

Dealing With Postal Costs

When I was born in 1945, a first class stamp cost 3¢; when I graduated high school in 1963, that stamp cost 5¢; when I married in 1973, it cost 8¢; when I first entered the hobby in 1983, it was up to 20¢; in 2000, I was forking out 33¢ per stamp; and in May of this year, that same stamp is going to cost 44¢.

What can you get for 44¢? With a letter and envelope, you can mail 13-16 20-strike covers. It varies, depending on whether you're sending older or newer covers. The older covers are thicker and weigh more. But, even with 14 covers and a 44¢ stamp, you can still end up with your own letter returned to you with 'POSTAGE DUE' stamped on it [*very frustrating!...Even more so, when your trader's envelope arrives, and you're expected to pay the postage due costs!*]

Well, you can at least avoid this problem by not simply shoving all those 14 covers into the envelope as one stack. The post office charges extra for what it considers 'extra thick' first class letters. So, you want to spread that thickness out throughout the envelope. In a regular-sized envelope, you take the 14 covers, divide them into two groups of seven, wrapping each separately with a paper strip and a piece of tape, and then tape the two groups side by side and insert into envelope. Voilá! Now your envelope is only seven covers thick, rather than fourteen, and there won't be any nasty 'POSTAGE DUE' surprises on either side of the mailing.

However, that's only one problem. Since the post office charges by weight, it's obviously less expensive to mail 20-strikes, rather than 30 or 40-strikes, and it's even more obvious that domestic mailings are less expensive than foreign mailings.

As a result, I try not to send a lot of 30 and 40-strikes in trade. The other side of that solution, however, is that I eventually deplete my trading stock of 20-strikes and end up with all those 30s and 40s forlornly sitting around my storage areas.

Always try and get the most for your postage when trading. For example, if you see your normal trades of 15 covers per swap are running more than that first ounce, you might as well up your trades to 25 per time, since you're already paying the extra postage anyway.

Foreign postage, especially when sending covers, is, to my mind, horrendously expensive and normally prohibitive. With domestic mailings, when you trade 14 covers for their 14 covers, it costs you basically 3¢ per cover. When you send the same 14 covers to Canada, it costs you 5¢ per cover, and when you send those covers to Germany, it runs 7¢. The latter is more than double what domestic postage would cost, so, unless I know what I'm getting in that overseas trade and I *really* want it, I try to avoid foreign trades.



Of course, all of this is for sending covers back and forth. For simply correspondence, e-mail has been a God-send! I couldn't even begin to calculate how much postage I've saved over the last ten years simply by using e-mail instead.

Now, what we really need is e-mail that actually sends 3-dimensional objects!

