



Editorial

The Case Of The Languishing Lists

Lists, as most, if not all, listers would tell you, are labors of love. They almost universally reflect a special interest that the lister has. The lister then goes on to spend many hours, and often many years, in pursuing those particular covers and studiously recording them for posterity.

Yet, in all too many cases, it's *not* for posterity, for when the lister eventually retires from the hobby or simply passes away, the list disappears as well.

The two most commonly used lists in the hobby are the Girlie Catalog and the Navy Ship listings (Pre and Post-War). There's no chance of those disappearing. There are too many copies in circulation. Not true with most other lists. Only a few collectors would have list A or list B (because most collectors don't use lists), so when the lister is no longer with us there's no way for a later interested collector to find a copy of that list. I get inquiries all the time about where would this or that listing be found, and all too many times any such search dead ends.

A second big problem with our lists is that many, even if you *can* find them, are incomplete because no one has taken over their maintenance since the original lister has passed away. They're just languishing in the hobby's past. For example, when John Williams passed away a few years ago, one of the most prolific listers in the hobby, his some 65 lists were suddenly orphans, with no one to maintain them. Since then, only a very few of those lists have been taken on by anyone else.

A further problem (at least potentially) has to do with the size of the particular listing. Most listings are small...because they deal with small categories. However, some are huge. The Pocketbox listing is over 20,000, and my own Dated listing is well over 19,000. In my own case, that works out to 440 pages, which eliminates printing or photocopying as an option. Thus, all of my lists are only available as .pdf files. That leaves anyone without a computer with internet access out in the cold (they could download the file with their cell phones, I suppose, but I'd hate to actually do that kind of work on a cell phone).

Well, the first problem, that of list availability, can easily be solved simply by listers ensuring that a copy of their latest updated lists are sent to Marsha Smith, RMS Archivist. Thus, when the lister can no longer be reached, interested collectors can get a copy of that list from the RMS Archives.

The second problem is not so easily dealt with. If no one steps forward to continue an already existing list or initiate a list of a previously unlisted category, that's it! Most collectors aren't listers to begin with, and listing, as noted above, is based on personal interests—a purely spontaneous and voluntary activity.

The size problem with large lists is just a fact of life.

You can see what lists exist, who maintains them (or who doesn't), and the possible availability of such by viewing the Master List of Lists page at <http://matchpro.org>. You might even see a currently orphaned list or two that you'd be interested in adopting!