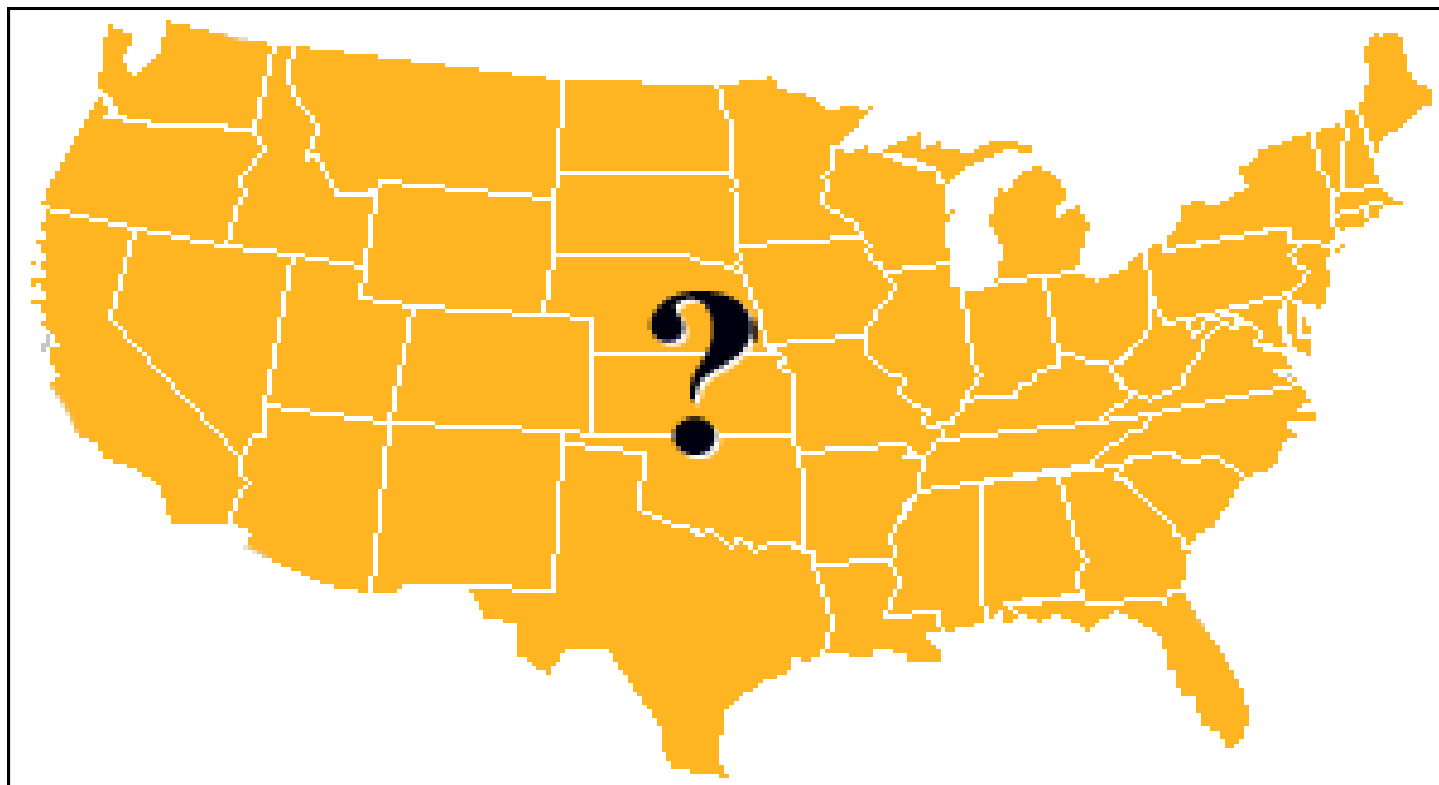


Hobby Demographics

by
Mike Prero

Wow! What an exciting topic! [*translated = "Oh boy! I get to play around with different graphics and statistics!"*] I enjoy picking apart the hobby and looking at the pieces. Often, there are valuable little gems of information (facts, trends, etc.) one may discover that normally stand unseen in the shadow of the whole. By analyzing, we can take a look and see, perhaps, if the way we're currently doing things is actually justified. At the very least.... "*I get to play around with different graphics and statistics!"*".



