

Trading: A Status Check

If you've been reading these bulletins for at least a few years, you already know my preliminary sob story...*but*, for the newbies out there, allow me to repeat myself..

I'm a trader. I've always been a trader, and I've always relied on trading to supply me with the covers I need for my collections. At the high point of the hobby, I had over 170 different people I traded with; the last several years, I've had 12-15, and most of those were very sporadic traders. So...

On July 27th, I sent out e-mails (individually) to 372 collectors, asking if they would be interested in trading with me, and I also mentioned that a return reply wasn't necessary if they weren't interested. Now, my primary goal here was certainly to dig up some new trading partners, but, as long as I was doing this (and it took a good chunk of the day to send out 372 individual e-mails!), I figured I'd keep track of the results and maybe I could get an article out of it (that 's the way an editor's mind works!) Well, the results presented me with more than one surprise.

Out of the 372 invitations to trade:

- 314 did not respond (I already knew it would be something like this, but it was pretty depressing all the same)
- 12 were kicked back because either the e-mail addresses were no longer good or the collector's spam filters were set to not accept anything except from 'pre-qualified' senders
- 46 collectors responded

Wow! 46 responses! Alright!!!....Well, wait a minute...Here's a breakdown of the 46 responses:

Out of 46 responses:

- 26 were to politely say that they were not in a position to trade at the present time.
- 20 said that they would be willing to trade

Well, 20 new traders! OK!!! Hmmmmmm....

Out of 20 collectors willing to trade:

- 13 had such narrow want areas that I was unable to trade with them ("I collect tarantulas on banana bunches," or "I'm looking for covers from the Hotel Leopold in Angola.")
- 7 collectors had wants that I could meet, and so I ended up with 7 new trading partners

The two results that I found surprising were: 1) many more collectors than I expected who either collected in only 1 or 2 small areas, or in several miniscule areas. Both negated the possibility of any trading (I mean, how many trades of Hotel Leopold covers from Angola would you be able to come up with?); and 2) I ended up with 7 new traders!!! That was more than I expected to get out of this exercise.

Thus, my purpose here is *not* to lament the sorry state that trading has fallen to in the hobby, but to note and rejoice that I now have 7 new traders. Given the sorry state of trading in the hobby, I feel as if I've really accomplished something!!...And, many thanks to those 46 people who responded!