

Coin Chronicles

The Newsletter of the Trenton Numismatic Club

September 2016

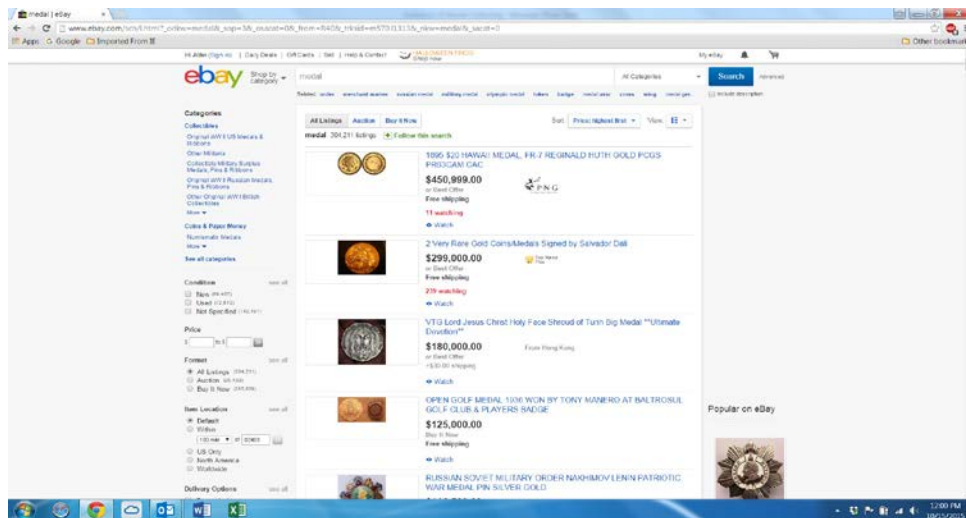
Volume 34 Issue 9

THE EVOLUTION OF MEDAL COLLECTING

PART 2: BEYOND EBAY

by John Sallay

We're now in the middle of an enormous and rapid evolution of information and communication technology that is beginning to affect medal collecting just like everything else. Yet, even with eBay, dealer websites, and Internet-enabled bidding in some otherwise traditional auctions, the nature and processes of medal collecting have not really changed very dramatically, especially not for some older collectors and the luddites among us. The more tech-savvy medal collectors and dealers now buy and sell on the web, while some blog or participate in chat rooms, and a few have posted presentation slide decks and videos of numismatic panel discussions online. In general, however, we have not fully capitalized on this new web/mobile



technology, let alone the next generation of information and communication technologies – such as cloud storage, the significant functionality and ubiquity of mobile devices (even just the very good cameras we all now have in our pockets), optical recognition technology, big data analytics, and eventually artificial intelligence – to evolve what we collect, how we collect it, and ultimately how we enjoy it with each other.

Last issue's article, "The Evolution of Medal Collecting, Part 1: eBay", discussed the emergence, growth, and current status of eBay as a medal collecting resource. This article provides an overview of the many other new transaction, information, and social aspects of the web that are now relevant to the hobby of medal collecting, and surveys some of the major online resources now being used by medal collectors. It then

explores some of the broader trends and possibly interesting web/mobile upstarts from similar collecting hobby arenas and mobile/social interaction generally. A third article, in the next issue, will highlight a few other new technologies that might someday be applied to our hobby, discuss the implications for us collectors of some broader social and economic trends, and speculate on the potential future evolution of medal collecting. Collectors' Digital Landscape Framework

There are now approximately 900 billion registered host names, 200 million active websites, and nearly 2 million mobile apps. Very few of these are directly relevant to numismatics let alone medal collecting, of course, but even categorizing and comparing hundreds of collector-focused offerings would be difficult without some sort of framework.

In This Issue: Extra Extra Extra

In this and the next issue we will bring you an expanded newsletter with John Sallay's article, the second in three parts.

Enjoy!

