

Reference books support modeler's drive for accuracy

Gary Wollenhaupt

Most plastic model builders are on a quest for perfection. Whether they're building a WWII Panzer tank, a 1963 Corvette or a Gundam robot, the goal is to recreate the prototype exactly or even better than real life.

They're hungry for reference material to ensure they're using accurate paint schemes or correctly recreating specific vehicles with unique markings or accessories.

That's where Schiffer Publishing fits into the hobby store market. Founded more than 50 years ago, Schiffer, based in Atglen, Pa., is a family-owned company with more than 7,000 titles. The company publishes books on a wide range of topics, from arts and crafts to maritime history to health and wellness.

For hobby stores, Schiffer is promoting the Schiffer Military imprint and the Legends of Warfare series. The series focuses on military subjects, including aircraft, ships, armor, artillery and related topics. More than 90 titles, with new ones published throughout the year, are impeccably researched and feature historical and, where available, contemporary photos of the subjects.

John Stone, director of the Schiffer Military line, oversees new title development and sales and marketing.

Hobby store owners should recognize Richard Poulsen, Military History Imprint account manager for Schiffer Publishing, who joined after a career at MMD/Squadron.

He's been reaching out to hobby stores to add the Legends of Warfare series to support their model kit merchandising.

Building on his career at MMD and his master's degree in history, Poulsen knows his stuff.

"Any time you talk to Richard, you know he's very passionate about history," Stone said.

While the military imprint is popular in museum shops, some hobby stores have been reluctant to take a chance.

"They say they're not a bookstore, but I ask them if they sell plastic models, and if they do, they should sell these books," Poulsen said.



Richard Poulsen



Schiffer's Pennsylvania warehouse is fully stocked with books such as the Legends of Warfare series and other military and modeling titles to keep product on store shelves.

He sees modelers as armchair historians.

"Modelers are enthusiasts for whatever their subject is, so if you stock a book or something that goes along with the kit, they will buy it," he said.

Stone and Poulsen witnessed the demand from modelers at the International Plastic Modelers Society convention last year.



They brought about 125 books and sold more than half of them the first day and sold out by the end of the show. "That told us the book would be a big draw for hobby shops," Poulsen said.

Poulsen also distributes catalogs for customers to the stores so they can special order titles for customers. Schiffer's books are known for their extensive photos, including

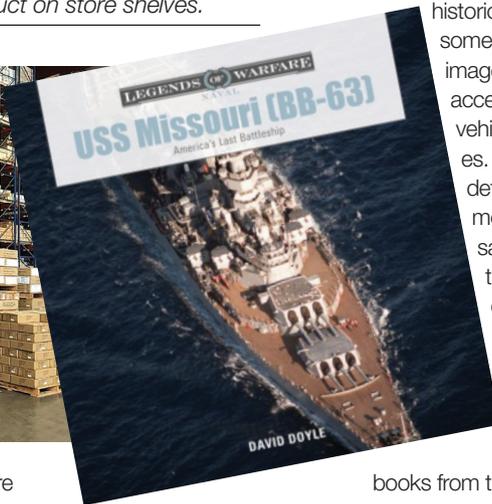
historic black and white and some original wartime color images. Some authors get access to historic aircraft and vehicles for exclusive images. "There's a lot of good detail like cockpits that modelers love," Poulsen said. "Modelers want that reference material, or they may have an interest in that particular area, whether or not it's for reference."

Stores can order smaller quantities of books from their distributors as part

of larger orders.

"They can try three or four books and we know they'll move quickly," Poulsen said. For larger orders of 15 individual titles or more, retailers can buy direct from Schiffer or still use the distributor. In the U.S. warehouse, titles are in stock and can help fill a store's shelves when other products are harder to get.

"When you want books, we have books, so at least you'll have some new product to put on your shelves," Poulsen said. "If you sell plastic models, there's no reason not to put books in your store." **HM**



SCHIFFER PUBLISHING