

April 2007

Archiving

by
Mike Prero

It's a truism that people who are good at something are good at it because they know what they're doing...*Knowledge is power*...and so on. So, it follows that we, as collectors, are better collectors if we know about what we're collecting, what's involved, how to go about it, etc. After all, isn't that the real difference between a collector and an accumulator? The collector knows what he's doing! *Right?*

How does that come about? Knowledge and experience. It used to be the case, far back in prehistoric times, that experience was everything. Before language developed, basically the only way you had of learning anything was to actually experience it. You had to *be* there...you had to *do* it...or at least *see* it being done. Fortunately, most of us have evolved.

So, how do we get that knowledge? Well, hey! We're living in the 'Age of Information', aren't we? It's all around us. We can listen to what our contemporaries have to say; we can read what they write; *and*, we can also learn from our predecessors...from years ago, decades...centuries, even! We have books, entire encyclopedias, libraries, clubs where people of the same interests gather to share information. And, with the advent of the internet, we have the whole world to learn from. But, the catch in all this is...that it requires time and effort on our part...and we're busy, modern people...and we're already expending time on the actual collecting as it is. Thus, some of us just can't, aren't, won't go out to find and harvest the knowledge we need.

Well! Have I got a deal for you! What would you say if I told you that the very same information that you need to be a more knowledgeable and wiser collector can be gathered, organized, presented in a logical fashion, packaged, and delivered right to your door?! Amount of effort required from you, thus far...zero! And would you be surprised to find that it's already being done...and that *you're* already getting it?!...Yes, it's your club bulletin! How cool!...But what you do with it after we deliver it to you is what really makes all the difference.

Not many of us have photographic memories, so once that bulletin is read it's only a matter of time before we forget most of the information we might be able to use later on. The solution...archiving!

What actually got me started thinking about this was a recent RMS Insta-poll I recently conducted [*Jan/Feb 2007 RMS Bulletin*] in which only 72% said that they permanently saved their bulletins for reference. 19% said that they threw them out sooner or later. But I was particularly struck with the responses from the other 9%....but let me backtrack for a moment.

Almost all of the collectors who got rid of their bulletins, and quite a few of those who keep them, noted that saving their bulletins created a storage problem after awhile. I can certainly attest to that. I've been editor for Sierra-Diablo for almost 24 years, editor for RMS for the last 12 years, and editor for Lone Star for almost 10 years, as well. That's 46 years of bulletins...and, as Editor, I keep them all! And keep in mind, that most collectors belong to multiple clubs, so they're dealing with multiple stacks of old bulletins, too... and each stack continues to get bigger!

Well, here comes the contribution of the other 9% of collectors from the survey above. They all did some creative archiving [*I suppose you could argue that just keeping your old bulletins in a box or something is a form of archiving...That's why I added 'creative'*]. The gist of the solution here was to simply take what you could use from each bulletin, save it some form, and throw the rest of the bulletin out (and thereby, in many cases, getting rid of the majority of the bulk involved).

How these collectors saved what they wanted varied, according to tastes and technology. Julie Killingbeck, IN, for example, saves her selected articles in binders. Richard Hopp, CA, scans the articles that he wants into his computer and thus creates a database of information. This computerized option would seem to be the best solution, as far as simply saving space. Imagine how many years' worth of information you could store on your hard drive or a backup storage drive...and that's with all the graphics, color, etc.! Still, some collectors aren't into computers...which is why I, personally, liked Donna Longenecker's, PA, procedure the best...

Donna removes the articles she wants (photocopying the backsides, if necessary), puts said articles into protective, plastic pages, and then puts them at the beginning of the appropriate album of covers, so that that information is right there, available to her when she's working on that particular collection! How direct! How simple! If the article happens to be, or contain, a list, Donna also makes an extra copy of that to put in a special notebook reserved just for listings. She also saves the *RMS Bulletin* Mailbag Q & A sections with the appropriate categorical albums.

Over the years, I've written a number of times about the importance of building up a reference library. Well, your bulletins are the biggest source of information there is. And all the information isn't just there to fill up space and be read...it's there for you to hopefully *use*. That means you need to retain in some fashion. That's also, by the way, why I, as an editor, will rerun or rework selected previously done articles every ten years or so and run them again. If that information was good ten years ago, it's probably still relevant now...and after ten years having gone by, most collectors currently in the hobby either haven't seen it or don't remember it.

In closing, and as an aside, James Radloff, WI, and Steve Gilbert, PA, noted that they eventually pass on their bulletins to their local libraries. How's *that* for advertising the hobby and the particular clubs! So, you might consider photocopying what you want out of each bulletin and then passing the undamaged bulletins onto your public libraries. Come to think of it, that might also allow you to get your foot in the door [*literally!*] as far as putting up a cover exhibition in the library...and perhaps doing both in conjunction, so that the display points out that the library now has these bulletins on hand for the interested public. *Great!*