Joe Pargola

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COIN SHOW SCHEDULE

By Bill Liatys

September 2016

PARSIPPANY *October 2nd at Sunday 9 AM – 4 PM*
Pal Bldg 33 Baldwin Road Parsnippany NJ

BURLINGTON *October 9th Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM*
Burlington Mason Lodge Route 541 Burlington, NJ

TREVOSE *October 16th Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM*
Trevose Fire House 4900 Street Road Trevose, PA

TRI-STATE COIN & STAMP SHOW *October 23rd Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM*
Williamson's Restaurant 500 Blair Mill Road Horsham, PA

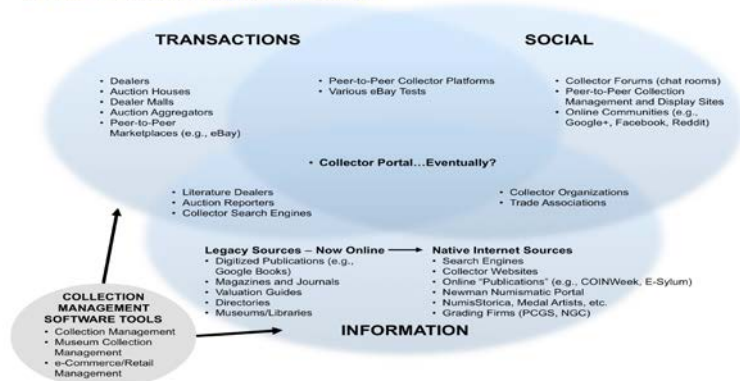
OCEAN COUNTY COIN CLUB *October 15 Saturday 9:30 AM – 3 PM*
Ocean Fire House 400 Arnold Avenue Pt. Pleasant Beach, NJ

LEHIGH VALLEY HERITAGE MUSEUM COIN EXPO
October 29, Saturday 10:00 AM – 5:00 PM
Lehigh County Historical Society 432 West Walnut Street Allentown, Pa

TRENTON NUMISMATIC FALL COIN SHOW
October 30 Sunday 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM
Ramada Inn Exit 7 NJ Turnpike 1083 Route 206 North Bordentown, NJ

WHITMAN COIN & COLLECTIBLES *November 3 – November 6 Thursday – Sunday*
Thursday – Noon – 6 PM Friday – Saturday - 10 AM – 6 PM Sunday – 10 AM – 3 PM
Baltimore Convention Center One W. Pratt Street Baltimore, MD

Medal Collectors' Digital Landscape



Broadly speaking, three major categories of collector activity describe most of what's out there – conducting transactions, gathering information, and collector-to-collector online social interaction. As shown in the diagram on the next page, some types of online activity fit cleanly within one or another of these broad categories. There is a large and growing amount of overlap, though, as various firms seek to enhance their web presence, increase engagement, and build collector loyalty. A fourth set of activities deals with collection and/or retail management, but most of this is handled by desktop software that performs a relatively narrow set of tasks like inventory records management, client list management and so forth. Even the cloud-based collection management platforms are intended for use by a single collector or perhaps a few collaborators, so are mentioned here only in passing.

By “transactions” we mean directly buying, selling, trading, bidding, offering to do any of that, and even setting up the ancillary services needed to complete an online transaction, such as arranging for packing and shipping purchased items, and payment processing. Going around the diagram counterclockwise, “information” includes news, researched articles, valuation guides, directories and even things like museums’ and libraries’ online offerings. Some of these sites represent just the digitized versions of legacy print publications, but native internet sources have emerged, such as online-only publications and other digital-only information. For example, a few new numismatic offerings, such as the Newman Numismatic Portal, NumisHistorica, and some recent initiatives by the grading firms are quite interesting, so we will come back to these. In our numismatic context, the third category, “social” includes sites

dedicated to sharing personal information, ideas and other content, collaborating broadly, and establishing virtual communities and networks. Everyone is familiar with Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest, but even within numismatics there are, for example, collector forums (chat rooms) and collection management/display sites.

Many sites have expanded beyond a single category and, indeed, the overlaps are potentially more interesting than the categories themselves. The ANA, as an example of a collector organization, has always been both social organization and a great source of information, and their new website attempts to bring the best of what they do into the twenty-first century. Or, consider an auction reporter like CoinArchives, which straddles the transactions and information categories. A few sites have tried to offer all three categories of activity, in effect seeking to become an all-encompassing “collector portal”, but none within numismatics have achieved any significant traction yet.

