-7285-4be1-972c-52d3556920cf#slide_92da9f24-7285-4be1-972c-52d3556920cf
- Canning lid ornament - https://www.bhg.com/christmas/crafts/christmas-card-projects/?slideId=slide_fff6744d-5878-49ea-814f-e554fa99e1bc#slide_fff6744d-5878-49ea-814f-e554fa99e1bc
- Poinsettia - https://www.bhg.com/christmas/crafts/christmas-card-projects/?slideId=slide_bb6d97d2-8677-4dc0-9ec6-c2066cbca22c#slide_bb6d97d2-8677-4dc0-9ec6-c2066cbca22c

Mantle Decorations

- Wooden blocks spelling out festive words like Joy or Peace - https://www.bhg.com/christmas/crafts/christmas-card-projects/?slideId=slide_74e83d20-708b-4d5e-8f05-2d3ec17801cc#slide_74e83d20-708b-4d5e-8f05-2d3ec17801cc
- Houses made from holiday cards - https://www.bhg.com/christmas/crafts/christmas-card-projects/?slideId=slide_fb2936a0-9ba2-47c5-bff2-0b769dc954d3#slide_fb2936a0-9ba2-47c5-bff2-0b769dc954d3
- Bunting - https://www.bhg.com/christmas/crafts/christmas-card-projects/?slideId=slide_afcac08f-9285-4ea2-9b32-836f44b65bff#slide_afcac08f-9285-4ea2-9b32-836f44b65bff

Creatively Reusing Photo Holiday Cards

One type of holiday card that might be more challenging to creatively reuse are those with people's photos on them. If you don't put them in in an album, what else can you do with them? They are often printed on photo paper which cannot go in the paper recycling. You can make placemats, place cards or bookmarks with your friends and family's photos on them which would really personalize your holiday table. You can also make ornaments from those photo cards so your tree is filled with the faces of the people you love.

- Placemats - <http://junkmailgemsblog.blogspot.com/2008/12/>
- Bookmarks - <http://knittingaura.blogspot.com/2011/01/snow-day-crafting.html>
- Placecards - https://www.bhg.com/christmas/crafts/christmas-card-projects/?slideId=slide_bb6d97d2-8677-4dc0-9ec6-c2066cbca22c#slide_bb6d97d2-8677-4dc0-9ec6-c2066cbca22c
- Simple Garland - <https://partyplanningcenter.blogspot.com/2011/12/recycled-paper-christmas-decorations.html>

Holiday Traditions

Here's an idea to engage your family in a gratitude practice. You can make a Wish or Gratitude Tree [<https://www.marthastewart.com/276934/recycled-christmas-card-crafts?slide=3398790>] You take a bunch of branches and put them in a vase. Then you take a card front, punch a hole in it and hang it up with string or ribbon. People write a wish for the new year on each card or they write a note of gratitude for something that happened this past year. This could be a fun idea for a holiday party. You could even bring it with you as a gift when attending someone else's party.

Another holiday tradition is the Advent calendar. I did a whole podcast episode last year on making Advent calendars from creatively reuse materials [<https://trashmagination.com/advent-or-countdown-calendars-from-recycled-materials/>]. Craftastica showed how they made little envelopes from holiday cards to make their calendar [<https://craftastica.blogspot.com/2008/11/recycle-bin-advent-calendar.html>].

Some families have a tradition of a card book [<http://www.mysocalledcraftylife.com/2012/12/27/diy-christmas-card-book/>]. To make this book, you get two or three binder ring. You punch holes in the cards and then put the holiday on the rings. These allow you to have your cards displayed in one spot.

Holiday Card Projects for Crochet Artists

One of the few fiber crafts that I have not done is crocheting, but there are wonderful holiday card reuse projects for those who love to crochet. I especially love these ornaments where you punch holes around the edges of a card and then crochet a lacy trim on it [<https://www.craftster.org/forum/index.php?topic=258381.0#axzz2gPnTzffX>]. Another crochet project I love is to make a holiday craft bowl by attaching the cards together in a circle [<http://www.mysocalledcraftylife.com/2012/11/20/diy-vintage-christmas-card-bowl/>].

Creatively Reusing Cards with Electronic Music Devices Inside

Have you ever received one of those cards that plays music or other sounds when you open them? Those cards definitely should not go into the paper recycling because they contain small batteries, wires and other electronic parts. I found a tutorial for how reuse those musical parts into fun projects [<http://www.creativefamilymoments.com/recycle-musical-cards/>]. The most important step is not to cut any of the wires when you remove the components from the card. This could be a fun way to teach about electronics.

Displaying Holiday Cards with Creative Reuse Projects

On the Trashmagination Pinterest board, I shared links to all these project ideas, and I also shared ideas for ways to display holiday cards with a spirit of creative reuse. These projects involve a display with a ladder, large frame, scrap wood or plate. So check out those projects as well.

- Ladder display - https://www.bhg.com/christmas/cards/christmas-card-display-ideas/?slideId=slide_3edd8708-6a50-469d-bdfd-cfd6edcd71f3#slide_3edd8708-6a50-469d-bdfd-cfd6edcd71f3
- Large frame or mirror with grid of ribbons - https://www.bhg.com/christmas/cards/christmas-card-display-ideas/?slideId=slide_04ce691f-324c-4dd0-bb18-896bbbde84db#slide_04ce691f-324c-4dd0-bb18-896bbbde84db
- Scrap wood with clips - <http://themerrythought.com/diy/diy-christmas-card-display-2/>
- Plate with clothespins - <http://www.mysocalledcraftylife.com/2015/11/05/diy-plate-christmas-card-holder/>

Thank you!

Thank you for listening! I would love to hear what you think about creative reuse of holiday cards at trashmagination@gmail.com. Happy holidays to everyone! This was the 66th episode of Trashmagination and I look forward to making more in 2019. Until next time – may you see holiday and greeting cards as a source of art in your life!