



Editorial

An Old Idea Resurrected

W-a-a-a-y back in 1989, I proposed the creation of one, combined, universal membership roster for the entire hobby. It was rapidly shot down with such logical arguments as, “Once they get all of our names on a mailing list, they’ll sell it to bulk mailers, and we’ll all be inundated with junk mail.” [*See? I’m not bitter!*]

That was eleven years ago. It seems the time is right to bring up the idea again. Why now?—Because the hobby has been shrinking for the last decade, and most clubs have been scaling back their activities in one way or another—not having club meetings as frequently, reducing the number of annual bulletins, and....trying to get out from under the burden of annual membership rosters.

And the latter *is* a burden for a club. It’s an annual headache, and it represents substantial printing and postage expenses, especially for those clubs which are forced to mail first class.

At the same time, in my 17 years as a collector, I haven’t seen any evidence that the average club member needs or extensively uses a new membership roster each year. Also keep in mind that such rosters are continually updated anyway with the membership changes being noted in each club bulletin on a monthly, bimonthly, or whatever basis.

Think of the incredible duplication (waste) as these rosters are flying across the country each year. There are many collectors that are listed on most or all of the club rosters, and most collectors are at least listed on several club rosters. Take me, for example. I belong to all the California clubs,

plus Lone Star, plus RMS. Each roster has me listed—same name, same address, same basic categories. What’s the point of all that duplication? True, some different people in each club are seeing that reference to me, but it’s an incredibly inefficient way to reach all those people.

I propose, instead, to have one comprehensive membership roster for the entire hobby; every collector who belongs to any club would be listed. Just think of the space alone that will save in your desk, closet, or garage! Want to find a collector? You don’t have to find what club he belongs to and then search for that club’s roster; you just look him or her up in our ‘comprehensive’ listing! Also, think about how many change of address notifications you have to send out each time you move. Under my proposal, you’d only need one!

What about the actual logistics? 1) RMS, as the largest such organization, is the logical one to handle this comprehensive roster. 2) All of the clubs would have to OK this and reimburse RMS for its time and additional expense in doing this (would only be a fraction of what the roster is costing the clubs now). 3) RMS would have to agree to it! 4) The RMS Membership Secretary (sorry, Terry) would probably be the one to do this, or perhaps a new position would be required. 5) A system would have to be worked out wherein RMS notifies the appropriate clubs of address changes for its members, etc.

The main stumbling block would be getting the various clubs to agree to ‘let go’ of the membership rosters. Although some will see this as a Godsend, others will be afraid that they will be losing one of their main draws for joining the club in the first place. I don’t see it as doing damage to the individual clubs. Bulletins and meetings are the two main reasons for joining clubs.

Can a ‘unified’ membership roster happen if some clubs opt for it while others don’t participate? Probably not. Discuss this at your next club meeting. Maybe we can get this thing going.