

Questions about where the hobby is going. I Get Mail

This past week I was contacted by another officer in MEPSI about the dwindling number of stamp collectors due to old age not only in our Society but other philatelic societies as well. His opinion was that there didn't seem to be a good answer. The rest of this message to you is a message of hope. As President of the Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International, this subject has been one that has always been on my mind and the increase of collectors is not only important for our societies, but the basic values of our own collections.

As you can imagine I have spent a good deal of time thinking about this subject that applies to all countries collected and stamp societies in particular. There are a lot of people that spend time on youth projects, but the likelihood of any of these producing many collectors of the future is slim. Most collectors of stamps and even coins come from people that collected these as children, but the reality is only a very small percentage of those young collectors of our past ever continued the hobby. Today's young people are being bombarded by many other forms of entertainment, from video games to collecting cartoon character cards. Stamps are only a very small portion on what even thirty and forty something adults have ever experienced.



So, where do we find replacements for the Seventy and Eighty something collectors dying off or just leaving the hobby today? Actually the replacements are all around us. They are people that may not have collected stamps before, but that doesn't mean they won't be attracted to stamps now. Actually, a society like MEPSI, that is so specialized, has little chance of latching onto these prospective stamp collectors, because that teenager that loved cars in the 1980s is not going to jump at collecting stamps from Mexico. Those 'Empty Nesters' today that might get hooked on stamps will be people that go into the post office and see stamps with cars or something else they can identify with. At first they may become topical collectors or just start picking up new issues and squirreling them away. But, these are the people that might, just might pick up the hobby. It all starts out at a very innocent level and then becomes more of a hobby, eventually becoming a passion. These are the future collectors that will add to our hobby in general.



Where do we find new members for a society that collects just one country, like Mexico? Likely it is not

going to be from the up and coming collector that are just starting out with stamps. It will come from established collectors that most likely have become tired of looking for the few stamps they do not have in their collection that are now beyond reach, either by cost or availability. So, this presents our dilemma, how do we reach these collectors? For one, it may be at a stamp show talking to someone that comes up to our society table. Another method is advertising in Linn's, APS's American Philatelist or in other society journals. It also may come from dealers like myself reaching out to their clients, both collectors of Mexico or other countries that they may sell in their listings. Mike Hart has gotten me and some other guys interested in writing articles, about Mexico, that could appear in Linn's in the same way that Dale Pulver's articles did before his death. This would be done in a simple but interesting way that draws collectors into our area of collecting. We are only in the beginning stages of getting authors for this project and a lot depends on Linn's agreement to this offer.



There are many other ways to explore adding to our ranks new and excited collectors of Mexico, such as just the beautiful pictures and the interesting stamps you can find on eBay any day of the week. The addition of new reference works has also been a way to add to the waning appetite of collectors that need a push from this new information that will excite their experience of collecting. So, we do not need to be a dying society in a dying hobby. It is up to us to share our joy and passion of collecting in general and Mexico in specific to both non-collectors and stamp collectors alike.

Bottom line is that a strong hobby will bring rewards to all collectors in stamps being offered for sale, healthy prices on what we already own and advancement in research that will increase the knowledge of what we can learn about what we collect. It is also a lot more fun to be a member of a society that is doing things for our enjoyment than sitting alone at our computer with no one to talk to about what we collect.