I. Collectors: *[All information presented here taken from my secret data base...only I and the Internal Revenue Service have access to this]*

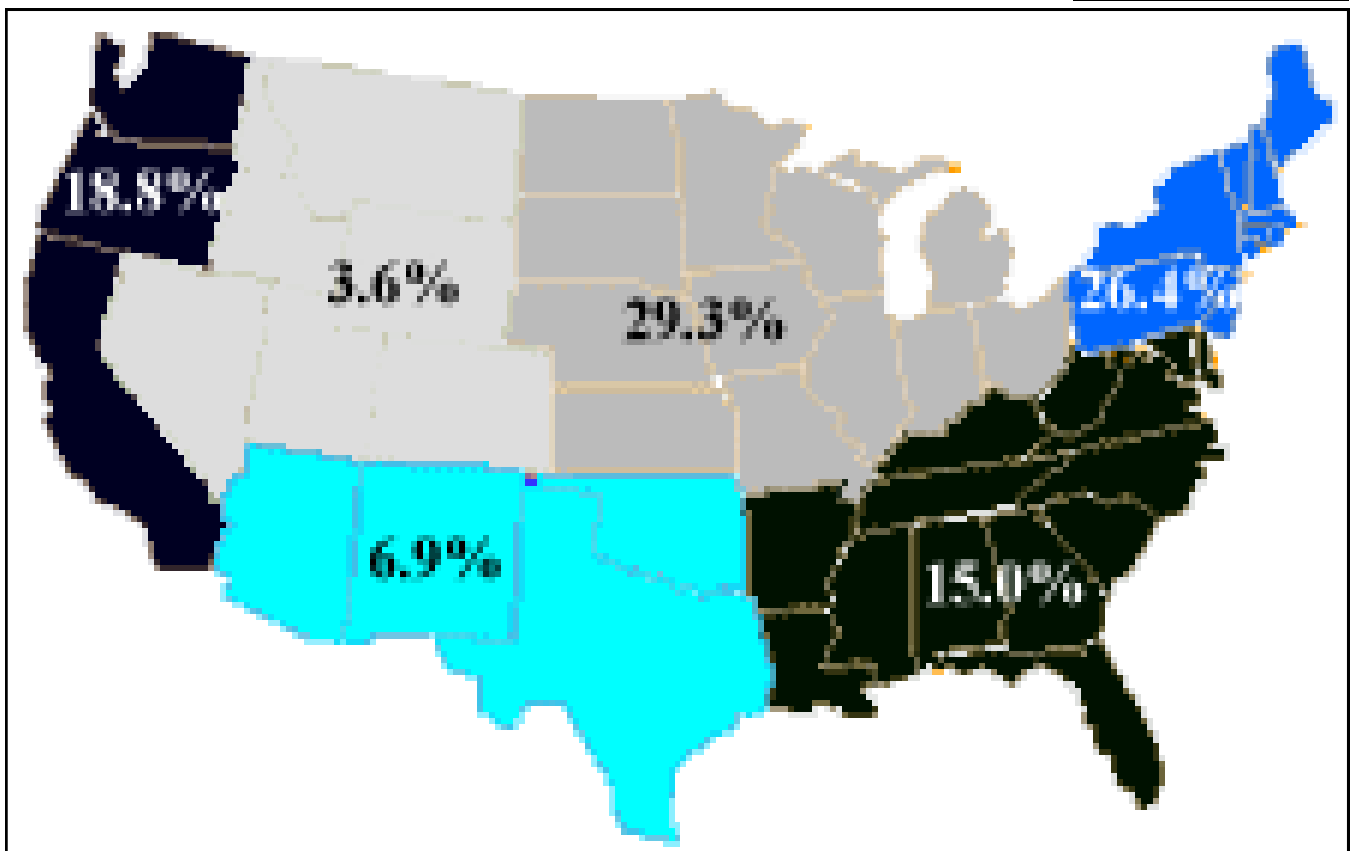
Percentage of Collectors by Country

United States	90.4	Australia	.8	Russia	.1	Czech Rep.	.05%	Germany	.05
Canada	%	India	.2	Argentina	.1	Denmark	.05	Iceland	.05%
England	5.9	Netherlands	.1%	China	.05	Finland	.05	Malta	.05