Using this framework, Exhibit 1 lists a number of the websites most relevant to medal collectors, along with their URLs (web addresses) and brief descriptions. This same exhibit with clickable links is now available on the MCA website

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Trenton Numismatic Club

President : Andrew Waholek
Vice-President: John Janeczek
Treasurer: Randy Ricco
Secretary: Joe Pargola
Sgt at Arms: Gary Elmer
Committees:
Bourse: Bill Liatys
Randy Ricco
Programs: Ray Williams
Newsletter: Joe Pargola
Auction: Bo Bobjak

Trenton Numismatic Club is members of:



at www.medalcollectors.org/news/index.html, so that with this issue of The MCA Advisory in hand and your laptop on the table, you can easily explore some of these sites as you read. There is also a column indicating whether the site has an associated mobile app. Hardly any numismatically relevant sites do, but this may change before long, similar to recent changes in a few other collecting categories such as sports cards. This list is not comprehensive but, rather, representative so as to provide a sense of what is out there. I apologize to any dealer or collector friends who might have been left off.

Transaction Sites for Numismatic Medals

The sites of the traditional dealers and auction houses are mostly very basic – Internet communication power applied to activities previously handled by mail or phone (e.g., browse

The MCA Advisory 7 inventory, buy, bid). Many look outdated and some dealers have not even bothered to update their inventory for items they sold long ago. Some dealers are barely online at all, such as Presidential, which makes a pdf of their printed annual auction catalogue downloadable from the Maine Antique Digest website, periodically e-mails a pdf mini-list of medals for sale, and has a Facebook page. Many dealers and auctioneers have their own websites and some are experimenting with functionality beyond the basics. Heritage, for example, is trying a “buy now from owner” feature (which enables offers through the firm to the lot winners of previously auctioned items), video descriptions, and a “360 degree view” visualization (a video of the coin being tilted in the light, so you can

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Articles Wanted

If you have a topic you'd like to be covered in the Newsletter... write an article or submit your idea. Don't be shy....do it.

All entries are welcome. Articles will appear in the Newsletter as soon as possible and might be edited for space consideration, not editorial content.

Meeting Schedule

The Trenton Numismatic Club meets on the fourth Monday of each month at the

HAMILTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
ONE JUSTICE SAMUEL A. ALITO JR. WAY
HAMILTON, N.J. 08619-3809

Mailing Address: T.N.C. P.O. BOX 8122
Hamilton, New Jersey 08650

Visit our Website:

www.trentoncoinclub.org

gauge the luster).

More interesting are the numismatic dealer malls such as MA-Shops and VCoins, and auction aggregators like Sixbid and NumisBids. By going to one site, a collector can explore a much greater range of potential acquisitions than by going to the site of only one dealer or one auctioneer, and do it much more quickly than reviewing a series of individual sites sequentially. The aggregators also offer bidding functionality, enabling left bids and/or live online bidding, just as if you were sitting at the auction.

It will be interesting to see whether, over time, the aggregators remain purely auction software for the auctioneers and a participation tool for the collectors, or evolve to become the primary intermediaries themselves. One could envision the traditional auctioneers becoming more like expert sourcing agents, like pickers in the antiques trade, with the aggregators becoming the main intermediaries. In the American antiques trade, fear of this dynamic apparently led a handful of regionally strong auction houses to establish their own aggregator, Bidsquare, rather than sign up with the auction aggregators Invaluable or LiveAuctioneers, though some are now cross-listed. Existing brand strength will mitigate this trend in the near term, but

in the long run the auctioneer's perceived fairness, expertise, and lot descriptions are the qualities that will determine market power, since simple lot listings will probably become commoditized.

Numismatic literature dealers straddle transactions and information, as do auction reporters and collector search engines. Collectors Universe recently launched the Collectors.com collector search engine, but it is still essentially only a subset of eBay items and is not primarily numismatic, so will be discussed in the next section.

