

## Where is this Going?

Stamp collecting is a hobby that has, entertained, taught history and drove home current events to many stamp collectors in the past — is this so today or into the future? Has it become a tool of investor?



2

To the left are three panels from the comic strip Crankshaft - as seen in the local News-Sun paper (another dying business?). In general, the strip (a spin-off of Tom Batiuk's high school comic, Funky Winkerbean) is about, Crankshaft, an old fart, whose primary job is a school bus driver who manages to hit on many relevant topics with muddled aphorisms and spreading out to touch/jumble the world of his neighbors and co-workers.

In this case, Miss McKenzie (neighbor and member of the local garden club) is now known for her stamp collecting is the foil Batiuk's uses to show insight in the problems faced in *his hobby*.

We tend to blame this decline in the use of postage stamps, on technology innovation — email, text messages, internet shopping, on-line finance — as providing an alternate means to replace traditional letter-writing, paper circulars/catalogs and bill paying. With this said, how can we make sure the hobby survives (and not like coin collecting which appears to become a game of investment) — is there a future in Stamp Collecting?

I would like to say yes, because there are a few million stamp collectors (particularly in China and India), around the world and there are always people looking to trade, buy and sell their stamps (noted by the exportation of Chinese and Indian stamps out of the US). So the hobby may survive for a while with people who already have stamps but this does not grow the hobby here at home.

In this country, we have the APS, with its 33,500 members, is the largest, non-profit organization for stamp collectors in the world. The APS (founded in 1886) serves collectors, **educators**, postal historians, and the general public by providing a wide variety of programs and services. Its stated mission is: **to promote stamp collecting for people of all ages**; to offer services to its membership; and to philately in general, including knowledge and education, which enhance the pleasure and friendliness of stamp collecting to initiate and coordinate new programs for the benefit of stamp collecting and of all collectors; to represent the United States of America in the world body of philately and to assist its members in acquiring and disposing of philatelic materials.

Maybe it is time to think about better supporting the APS so it can coordinate/focus efforts to grow the hobby at home and make it "relevant" in today's technological world.