

NOTES ON COLLECTING AMERICAN NUMISMATIC LITERATURE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

As 2007 begins, the following scenario exists:

The biggest coin market since popularized collecting began in the late 1850s has created the biggest nightmare for dedicated numismatic bibliophiles and researchers. It is nearly impossible to keep track of, and find storage for, all the auction catalogues being generated by the major coin auction firms in today's market.

It used to be "buy the book before the coin", now it's "buy a bookcase before the books or catalogues that will come pouring in to entice you to buy the coins." Just one year's catalogues from the various auction companies can equal 15 feet of shelf space if you keep them all. Just a few of the many new books will easily overflow any remaining space. The dumpster ends up winning.

Using the same titles over and over such as Long Beach, Central States, F.U.N., Rarities, Anniversary Sale, Pre-this and Pre-that doesn't help either. Having five or more separate catalogues with the same date for a single coin show or event just adds to the overall confusion. I won't even mention the continuous use of pseudonyms for the consignors.

Future numismatic literature collectors, researchers, and yes, even the cataloguers will be greatly challenged to accurately determine the appearances, pedigree chains, and even the lot numbers, which skip hundreds or thousands in sequence and then continue to over five figures in some of the catalogues.

As a numismatic literature dealer with thousands of catalogues already in stock I have to ask, "What is the purpose for all of this?"

In the age of CDs and DVDs it remains an expensive and silly concept for these companies to spend huge amounts on production costs for temporary sales and pay the continuous postage expenses. A 3x5 bookshelf would easily hold all the CDs and DVDs of all the coin auctions for the next 50 years; and each company's bottom line profits would actually increase! *Why don't they get realistic?*

I, for one, believe it's time to make a change in the coin marketing business, and do away with the printed auction catalogues that often weigh several pounds each. Indeed, most modern day coin buyers already spend many hours online examining the enlarged images of the lots and submitting bids. It's alright to continue printing enough spiral bound copies to use at the sale, and if a customer requests and pays for such printed items (because they don't have access to or actually use a computer), that's fine. They will have an interesting "last-of-its-kind" item.

For my part, I'd much rather be the first numismatic CD and DVD dealer rather than see the continuing onslaught of overweight and easily forgotten coin auction catalogues simply because that's the way it's always been done in the past.

Who agrees?