

The Real Deal about Stamp Collecting Prices

Stamps have been a ubiquitous part of everyday life. After all, stamps are one of the ingenious ways devised by the postal services in order to facilitate payment for the delivery of letters, mail equivalents, packets, and the like. Because of the ubiquity of stamps, it is inevitable that many individuals over the years took interest in collecting these stamps. As many stamp enthusiasts and scholars (otherwise known as philatelists) would argue, stamps are one of the best ways in order to study the history of any nation.

Individuals who collect stamps have, over the years, banded together in order to help each other ease whatever external difficulties would be had in collecting stamps. As early as the year 1886, American philatelists already came together to establish the American Philatelic Society. To date, it is the biggest congregation of stamp enthusiasts in the world with its over 44, 000 members.

The reason they banded together, aside from trying to get together people with similar interests, was to alleviate difficulties in stamp collecting. Admittedly, there are true benefits both financial and emotional to stamp collectors; however, they do come at a cost.

Stamp collecting, as a start-up hobby, may not be half as expensive as the stamp collecting practiced by those who've taken it to heart. Usually, amateur collectors only go as far as collecting the various stamps attached to the letters they receive daily. Therefore, in the level of acquisition, there's very little expense incurred.

However, while building a bigger and more comprehensive stamp collection, an amateur collector may find that the daily mail delivery may have turnover rates too slow to say that there is significant progress in building a collection.

This is where it's important to know where to go to look for cheap sales of used stamps. Usually, organizations and offices that receive huge amounts of mail from all over the world sell the stamps in bulk, known to stamp collectors as kiloware. Kiloware is the collective term used to refer to stamps attached to a small portion of the original envelope where it was used, and sold in batches or bulks. This is one of the cheapest ways to build collections, as the stamps are sold at prices less than their face value. Moreover, companies aren't really intent on making huge profit out of enthusiasts, but just to make some money out of stamps, which they would have otherwise thrown away.

Soaking or lifting stamps in order to remove them from where they are originally attached is a relatively costless process that would require more skill than

money.

However, in order to properly care for stamps, there are some overhead costs that must be covered. For example, many collectors do not handle their stamps manually. Handling of stamps is instead done with the aid of a trusty pair of tongs. This is because the hands secrete a natural oil that may prove damaging to the stamp in the long run.

Moreover, part of the requirements of stamp collecting is proper storage and care. Stamps, unlike books or CDs, cannot be stacked or left lying around a room gathering dust. It has to be contained in a case that will allow the stamp to breathe (an airtight container will cause the stamp to deteriorate to dust). Stamps must also be protected from dust that can damage the stamp, and fluorescent light and direct sunlight that can cause discoloration in the stamp's design.

Another important factor to be considered in storage is that the storage facility must not cause the stamps to stick against each other (and in effect, humidity must be controlled in some way), or destroy the gum at the back of the stamp when it is lifted or removed from containment. Moisture and water are enemies of stamps as they are perishable in nature and would obviously be ruined with continued exposure. If one were to collect huge volumes of stamps, it would also be important for storage to occupy a limited space.

Glassine envelopes, which are see-through envelopes, are available at relatively cheap prices and may be used to temporarily contain stamps until one is able to transfer them to an album. Albums free with any form of plasticizers are perfect investments for stamp collectors because even if they would come at a higher price than other ordinary albums or storage books, these would help ensure the safety and protection of the stamp.

When buying, selling, or trading stamps, be guided by stamp catalogues like Stanley Gibbons. These stamp catalogues, found in most libraries, contain information about various stamp issues, alongside a good estimate of the worth of a stamp. Usually, dealers sell well below catalogue price, so it is important to be knowledgeable of this estimate.

Philatelic clubs and associations, for a minimal membership contribution, provide for services that greatly reduce collecting costs and prices. They afford the services of expert philatelists to its members, and provide access to stamp shows for its members to meet other enthusiasts and get good bargains on their collectibles.

At the end of the day, the price to be paid in stamp collecting may be small

compared to the fulfillment it would bring. However, it won't hurt knowing how to cut back costs to better enjoy the experience!