

## ~~Carpe Diem~~ Covers!

That's always been true for collectors, but it's even more so these days when covers are harder to find. New ones are still being produced, and they're out there, but they're definitely much fewer and much farther between. But that just means you have to look harder.

In actual fact, most collectors don't spend the time or the trouble to canvas local business, or areas that they happen to be in anymore. Smoking is permitted in so few places now, it's almost a given that your time and effort aren't going to pay off...*Almost*...Yes, there are some businesses that still give out matches—some bars, night clubs, etc—and some dedicated souls still root them out...but most of us no longer do that.

So, what does that leave today's collector? Well, how about the *millions* of covers already out there, not yet in the hobby. The *primary* sources of covers (businesses, etc.) may have mostly disappeared, but the *secondary* sources are still rich with abundant covers. Someone's got those covers, and those someone's are the secondary sources. They, for whatever reason, have already gathered the covers—as collectors themselves, as former collectors, as souvenir hunters, as inheritances from deceased relatives, etc. Now, *you* have to gather the covers from *them*! So, here's a quick synopsis of at least most of your options:

SOURCE	MODE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collectors</li> <li>• Auctions</li> <li>• Estate sales</li> <li>• Relatives and friends</li> <li>• Local community</li> <li>• Freebie tables</li> <li>• Club activities (games, drawings, etc)</li> <li>• Dealers</li> <li>• Room hopping</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• trading, buying, even donations</li> <li>• buying</li> <li>• buying</li> <li>• donations</li> <li>• Advertising, resulting in buying or donations</li> <li>• donations</li> <li>• donations, buying (tickets, etc).</li> <li>• buying</li> <li>• donations</li> </ul>

You'll no doubt notice that 'buying' figures rather prominently as a way of getting covers. A collector who relies on 'donations' (freebies) is not going to normally see his or her collections grow at any significant rate over a reasonable amount of time. It's just too much of a haphazard and unreliable way to get any kind of steady flow of covers coming in.

Today, like it or not, if you're going to be a serious collector, you have to be prepared to buy—on a small scale, large scale, whatever—but buy you must. Trading is a great way to get covers, but in order to do that you have to have covers to trade! And even then, unfortunately, the pool of people to trade with has dwindled drastically over the last 15 years as the number of collectors has drastically shrunk as, simultaneously, newly issued covers have greatly lessened as well.

The covers are still there...golden oldies, rarities, newer issues...You just need to shift gears, perhaps, and look more to those secondary sources. Personally, I like the advertising method (in local community papers and circular, through a web site, etc.)... "*Advertise, and they shall come!*" You never know what's going to show up!