

Adding to Your Collection

Take the time to follow five, simple suggestions

before putting out the welcome mat for new acquisitions.

NUMISMATISTS OFTEN find that their collections constantly are growing, and with so many sources for new material, it's no wonder. Coins or notes can be rescued from circulation, purchased at a coin shop or show, or sent from cyberspace. But as your collection expands and changes, I suggest that instead of immediately looking ahead to your next acquisition, you take some time to linger over your past additions. In that spirit, here are some ideas of how to welcome new pieces to your collection.

Protection. The joy of numismatic ownership also brings the need for proper preservation. It's vital to keep the items in your collection from encountering anything harmful: human handling and hazardous contact with moisture, atmospheric gases and other items.

Fortunately, it's easy to protect your treasures with widely available and inexpensive holders. For coins, 2 x 2-inch, cardboard holders lined with mylar generally are a good, inexpensive choice. Clear plastic "flips" for coins, or sleeves for currency, also offer adequate storage protection, but those with polyvinyl chloride (PVC) contain damaging chemicals and should definitely be avoided or replaced. You'll get the highest level of protection with hard-plastic holders or capsules.

If you store your coins in pre-made albums or folders, make sure they come into contact only with inert materials. One particular concern is the sulfur in cardboard, which can cause coins to discolor over time.

Keep coin holders (regardless of type) in an airtight container, which will pro-

vide another layer of protection. It's also a wise idea to store everything in a cool, dry environment.

Proper storage requires some effort, but don't think of it as a burden. Instead, consider it a small investment of time and money, with a big payoff in protection and enjoyment.

Appreciation. Once your new acquisition is safely ensconced, it's a great

power will bring out even more details. For variety collectors who must scrutinize design elements like letters or numbers, a magnifier with 20x power is a useful tool.

For another perspective on your collection, take advantage of computer imaging technologies, like digital cameras or scanners. After some setup, either of these devices allows you



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▲ How hobbyists store, view, inventory and share old and new pieces ultimately affects their satisfaction with their collection.

time to reflect on its appearance. You'll find that the kind of light that illuminates an object can make a big difference. Daylight-balanced, incandescent bulbs generally give an accurate and pleasing view, but sunlight or harsh indoor lighting, like halogen or fluorescent bulbs, can highlight flaws or obscure an item's appeal.

Enhance your view with a magnifier, which provides a clearer focus on its details. For overall evaluation or grading, a magnifier with 4x or 5x power is a good choice. Those with 8x or 10x

to obtain large-size, quality, high-resolution images of the specimens in your collection.

Integration. It's always a good idea to keep an up-to-date inventory of your numismatic items. After all, no matter how much you enjoy making a new purchase, your excitement surely will fade if you later realize that you already own the exact, same piece.

Many different collection management, grading and valuation programs are available. An Internet search for "coin software" will yield several ☺

possibilities. There's also a selection of software for sale in the ANA's Money-Market catalog and on the Association's website, *www.money.org*. Alternatively, you can devise your own computerized lists, or even manually jot down information the old-fashioned way—on paper.

Discussion. Part of the fun of numismatics is sharing your collection. Many local coin clubs have regular “show and tell” sessions at their meetings that allow members to present their prized pieces to an appreciative audience. You also can engage in discussions online—and even post digital photos—at forums like *www.cointalk.org*, *www.coinpeople.com*, *www.forums.collectors.com* or *www.boards.collectors-society.com*.

After you've protected, appreciated and integrated your new addition and shared its story, you'll value its place in your growing collection. And then you can move on to your next acquisition!

sanders@money.org