



The Collector: An Individual

Eureka! I think I have the explanation! Try this on and see if it fits...

Why do so many new collectors leave the hobby after their first year or two? Why do so many collectors opt not to attend club meetings in their own local areas? Why are most collectors basically just names on a roster to most other collectors?

....[drum roll]...It's because collectors are first and foremost individuals...We may get together and form an organized hobby...We may even band together to form clubs...but collecting is inherently an individual activity.

Some of us are more fanatical about collecting—We attend conventions and swapfests; we continually trade, buy, and sell; we volunteer our time as club officers and workers; we organize, share, and write—But we're the smaller faction within the family of collectors. The larger faction is, as I perceive it, content to collect on a smaller

scale, at a slower rate, and with much less fanfare. They don't really *need* the organized hobby.

And within this latter group are also the dabblers, the looky-loos, the 'homeless', if you will—They're looking for something, but they're not quite sure what, and they're not certain where to settle. So they drop in, look around, dabble a bit, and all too often end up moving on to try something else.

Now, the *fanatics* (myself included), we're individuals, as well. But, we're into collecting enough to see the hobby as an invaluable tool, and we make it work for us. We're *always* looking for those next covers, so we establish and maintain connections; we advertise; we attend get-togethers of fellow collectors whenever we can; we share information and strategies. Strange as it may sound, though, (and here comes the sacrilege of sacrileges!) we don't really need the hobby, either. We'd *still* be collectors in any event.

The hobby is a means to an end. It's a *great* means, to be sure, and affords collectors all sorts of advantages, but we fanatics would be collecting anyway, hobby or not (it's probably a genetic predisposition). We wouldn't be as successful as we are without the hobby, but still...we're individuals, not ants.

Thus, it's intriguingly ironic that the same individualism that brings us together to form a hobby also splits us into factions and eventually sends some of us elsewhere.

There's the 'content' faction and the social faction; there's the West Coast faction and the East Coast faction; there's the convention faction and the 'never been to one' faction, and so on.

Paradoxical, no?