

Postage Stamp Collecting

Stamp collecting has become one of the most loved hobbies of people throughout the world. A stamp contains a piece of time and a piece of place and that's why people love collecting them. Stamp collecting can also be a very inexpensive hobby and this is one of the main reasons why people join the stamp collecting bandwagon.

Postage Stamps

The first postage stamp was issued by Great Britain as a way to pre-pay for the cost of the delivery of mail. The first-ever stamp was issued on May 6, 1840. Sir Rowland Hill first came up with the idea of postage stamps as part of Great Britain's standardized postal rates.

The first postage stamp was referred to as the Penny Black. It assisted in the elimination of certain problems that are associated with mail delivery. Twenty years after the stamp was introduced, it became so popular around the world that 70 countries adopted the postage stamp system.

Stamp Collecting

Postage stamp collecting was born basically at the same time that the first stamps were issued. Around 1860, there were already thousands of collectors and businessmen became caterers in terms of the desires of these collectors. The stamp madness swept Europe and the European colonies all over the world. People collected stamps in different ways. Some of them even went to cover their rooms with sheets of stamps which were issued.

Business

Businessmen found a niche in stamp collecting. They opened businesses that catered to the needs of the collectors. They started to sell different stamp collecting paraphernalia such as stamp books, hinges, coverings, etc. They also specialized in selling stamps. The oldest business which specializes in selling stamps and supplies is "Stanley Gibbons" in London. It was created back in 1856 and is still growing!

Popularity

Stamp collecting is continuously garnering popularity. In the United States alone, an estimated 25 million Americans collect postage stamps. Around the globe, there is an estimated 200 million stamp collectors. There are around

125,000 stamp dealers, manufacturers and other businesses that are connected with stamp collecting. There are also numerous associations, clubs and stamp-oriented organizations. There are also around 4000 shows and exhibitions about stamps in the United States annually.

Taking Care of Stamps

Many collectors house their stamps into specially-made albums and stamp books. The stamps are encased in special plastic which prevents them from being damaged. These plastic encasings are usually hinged so as to minimize contact with the stamps. There are other supplies such as stamp tongs and magnifying glasses which are useful in handling stamps. The value of a stamp is mainly dependent on the preservation of its condition. A single scratch on the stamp can render a stamp worthless.

Ways of Collecting

There are several ways of collecting stamps. People collect stamps according to their countries of origin or according to the time periods when they were issued. Some people like to collect stamps according to a certain sub-topic, such as collecting stamps which contain cartoon characters or perhaps their favorite animal. Postage stamp collecting is not only limited to collecting postage stamps per se. In general, stamp collecting refers to collecting stuff that are connected with stamps such as stamp covers, envelopes and containers which contain the stamps themselves.

Philately

Collecting stamps is not quite the same as philately. Philately is commonly associated with stamp collecting but it is actually the study of stamps. A philatelist may not necessarily be a collector and a collector need not be a philatelist.

Economic Activity

Stamp collecting has generated substantial revenues for small countries which create limited edition stamps. These stamps are designed to attract the collectors and are made for profit.

Future for Stamp Collecting

Some people argue that postage stamp collecting is nearing its end because of the advent of the different hi-tech communication systems such as the electronic

mail or e-mail. However, nothing would beat a personalized mail coming from a dearly beloved friend or family member. People will never stop sending mails and packages to other people. And even though the need for postage stamps would decrease, the need for collecting stamps will not diminish. People will be more interested in collecting stamps especially under the assumption that they will become more and more difficult to find.

Collecting postage stamps should not be clouded by too many rules and restrictions. Even though these stamps can actually be means of earning money, the real value of stamps come from the sheer fun that they give when one is collecting them.