

# ASSCO INFO-SHEET NO. 9

## SELLING STAMPS

The question of selling stamps is a very complex one, and there is no single "best" way to go about it. Hopefully, this guide will provide some help in tackling the problem.

What options do you have?

There are four options open to the person who wants to sell stamps, and each is dealt with separately.

1. **To a collector:**— It is hard to find someone who wants all of what you've got via advertisements in stamp journals or by word of mouth. You must know the value of the material and not have the wool pulled over your eyes. Another disadvantage is security, for you must reveal your address, and would-be thieves may prey on you. Despite all this, you can attain a good price by this method.
2. **By public or postal auction:**— This is one of the more favourable methods, with the vendor either attaining their desired price or else getting the goods back. Auctioneers charge a commission to either the buyer or the seller to cover his costs.
3. **To a dealer for cash:**— An excellent way to off-load a collection quickly, though the price received is comparatively low. The dealer must buy at a low enough figure to allow him to add on his margin.
4. **To a dealer on commission:**— Almost like selling by auction, except you're at the mercy of the dealer, who may or may not sell your stamps.

## PREPARING TO SELL

Before embarking on your chosen sales method, a number of preliminary steps must be followed.

1. If you have old letters which have passed through the post, don't tear the stamps off, the entire cover may be worth considerably more than the single stamps.
2. Don't try to remove old stamps from album pages — leave this to the expert.
3. Don't tear up blocks or strips of stamps to sell as singles. The larger the unseparated block or strip the better. Along the same lines, don't tear off the selvedge or bend, crease or fold the stamps.

## MAKING YOUR APPROACH

The best way to approach a dealer is in person. It's extremely hard to value a stamp over the phone or by correspondence, so make a trip to see the dealer. Most classified telephone books have a "Stamp Dealer" classification, or the stamp journals could be consulted.

Try to have your stamps in an orderly fashion when you present them for pricing, and think in advance on what value you think they're worth (consult a catalogue on this).

Be aware that the dealer is not going to offer you the price shown in the catalogue, because that value is only meant as a guide. Usually, the figure is less, to allow the dealer to mark up the goods for re-sale.

Be prepared for disappointment if the dealer tells you that your great-grandfather's collection isn't worth much. Just because the stamps are old, doesn't make them valuable. Value is related to supply and demand.

Always make sure that an adult accompanies a child to sell stamps. This prevents any later accusations that the child was "ripped-off" by the dealer. It may also mean a slightly better price may be realised.

With private sales, the ball is entirely in your court, and you can hold out for a better price — make sure first that you can get it.

Good luck with your selling adventures.

## **TOPICAL COLLECTING (THEMATICS)**

Topical (thematic) collecting is becoming increasingly popular here in Australia and can add a different side to the hobby of stamp collecting. We used to call it thematic collecting here in Australia but now we have realised that this type of collecting can be divided into two different sections and it is less confusing to the collector if it is called "Topical".

In the first section we have "theme" collecting. This means collecting stamps along a theme or story line such as the History of Scouting (Guides) History of Red Cross, The Story of Captain Cook, The Life of Sir Winston Churchill, The History of Australia, The Development of the Horse, Bird Life in Australia, The Royal Family or Trees and Mankind.

In this section you have to tell your story by using the stamps with designs that fit the story. It is very similar to a school project but in this instance a collector uses very little writing up but uses lots of stamps to tell his story.

In the second section we have "subject" or Topic collecting. This means collecting stamps according to a subject. Such as Birds on Stamps, Captain Cook on Stamps, Olympic Games on Stamps, Scouts (Guides) on Stamps, Trees on Stamps, Queen's Silver Jubilee Issue, The Royal Wedding issue.

In this section the stamps can be put in country order, alphabetical order, date order or type order. For instance if you are doing Trees on Stamps you can divide into types of Trees such as British Trees, Australian Trees, Asian Trees, American Trees etc.

A good aspect of thematic collecting is that it lets you collect stamps and postmarks from all over the world. You are not committed to buy every stamp of just one country. This allows you to get penfriends with your interest all over the world and helps you learn lots of things about other countries that otherwise you would not hear about.

Perhaps a drawback of topical collecting is that sometimes you need to buy whole sets of stamps just to obtain the stamp you want but other times you are lucky and can buy just the stamp you require from stamp dealers or exchange books. Countries now seem to issue various designs in sets in any event such as Australian Trains, Australian Whales, Australian Trees etc.

You will find a lot of pleasure in thematic collecting and you can really make your collection different from other collectors. You will tend to learn a lot more about the reason for various stamps to be issued. And of course if your theme coincides with some other interest then you are getting pleasure in two ways!

What subject will you pick? Scouts, Football, Kings and Queens, Police on Stamps, Horses, Trees, some famous man . . . YOU choose.