

ASSCO INFO-SHEET NO. 2

GETTING ORGANISED

Answer these questions for yourself . . .

1. What country, countries, period of time, or subject am I going to mainly collect?
Your answer to this one will be governed by such things as what types of stamps you have already got a good number of . . . how easy it is for you to get more stamps of what kind, what are your other interests, how much time you want to set aside each week, and so on. Collecting one country only is often called **SPECIALISATION** and a lot of adult collectors have become specialists in a particular country or period of time by starting off first with a world collection, later changing down to just a group of countries, and finally weeding out until only one country is left. Then when they have every single stamp of a country, they start looking for errors and flaws on the stamps. Like stamp detectives they watch out for small differences between similar stamps. This process of narrowing down the field of collecting is usually because of money reasons; often getting the last few stamps of a country can cost lots and lots of money, beyond the average collector. But don't narrow yourself down to one country yet . . . don't miss the pleasure of finding all about other countries and places until you have been collecting for quite a few years.
2. The second question to ask yourself is how much money you are going to set aside out of pocket money each week for the hobby. You don't have to spend up big to have a good collection — in a coming issue we will be suggesting ways of getting stamps other than buying them. But you do need to buy some stamps, and perhaps parents and relatives will give you birthday and Xmas presents which help, like albums, stamp catalogues, etc.
3. You have to ask yourself next how you will organise yourself. When will you do your collecting work . . . one night a week, or at the weekend. Don't let it affect your homework of course! What will you keep your stamps in to sort (before you mount) them in your album . . . will you keep a record of where you got stamps from . . . where you can find out more about them, and how will you "write-up" your collection . . . also . . . a safe place to keep them.
4. Next question — What kind of stamps . . . mint or used, first day covers, or what? Talk to the club leader about these things if you want advice.
5. Finally, depending on the type of collecting you are doing . . . what sort of special equipment is needed. There is usually a magnifying glass around the house, and don't rush into buying things like colour guides, perforation gauges, watermark detectors, and so on, until you know more about them. Perhaps the first acquisition you need is an Australian stamp catalogue — because I guess all of us will always collect Australia, quite apart from any other countries or subjects we eventually pick.

WHEN YOU ARE WORKING ON YOUR COLLECTION

Here's a few tips for that evening or time you have chosen for your regular stamp working period:—

- A. Pick a place where there is no draft or wind which could spoil things.
- B. Set yourself a finishing time, and then you will know when to start tidying up. **DON'T** leave stamps around on tables . . . it's risky.
- C. If you are mounting, soaking, sorting . . . don't do too much at once. The great thing about stamp collecting is setting your own pace, and there is no-one to tell you how much or little time to spend. There is always another day to finish.

- D. Get into the habit of using tweezers. Buy proper stamp ones — and don't use any other sort. It's the most essential tool you can have.
- E. Have envelopes for sorting stamps into. Mark one **"FIND OUT MORE"** for those you need to identify, or want to find out more about.

Some stamps are worth a fortune. There are one or two which, if you owned them and sold them, would bring you enough money to live on quite comfortably for the rest of your life. Other stamps are sold by the sackload at only a few dollars. The difference is simply one of scarcity. In Britain or the United States, many millions of letters are posted every day. The common American 5 cent stamp is easy to find, therefore, and in Britain, too, the ordinary "letter rate" stamps are so common that most are thrown away. But stamps used for parcels are harder to find, and therefore more valuable. Stamps from small countries where few letters are posted are naturally scarce, and if there are few letters, there must be even fewer parcels.

WHAT IS A STAMP WORTH??

I think this is the hardest — and easiest — question that adult collectors are ever asked by young collectors. The simple answer is just that it's a matter of how many collectors want a particular item compared with how many are available. (This is called the rule of supply and demand, and applies to most things of value in the world). Looking more closely at the question, it can be seen that the number of stamps of a particular issue printed is a factor, and how easy was it to get when it was on sale at the post offices of the issuing country. Is the issuing country popular with collectors? Is the stamp in question no longer on sale at post offices? How many collectors collect that country and would want one? Was it more commonly available used or mint? And if a country is actively trying to encourage more people to collect its stamps, then the demand is always growing.

Finally, for any particular issue, remember that its value depends on its condition. Clean copies are worth more than grubby or heavily postmarked stamps. In checking up on stamps value in a catalogue, remember that the price shown is usually closer to a dealer's **SELLING** price than the price someone will give a collector for the same stamp!

APPROVALS

Swapping and presents are two ways of getting more stamps for one's collection, but there comes a time when there is some spare pocket money or when you want to buy something really special.

We suggest that often, the special or "free" offers in advertisements in comics often turn out to be the most costly way of adding specimens to one's collection.

The risky word in these advertisements is **"APPROVALS"** . . . which means that as well as the special gift or discount item, the advertiser is going to send you a lot of other stamps which he hopes you will also buy.

You can get some good stamps this way, as long as you remember that the price must be higher to cover the cost of the "giveaway" item. And even if you don't buy any, you will have to pay postage to return them.

We suggest that you leave approval buying to the grown ups . . . perhaps they can afford it.