California	12.4	Massachusetts	2.8	Indiana	1.3	Georgia	.6	New Mexico	.2
Ohio	%	Michigan	2.8%	Kentucky	1.3%	Rhode Island	.6%	Arkansas	.2%
Pennsylvania	10.0	Maryland	2.5	Oregon	1.3	South Carolina	.6	Delaware	.2
New York	8.3	Virginia	2.4	Tennessee	1.2	New	.5	Idaho	.2
Texas	5.6	Connecticut	2.0	Minnesota	1.2	Hampshire	.5	Washington,	.1
Florida	3.9	Missouri	1.8	Arizona	1.2	Wyoming	.4	DC	.1
Illinois	3.7	Colorado	1.8	Kansas	.9	Alabama	.4	Hawaii	.1
New Jersey	3.7	North	1.5	Louisiana	.9	Nebraska	.3	North Dakota	.1
Wisconsin	3.3	Carolina	1.5	Nevada	.7	Maine	.3	South Dakota	.1
Washington	3.1	Iowa	1.3	Oklahoma	.7	Mississippi	.3	Utah	.1

Percentage by State *[There are also an additional 5.9% Canadian and 2.0% Foreign* **of Collectors**

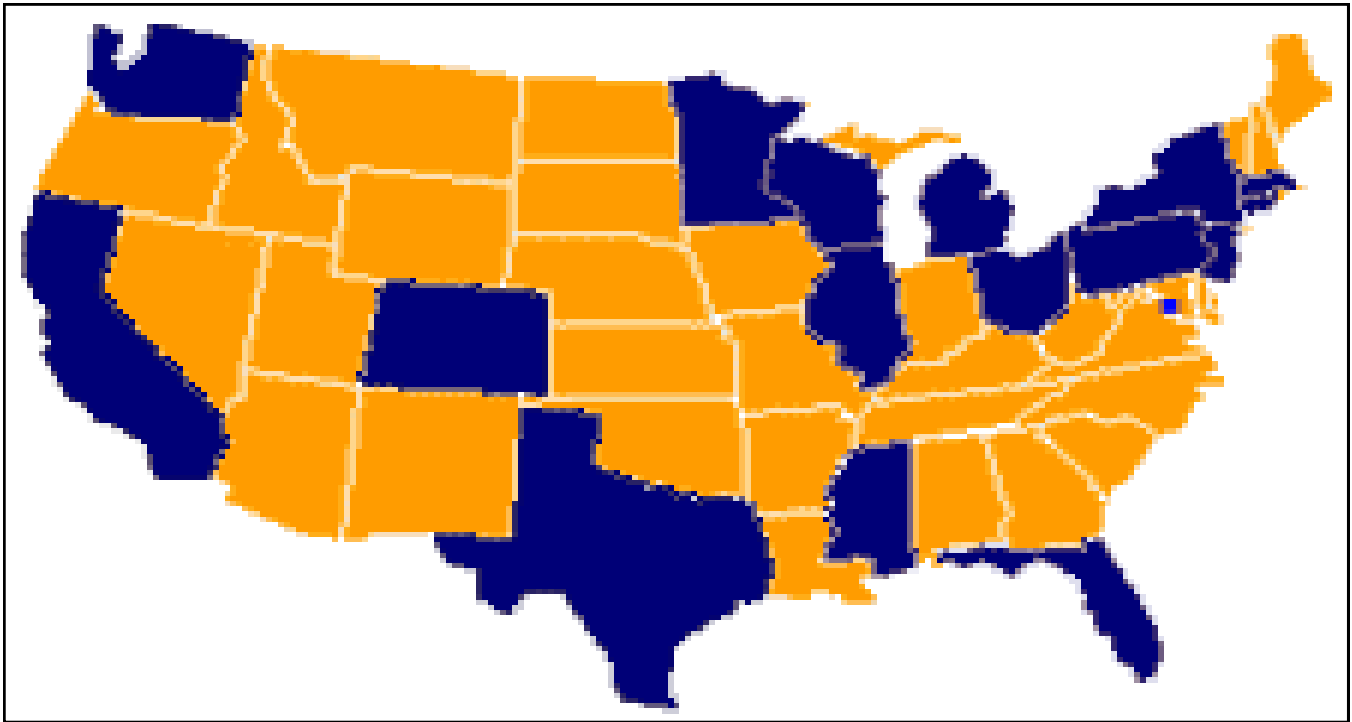
Midwest	29.3	Northeast	%	West Coast	26.4	Southeast	%	Southwest	18.8
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Percentage of Collectors by Region

Conclusions? Well, first of all, a suspicion I've had for a long time is now definitely confirmed...*No one lives in Montana!* The government has the entire state cordoned off because that's where it moved everything from Area 51 in Roswell, NM. Second, God bless that lone collector in Alaska! As for the rest, you'll have to read my adjoining editorial.

