

What To Do With All Those Incoming Covers?

You might think that since we're in a period of shrinkage (declining collectors, declining trading, declining covers, etc.), that having to deal with the 'problem' of how to handle so many covers coming in wouldn't really be a problem anymore (unfortunately), but that's not necessarily true.

First, though, let me dispel, at least from my point of view, the myth that covers are declining. Yes, the industry doesn't make anywhere near the number that they did in 'the good ol' days,' but when collectors lament the lack of covers these days, what they're really lamenting is the fact covers are not as easily available as they were in the past. The covers are *still* there—millions! billions! They're just harder to obtain now.

In any event, the upshot of the current collecting situation is, for the average collector, you're still going to be getting covers, but it takes you longer to amass the same amount as you used to take in in a shorter period in the past...so, as those incoming covers pile up, what do you do with them? Of course, you sort them, match them against what you already have, see which ones are dupes, etc., etc. But, do you do that as soon as you obtain each group of covers? I certainly don't! I don't have the time for that, and, it seems to me at least, that that's not an efficient way to do it in the first place (i.e., you'd be constantly dragging out albums, paging through the same pages you just went through last week for the previous batch of covers, etc.). Thus, some sort of procedure, a routine, is needed to deal with these incoming covers. The one I present here is certainly not the only one which would work, but it works for me, so take any ideas you may find useful and adapt them to your own particular needs.

I have covers coming in every week (although nowhere near the numbers in the past, *sigh!*)—covers from traders, covers purchased, covers as gifts (from relatives, coworkers, etc.), covers brought back from conventions and swapfests, and so on. Because I'm not retired, here's the process I use to incorporate these covers into my collections:

1. When covers first arrive, I simply put them all in a central shoebox until I can sort them out. I don't sort them until the box is full.

2. I eventually sort the box of covers into their respective categories (Matchoramas over here, Indians over there, etc.), taking out those covers I can spot immediately as known dupes. When finished, I take the resulting categorized stacks of covers and put them, in turn, into their own individual holding areas. So now I'm eventually filling up my Matchorama holding area, my Filigree holding area...

3. When a particular holding area gets to the overflowing stage, that's when I pull out the respective albums, sit down and match the covers against what I already have. (For me, this happens about twice a year).

Now, for smaller categories, such as my beloved 'Duncan Hines-approved' H/M/R, those holding areas are never going to be overflowing (because they *are* smaller), so I just do those when I reach stage 3 with my bigger categories. There are also categories which simply may not be worth my while to work on at regular intervals. For example, I just finished working on my Navy Ships, but I get so few incoming Navy Ships during a year, that it had been 8 years since I had worked on them previously!

.....What are *your* secrets for success?