

Collecting the World

By Richard Pederson

Once upon a time, virtually every person that embarked on the stamp collecting journey, started with a worldwide stamp album. Prior to 1960, it was possible to create an inexpensive worldwide album that encompassed most stamps and countries that a beginning collector was likely to encounter. Those earlier albums left empty spots for the occasional item that was acquired and did not fit in one of the album's pictured or numbered spots. Worldwide albums typically contained information about most of the world's countries, including pictures of the flags and coats of arms, historical facts, and other data such as population, leading industries, and the capital cities (see Figure 1, Partial Page from Grossman Stamp Album). By reading this information and examining the many varied and interesting worldwide stamps pictured on the album pages, each collector received an education in geography, history, art, and culture.



Figure 1. Partial Page from Grossman Stamp Album

Today, with the proliferation of stamps and stamp issuing entities it has become virtually impossible, for all except those having deep pockets and virtually unlimited time, to build a comprehensive worldwide collection. Now it is common for collectors to focus on a given country, stamp issue, or topic. By more narrowly defining what is collected, it is still possible to develop a relatively complete collection without committing undue time and resources. There is certainly nothing wrong with collecting in this manner. In fact, most experienced collectors have refined their collecting habits to do just that. Unfortunately, beginning collectors that pursue those other stamp collecting options, without first pursuing worldwide collecting, miss out on some of the very significant educational benefits derived by collectors from earlier generations.

Perhaps, with a little thought, we can come up with ways in which today's beginning collectors can still derive the benefits of worldwide collecting without being overwhelmed. Following are several possible ways to collect worldwide issues and have a manageable collection that is within one's resources:

- Collect the first stamp or issue from each current or current and previous stamp issuing country/entity;
- Collect a specific class of stamp (e.g., airmails, postage dues, revenues) from all countries/entities that issue the selected class;
- Collect a first day cover or cover showing an actual postal usage of a stamp from each country you can find;
- Collect all stamps issued in a given year (e.g., year of birth for you or your child); and
- Collect one stamp, irregardless of year, for each current and/or previous stamp issuing country/entity.

Each of the above options would result in a manageable collection, although some options (e.g., collecting the first issue of each country) are more expensive than others (e.g., collecting one stamp for each country). Following (see Figure 2, Great Britain Number 1) is an example of the world's first postage stamp issued by Great Britain.



Figure 2. Great Britain Number 1

Unfortunately, there are limited options available, in terms of stamp albums, for the beginning worldwide collector. It would be nice if one or more album manufacturer picked up on some of the above ideas and created better albums for beginners. It would not be difficult for a manufacturer to emulate some of the best qualities of earlier worldwide stamp albums. For instance, a page could be created for each stamp issuing entity (past and/or present) with the name of the country, a picture of the country's flag, and a paragraph of information about the country. The information about the country could then be followed with one or more (depending upon the approach taken) spaces for the country's stamps. If the album is printed on loose leaf, three ring, hole-punched pages, the collector can even add more pages for each country, if he or she desires. Mounting corners or stock pages (both readily available from supply dealers advertising in [Mekeel's and Stamps Magazine](#)) can also be used to add other stamp-related items to your collection. For example, articles about the countries or stamps you collect, souvenir programs from first day ceremonies, and covers containing stamps of interest, can all easily be incorporated in your collection.

In the absence of manufactured albums, at least today's beginning collector has the advantage of technology readily at hand. Research can easily be conducted on the internet to obtain a list of stamp issuing countries/entities and information about each country/entity and its stamps. From there, it is a relatively simple step to use a word processing or publishing program to lay out album pages incorporating the information you have learned. It is also possible to use readily available items, such as stock pages, to store the stamps and stamp-related items. Your research about each country/entity can then be entered in a computer using a word processor, printed out and three-hole punched, and placed in a three ring binder in front of the appropriate stock page(s) for the applicable country

In addition to the ideas that have been discussed above, with a little thought, you can come up with many more ways to collect the world. The important thing is to come up with a way that allows you to have fun while collecting stamps and getting the educational benefit of taking a personal tour of the world's nations and different cultures.