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Strategies For Recruiting: Part I

In all probability, every hobby wants to grow and expand. New members mean new ideas, fresh approaches, and, often, new collectibles coming into that hobby. But for our hobby, new members are especially critical, if for no other reason than the very obvious fact that ours is very top heavy with older collectors. Why that is so has been discussed at length elsewhere, so I won't rehash it here. Also, it's been pointed out before, for a variety of reasons, that it's not reasonable to expect that many young people are going to be attracted into the hobby...so that's not the answer, either. The problem is to attract more adults into the hobby.

I've been in the hobby for 15 years; I've been an editor for 15 years; I trade and correspond with many other collectors; I attend the AMCAL convention every year and the RMS convention whenever I can...I think I have developed a pretty good feel for the hobby and its particular needs and circumstances...and it seems to me that **publicity** is what Lone Star, and, indeed, every club, needs to concentrate on.

Publicity represents a two-pronged attack. It can turn a non-collector into a collector by stimulating latent interests, but, much more importantly, it can direct both the casual and serious collectors who have been groping around on their own into the formalized and supportive structure of the existing hobby. If you read the various biographies of collectors which are run in various club bulletins, you see time and time again the statement, "I never even knew there was a hobby out there until..." The collectors are already out there. They develop that glorious craving all by themselves. Perhaps it's instinctive for most of us, as most of us would describe ourselves as "born collectors," and we collect a variety of things, not just matchcovers.

What we should concentrate on, then, is letting the rest of the world (and I *do* mean the rest of the *world*) know that the hobby exists and is here, ready and waiting, to support their collecting efforts. That this is practical, efficient, and works is easily seen in a variety of ways. Just look at the success of, for example, of the RMS web site. Since its inception, the web site alone has brought in some 90 new members as of this writing. They're out there, so it's just a matter of.... "*If you publicize, they will come!*"

That's not to say that Lone Star needs to rush out and set up its own web site [*although that would be nice someday*]. The point, here, is that there are a variety of ways in which to publicize the hobby and our club, methods which can be utilized at the individual level and methods which can be utilized at the club level.

As an individual, you can do your part by using the word-of-mouth method, of course. Let your friends, relatives, co-workers, etc. not only know that you are a matchcover collector but that it's a great hobby with something to offer almost everyone. Most of us do that already...and each year the hobby sees friends, relatives and co-workers join the hobby as a result. But there are many other *more effective* means available to the individual, as well.

Dean Hodgdon, OK, immediately comes to mind as an example here. Dean has been running ads in magazines and sending out introductory "packets" for years and has brought into the hobby countless people (including me!). The man should be declared a saint! [*Of course, Dean is still alive and well, so, hopefully, I won't be petitioning the Church for many years*].

Part II in our next issue