



Editorial

Time To Broaden Our Horizons?

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Looking through RMS Bulletin issues since its inception in 1941, it's readily apparent that, as American collectors, we have basically ignored the rest of the world. That's somewhat understandable, perhaps. Since the matchbook was invented here, and since that match medium went on to dominate the industry and issues here, naturally our focus centered on the matchcover—even though phillumenists started out in history as label collectors, and even though the earliest phillumenists in this country were label collectors, and even though the majority of the collectors in the world today are still label collectors.

So, given the declining interest in this country, and the resulting declining number of collectors, not to mention the huge decline in matchbook issues, piggybacked with the constant domestic anti-smoking/anti-tobacco campaigns of the last 20 years, perhaps it's time that we re-examine our position on label collecting.

To many American collectors, label collecting seems as foreign

as the countries from which those labels come from. The vast majority of American collectors are simply not label collectors, and for most of whom that actually have some labels, they remain more curiosities than collectibles. But, I think the American hobby should at least give some thought to reconsidering our current position on such—and it's an 'informal' position, I should note. There is certainly nothing in writing in the hobby that is 'anti-label'; over the years, it's just become a tradition that our focus and priorities lay elsewhere.

Granted there are inherent problems in our turning more to labels. Since we don't produce labels here, availability would be an issue; everything would be foreign. And, that, in turn, would lead to greatly increased language difficulties. Also, perhaps, there would be different storage requirements, and, certainly, collectors would have a lot a new 'learning' to do as they encounter types, manufacturers, etc. Additionally, there has been much more counterfeiting in the world of labels than there has been within the realm of matchcovers, so there would be more dangers to be aware of...

And yet, even still, I believe it would be to the unquestioned benefit of both RMS and the hobby at large to be more aggressive in favor of label collecting—certainly not to the exclusion of matchcover

collecting, but, just as certainly, more inclusive.

From a strictly business standpoint, variety is the only way to go. A business that specializes in one product is on very shaky ground, and we've gotten a healthy taste of what that can lead to. Concurrently, from an investment perspective (but not having to do with profit and loss here), diversity is the golden rule. You're asking for trouble when you put all your eggs in one basket.

I keep asking myself why I collect matchcovers. Well, I've always had that 'collecting mentality' in any event, but, aside from that, it's the History that I love about matchcovers. The entire panorama of the development of this country for the last 100 years is all recorded right there in matchcovers. Well, the same can be said about the rest of the world when speaking of labels...and labels pre-date matchcovers by almost 70 years!...That's more History, more events, more personalities, more art work—more everything!

And, if RMS and the American hobby became more inclusive with respect to labels, the rest of the world would open up to us. More members, more traders, more material. We could, in fact, truly become international—our interests, our influence, and our peers would span the globe.

It's something to think about.