

Auctions!

by
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Since May/June's RMS Insta-Poll showed that buying was the main source of covers for most collectors, and that, within that category, *auctions* were the most often cited source for collectors to buy covers...and, since auctions have not only become common throughout the hobby but have become a mainstay of many clubs as they attempt to pay the bills...I thought it would be appropriate to take a look around see exactly which auctions are available, where they are, and what they normally offer. I have categorized the results into sub-categories to make it easier for the reader to find the type that they might be looking for. *[Note: descriptions here are based on a one-time look, so keep in mind that the offerings of any auction vary from instance to instance]*

Along with all the other changes that have occurred in the hobby over the last 15 years or so is the undeniable turn around with regard to the selling of covers. When I came into the hobby 25 years ago, the individual selling of covers was actually looked down on. At the time, it seemed to me that there was some unwritten value within the hobby that no *real* collector *sold* covers as a main stay activity. And, even though auctions were evident at the time, the only ones I can remember were the convention auctions, and no one saw anything wrong with those. I'm just guessing, but there were probably a couple of club auctions going, as well. Sierra-Diablo Matchcover Club, for example, started in 1983, and I'm pretty sure we went to a club auction either immediately or pretty soon after that. And, there was at least Frank Tripodi, who was selling covers as an individual. So, in the mid-1980s, there were a few auctions and a few individual sellers...But look at the hobby *now!*

Now, selling is bigger than trading!

Convention/Swapfest Auctions:

- **AMCAL:** Once a year, normally has 4 big auctions featuring hundreds of lots (although, I believe, last year's were significantly curtailed), mixed content, single and multi-cover lots; used offered, but I don't

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remember ever having seen flats offered. If so, it would be rare. 'Yes' to minimum bids (in the sense that bidding basically always starts at \$1).

- **RMS:** Once a year, normally has four big auctions featuring hundreds of lots each, mixed content, single and multi-cover lots; some used/no flats. Minimum bids only occasionally on special lots.
- **Southern Swapfest:** Once a year, normally has 3 big auctions of 300+ lots each, single and multi-cover lots, mixed content, \$1 minimum bid, some used lots on old covers, some lots of flats.
- **UES:** Once a year, three big auctions, some used, no flats, single and multi-cover lots, mixed content. Minimum bids only occasionally on special lots.

Club Bulletin Auctions:

RMS has its *Bulletin* auction 6 times a year, and, since you all get the bulletin, you're all familiar with what it has to offer the collector. But, what about the various regional clubs?...

Club	Average # of lots	Single lots ?	Multi-cover lots?	Content	Min. bids allowed?	Frequency per year	Flats/used OK?
Angelus	110	yes	yes	mixed	some	4x	no
Garden State	20	yes	yes	mixed	no	4x	no
Great Lakes	75	yes	no	mixed	yes	6x	no/ seldom
Liberty Bell	125	yes	yes	mixed	yes	5x	some/ used
Long Beach	113	yes	yes	mixed	no	10x	some/no
Marva	10	yes	yes	mixed	no	?	no
Philly-Quebec	20	yes	yes	mixed	no	4x	no
PNMCC	120	yes	yes	mixed	no	6x	few/no
Rocky Mtn.	40	yes	yes	mixed	yes	4x	no
Sierra-Diablo	195	yes	yes	mixed	no	10x	no
Trans-Canada	42	?	yes	mixed	no	4x	no/few

Individual Auctions:

- **Postal:**

- **Bob Hiller's mail auction:** usually estate material, so lots may be varied or not, [Continued on p. 11]

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depending on the collection; 3x per year, both single and multi-cover lots, flats offered sometimes.

- **Web Site:**

- The Vault:* (<http://matchpro.org>) 60 lots per auction, 52x per year (weekly), both single and multi-cover lots, mixed content, no minimum bids, used/flats not offered.

- **Outside the Hobby Auctions:**

- **ebay:** ebay, of course, is constant--24 hours a day, 365 days a week. It features a larger selection of lots, including an increased chance to find rare and very old material. With that, however, comes generally higher costs and more administrative hoops to jump through. Also, with ebay, bidders are allowed to continually submit rebids (which makes the lots more expensive and means that if you're serious you have to monitor what's going on). None of the auctions described above allow rebidding.

[Note: If I missed any auctions, I apologize, but these were all the ones I could find any info on; also, I have omitted coverage of club meeting auctions since they don't have the 'open access' that the auctions described here have. They're basically only open to members, and usually only those members that show up for that particular meeting.]