



## Editorial

# Globalization

Reading the comments collectors had as they responded to this issue's *Insta-Poll* got me to thinking. Several pointed out that not listing *all* collectors on the web site's *Collectors On-Line* page would just further separate us from the rest of the phillumenic world. At the same time, more than one respondent basically said that anything RMS should be solely for RMS members. It's funny how people can have the same goal in mind and yet be worlds apart in their thinking.

Two collectors specifically mentioned 'globalization', though, and that's what got me going. The domestic hobby's shrunk so much...and I keep thinking of all those collectors in other parts of the world. Why would we want to isolate ourselves from them? I'm sure that those collectors who thought that non-RMS members shouldn't be listed on an RMS web site didn't see it in terms of isolation, but that would certainly be the effect. We should be doing everything possible to make ourselves more open and more attractive to those overseas collectors.

Many of those who voiced a 'no' on the 'open' listing inferred that the world should come to us (by joining RMS), but any businessman can tell you that's not the way it works. We have to go to them, and, hopefully, the result will be that some or many eventually join us. That's why business is willing to spend billions in advertising, promotions, etc.

Moreover, it's imperative that the hobby change with the times...and these are certainly changing times! Just look, for example, at the lesson being illustrated over and over again in business. It's adapt or die! Blockbuster didn't adapt, and it's bankrupt; Borders didn't adapt, and it's filed for bankruptcy protection. Conversely, twelve years ago we didn't have a web site; today that web site brings in most of our new members.

Our hobby should be opening itself to the rest of the world's phillumenists, not building barriers. We should be showing overseas collectors what they have in common with us and how they could benefit by joining us.

And, I might point out, it's not just the number of collectors overseas that should be alluring to us. The vast majority of phillumenic material is overseas!--boxes and labels certainly, but a significant number of covers, as well--Tobacco, Military, Girlies, and so much more. Moreover, while the match industry continues to decline here, it's booming overseas! Thus, there are good arguments for expanding our perceptions and our wants and, in the process, infusing the hobby with a new vitality.

There *is* a rather large problem inherent in such a move, however. The vast majority of those phillumenists are focused on labels and boxes, not matchcovers. Hmmmmmm....That's why we need to adapt to them, rather than simply waiting for them to flock to us. The latter just isn't going to happen, not the way things stand now. After all, what incentive does an overseas collector have to join RMS or any of the regional clubs in the country? He can't attend meetings; he's not going to attend swapfests and conventions; and almost all of the information he could glean from bulletins is just an aside to what he really collects. No, the world's not going to beat a path to our doorstep. If anything's to happen, it's up to us to be proactive instead of inactive.

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Am I suggesting we all switch over to labels? No. But there *are* some reasonable things we might do.

- \$35 dues for overseas members is prohibitive (and so is international postage). That's another reason why we should be offering the bulletin on-line.
- We don't have a supply of labels here, but we certainly have plenty of boxes. We could be promoting US boxes to overseas collectors.
- The *RMS Bulletin* auction petered out due to lack of participation, but we could have an on-line auction open to the world! Overseas collectors would have a larger, easier access to collectibles here. They would still face the international postage issue, but I believe they'd be more willing to deal with that if they were actually acquiring covers and boxes as a result, rather than just information in the form of the bulletin, most of which is relevant to their collecting.
- The *Bulletin* would need to be made more attractive to overseas collectors. Its content would have to offer them something in return for their membership. I've already done that to a small degree--the "Around the World" page and an occasional article on labels--but there would have to be more, perhaps a greater emphasis on boxes, but not to the detriment of U.S. collectors.

And, who knows? Many US collectors may (albeit slowly) become more appreciative of boxes and labels. Most, if not all, of us already collect boxes appropriate to our particular want areas. Still, all in all, I think many of us view boxes as a general hassle--they're usually harder to open; they come in too many varied sizes; can't fit as many on a page as 20-strikes; and, traditionally, they're just not as available as covers. They're just not as 'convenient', perhaps, as collecting covers.

While all that may be true, I'm sure the box club members could come up with a number of points extolling the virtues of boxes, and I'm quite fond of American Aces and Pocketboxes, myself. The point is, US collectors would have to be 'reeducated' somewhat...even more so if we include labels as a goal.

I'm tempted at this point to say that it's not realistic to expect such a change in veteran collectors, and that we'd have more success with the younger generation of collectors....but we don't *have* a younger generation of collectors! At least not in terms of age. There *is* a 'less-experienced' generation of collectors, although, unfortunately, it's quite small. Still, we could start with them and future new collectors.

The proposed change, here, isn't quite tantamount to changing horses in mid-stream, but it would constitute a change. Still, I don't think it would be an unreasonable assertion to believe that if collectors were exposed more to collecting boxes and labels as part of the hobby we'd end up with collectors who were more interested in boxes and labels. After all, if a shopper goes into a store that only offers one item, he only comes out with one item; if the store offers a variety, he usually emerges with more than one item. Thus, collectors would become more interested in what the rest of the world has to offer them. At the same time, overseas collectors would take a greater interest in the hobby here in the US, which would inevitably lead to more members for RMS.

Is this just another pipedream? Well, it's all speculation, of course. Perhaps there will be those that say it's better to be a big fish in a small pond rather than a small fish in a big pond...but that small pond is getting awfully small!