II. Clubs:



Regional Clubs by State

EDITORIAL

[The following opinions are mine, all mine, and no one else's but mine!]

or Kansas would be nice! Quiet, open spaces = cheap, uncongested, and whoever got our business would be more appreciative of the \$\$ we're bring their way. Of course, no one asked me to plan any conventions, but, come to think of it, RMS doesn't plan its conventions either. It waits and let's a host club do the planning. It doesn't have to be that way. Look at the '98 convention in Moline, IL. There was no host club. RMS finally put on its own convention (and kept all the money...thank you very much...and that's the way it should be).

OK, down to business. Based on the breakdown of collectors by region, I'd take a hard look at planning more RMS conventions in the Midwest. Not only is that where the largest percentage of collectors are, but it's centrally located...Nebraska

What's the big argument for having a host club?....They're the ones on site that do all the work (which is why they get 50% of the profits). It doesn't have to be that way. All you need is one RMS member at ground zero to coordinate the

hotel and surrounding activities. Everything else can be done off site by RMS members: Bill in Podunk, IA, collects the raffle prizes; Mary in Jacksonville, FL, takes care of the program book; Bud in Reading, PA, handles the auction lots, etc. Everyone converges on the site at the proper time, and...bingo...convention!

And, by the way, attendance at the '97 Quebec City convention was 210; 233 showed up for the Pittsburgh convention in '99;...270 people showed up for that no-host Moline convention in '98 (*and that's no slight on the '97 and '99 host clubs*). Notice, also, that the Moline convention was much more centrally located than either the Quebec or Pittsburgh sites.

It's economics and geography which should be the guiding factors in planning a convention. There's no question that everyone concerned knocks themselves out to make the convention as best as it can possibly be, but convention sites aren't normally picked according to what will be the most affordable and most accessible to the greatest number of collectors. Normally, it's simply a matter of what club has offered to host the activity.

By the same token, it's easy to see why so many conventions end up in the Northeast. It's the smallest, most compact of all the regions, and yet it has almost the same percentage of collectors that the Midwest does. In other words, that's where the population is. Thus, when those northeastern clubs bid for the convention practically every year, it's understandable. They have a huge base of northeastern collectors to draw upon.

As it turns out, it just so happens that this year the convention is in California, but what's the proposed location for next year?—Philadelphia — back to the Northeast.

The drawback to having so many conventions in the Northeast is that it's in a far corner of the country, about as far from being centrally located as you could possibly get. Yet, 51.6% of all conventions have been in the Northeast [*that's*

counting the Canadian locations], and, if you throw in the Ohio conventions, which are adjacent to the Northeast region, the figure jumps to 63.3%.

Now, to be sure, there are other considerations. The Eastern supporters, for example, will quickly point out that it's the only one in the hobby that is consistently ready, willing, and able to host an annual convention, so why shouldn't the lion's share of conventions be held in the East? Opposing factions will just as rapidly point to the resulting perception that RMS has been basically an Eastern clique, which, even if it is just a perception, is counterproductive to the aims of RMS.

Again, it can be argued, and correctly so, that the present system of club-hosted conventions helps insure continuing close relations between RMS and the respective regional clubs. Correspondingly, the same system severely restricts RMS's options when picking convention sites.

And so it goes...good arguments on both sides— that's what makes it controversial. For my own part, I'd like to see RMS go to no-host, centrally located conventions. I think the conventions would stand a better chance at drawing '1st timers,' and getting the locations out of the big urban centers would bring the costs down.

Another brewing controversy is *when* the conventions should be held. Someone at the last convention proposed the idea that the 2002 convention be held in September, for example. Larry Bell, CAN, argued for August in our last issue. Others could well argue for other times of the year. Whatever we do, someone's going to be disappointed, but I think it's time to rethink our present system of planning conventions.

I say this, by the way, as a fairly objective observer standing on the sidelines rather than a collector at the other end of the country arguing for nearer conventions. On a strictly personal level, the particular location of the convention