



AUSTRALIAN PHILATELIC FEDERATION LTD

WHY COLLECT STAMPS?

“A window on our past, present and future”

Stamp collecting is one of the world's most popular hobbies, and is well known as *“The hobby of kings and the king of hobbies.”* Ever since a young Victorian lady advertised in *The Times* for Penny Blacks to wallpaper her room, stamps have fascinated and delighted collectors.

Millions of people around the world collect stamps and as many as one person in four in Australia has collected stamps at some time in their life.

Collecting stamps satisfies our collector instincts while providing an insight into the history, geography and culture of the countries whose stamps we collect.

This brochure outlines how to start down the path of a hobby that lasts a lifetime.

Besides being educational, stamp collecting is fun!

It is a hobby suitable for all ages from youngsters of six or seven to adults in their nineties. It is a hobby that offers tremendous scope from casual collecting of stamps from the mail to detailed studies of printing methods and postal and social history.

Whether you are interested in the whole world or only one small specialized part of it, you will find a kindred spirit out there with a similar interest. Stamp collecting transcends national boundaries and offers a peaceful hobby that is enjoyed by millions worldwide.

Stamp collecting, in all its facets, is truly a window on our past, our present and our future. More is written each year about this hobby than any other. Stamp collecting will carry you through life and offers you exercise for the brain - a key ingredient to a long and healthy life.

Isn't Stamp Collecting Expensive?

The real beauty of stamp collecting is that it can be as inexpensive or as expensive as you want to make it. There is no minimum requirement to stamp collecting, with the spectrum of collectors ranging from people who only collect the stamps from their mail through to millionaires who buy world class rarities at auction. Where you fit is up to you.

The other really great aspect of stamp collecting is that the hobby can change as your circumstances change, simply by altering your area of interest. As discussed in Collector Brochure 6, stamp collecting is much more than just stamps. It offers a world of interest and opportunity.

Money spent on many hobbies is gone for good. With stamp collecting, there is a good chance that you can recoup some or all of your expenditure. This is an added bonus for a hobby that gives many people thousands of hours of enjoyment whilst keeping their minds sharp.

How Do I Go About Starting?

A good quality album or stock book, a pair of stamp tweezers and your enthusiasm is all you need!

Traditionally people have begun stamp collecting by resurrecting their childhood collection, buying stamps and first day covers from the post office, buying packets of stamps or simply collecting those from their mail.

One excellent piece of advice is to learn the basics before spending large amounts on your hobby. Your local stamp club or stamp dealer are good places to seek advice, or any fellow collector you know who has been collecting for a while.

There are also a number of introductory books on stamp collecting which are available from stamp dealers or from book sellers. Try some of the on-line book sellers.

New collectors should also read avidly, obtaining access to a world catalogue (such as those published by Stanley Gibbons or Scotts). Many public libraries have copies of these catalogues.

Storing Your Stamp Collection

Treat your stamps well and they will repay your attention. A pair of stamp tweezers are essential for handling stamps to prevent them from damage from dirt and moisture on your hands.

The two main ways to store stamps, other than loosely in envelopes, are stockbooks and albums. In a stockbook the stamps are placed behind a clear strip of acetate for safe storage. This is recommended for mint stamps (those with gum). Stamps can also be hinged onto album pages using stamp hinges but collectors should note that hinging mint stamps may lower their value when you come to sell.

Stamp dealers offer a wide range of albums and other accessories to assist you with your hobby. Basic supplies are also available from some post offices.

It is important that you use good quality albums or stockbooks, as the poor quality acid paper in some albums can result in damage to your stamps. Your local stamp dealer can advise you on the various options including special albums for storing covers. Or try your local stamp club for further advice.

Deciding on what to collect

Once you have collected for a while you will have some feel for the range of stamps available and you will begin to develop preferences for collecting stamps of particular countries or periods or of a particular theme or topic.

The sheer number of stamps issued means that very few people attempt to collect stamps from the whole world. Most collectors limit themselves to collecting the stamps of a particular country, period or topic.

An excellent piece of advice is to undertake some research on your area of interest, and be pragmatic about what you can afford to spend now and in the future on your hobby. There is greater satisfaction in having a strong selection of material from your area of interest, rather than a collection of stamps with many gaps because you can't afford them now or ever.

Also, it never hurts to get advice from fellow collectors and dealers as this can help you avoid the mistakes that many new collectors make. Before deciding, take a look at Collector Series Brochure No. 6 "Beyond Australia".

Obtaining Stamps

There are many ways of obtaining stamps for your collection and these are outlined in Collector Series Brochure No. 5 "Where Do I Get Stamps For My Collection?" Some of the key areas are as follows.

How Can Stamp Clubs Help?

Stamp clubs (or philatelic societies) exist in most areas. Their membership includes people from a wide range of backgrounds who are interested in stamp collecting. They provide their members with the opportunity to meet with like-minded people and to share information about their hobby.

They often offer displays, visiting speakers, newsletters or magazines and purchasing schemes for books and accessories. Many clubs also organise stamp fairs and exhibitions.

Importantly they provide you with an opportunity to obtain stamps at reasonable prices through their exchange books, where you both buy and sell stamps.

For details of stamp clubs near you please contact the philatelic council in your state.

Dealers

Developing a close relationship with a stamp dealer is one of the best ways of obtaining new material. Most dealers see a wide range of material and will assist you in obtaining the stamps you need for your collection. For information about the dealers near you please contact the **Australasian Philatelic Traders' Association (APTA)** www.apta.com.au.

Australia Post

If you are interested in modern Australian stamps you can purchase stamps, first day covers and other products directly from Australia Post. Most Australia Post shops carry a range of new issues, or by mail from the Australian Philatelic Bureau, PO Box 4000 Ferntree Gully Vic 3156 or on-line www.auspost.com.au.

Is stamp collecting an investment?

Of course stamp collecting is an investment! It is an investment in your time (and money). However, if you are only collecting stamps as an investment then you need many years of experience in collecting and sound advice from experts. Don't expect to make extraordinary profits from stamp collecting, the days of stamp speculation died in the early 1980s.

However, that's not to say that good philatelic material doesn't appreciate. It does, with some material outstripping many other assets classes.

But for the average collector, the best way to get a return from your hobby is to treat it as a hobby and enjoy both it and your fellow collectors. Over time, as you learn more and build your collection, you will end up with an asset that is likely to give you or your heirs a respectable return. But don't forget to let them know you have it.

For Further Information

www.apf.org.au

or

Contact your State Council

ACT: ACT Philatelic Council,
GPO Box 980 CANBERRA ACT 2601
NSW: Philatelic Development Council - NSW
GPO Box 9800 SYDNEY NSW 2001
QLD: Queensland Philatelic Council
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TAS: Tasmanian Stamp Council
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(Further contact details, including e-mail addresses, are available on the APF website.)

Other brochures in this series are available from the Australian Philatelic Federation or your State Council:

- 2 *Why Join a Stamp Club?*
- 3 *I have just inherited a stamp collection - Where do I go from here?*
- 4 *I have just rediscovered my old stamp collection – Where do I go from here?*
- 5 *Where do I get stamps for my collection?*
- 6 *Beyond Australia!*
- 7 *How can I identify and value my stamps?*

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