Information Sources

Moving to the second division on our framework, information sources, most numismatic publications have some online presence and many large museums and libraries with significant numismatic holdings have made at least some of their objects searchable and viewable online. It is often still easier, however, to find relevant information using a search engine like Google, or Google Books, than going to an individual museum or library site. A few online-only numismatic "publications" such as COINWeek and The E-Sylum have become widely read and important resources, and are beginning to push beyond what could just as easily be done in print, for example with video and embedded links to other online stories

and resources. The

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E-Sylum is doubly interesting since nearly all of its weekly content is crowd sourced from the nearly 2,000 subscribers and moderated by its founder and editor, Wayne Homren.

Several medal collectors have created their own collection displays online and some explicitly aspire to become comprehensive online catalogues of a particular collecting interest. Ben Weiss's personal website is among the very best, as it includes excellent photos, lengthy descriptions and historical background, and a number of articles and e-books that Ben has written. Ben's site also provides considerable general reference information, such as definitions of medallic terms, a discussion of how medals are made, notes on the dating of French medals, an extensive bibliography, and links to other collector and dealer websites. Dave Baldwin's website on Lovett tokens and medals is also very good, and noteworthy for pushing beyond Dave's personal collection to include a few medals owned by others, as he works toward a comprehensive online catalogue of the Lovett family oeuvre. Some of the other collector sites listed in Exhibit 1 are also good, though most are simply online galleries of some of the collector's

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holdings. Further, almost all of these single-collector websites demonstrate the difficulty of keeping the content, design and technology current, especially for a single individual.

The Newman Numismatic Portal has come together over the last year or so, representing the combined forces of Wayne Homren's Coin Library project, the Eric P. Newman Numismatic Education Society, and several highly respected numismatic experts under the auspices of the Washington University in St. Louis. The NNP has begun digitizing decades of specialized periodicals and rare auction catalogues, and is dedicated to becoming the primary and most comprehensive resource for numismatic research and reference material, initially concentrating on U.S. coinage and currency. This project holds great promise for medal collectors.

Bob Korver's NumisStorica website was recognized by the Numismatic Literary Guild at the 2015 ANA as the "Best Non-Commercial Website". Much of this site is still comprised of placeholders and static content (e.g., a pdf of an interview transcript, rather than video or even audio of the interview itself), though it holds promise as well. The relevant point is not so much the nature and quality of the content, but that this very basic offering

is the best that the NLG could find among non-commercial numismatic websites this year. Similarly, Dick Johnson's Medal Artists databank of American diesinkers, engravers, medallists, and sculptors of coins, medals, and tokens will be a valuable resource if and when it is built out.

The large grading firms have been experimenting with broader information offerings to enhance the engagement and loyalty of their coin grading clientele. PCGS offers an online price guide, a CoinFacts encyclopedia, articles, videos, a calendar, and a handful of message boards. NGC has many of these same online offerings, plus a couple dozen online galleries (e.g., selections from the Partrick and Newman collections, showing pieces graded by the firm). They have also recently started an online registry of tokens and medals, though with very few listings so far. Both services have also recently launched mobile apps that provide much of what is on their websites.

Collector organizations like the MCA, ANS and ANA fall into the overlap between the information and social dimensions. The MCA's website has grown significantly under webmaster Ben Weiss. It has some terrific information content and undoubtedly represents the richest online offering on a per-mem-

ber basis of any numismatic organization. The ANS places relatively more emphasis on information than social interaction, with three major online research tools – Donum for their library catalogue, Mantis for their collection, and Archer for the historical archives of the society itself. All of these ANS databases are highly technical and very difficult to use.

The Social Dimension

The third major division of our framework represents the social dimension, or peer-to-peer aspect of medal collecting. It is possible to use the major online social networking sites like Facebook and Google+ to create an online collector community, such as the MCA's Facebook page, but the functionality specifically useful to a collector is limited and, so far, none of the numismatic communities have gained widespread use.

Taking a very different tack from the ANS, the ANA launched a completely new website about a year ago, with a clean modern look and heavier emphasis on the social aspects of the organization's mission. The library catalogue and borrowing function are available online, as is considerable information about the association, but the new site places even more emphasis on the social dimension. Members can post blogs, message one another, and create online collec-

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tion galleries with photos and descriptions of items in their physical collections to share with other members. This last function is still somewhat rudimentary and does not yet work entirely properly, but nevertheless represents an exciting new angle on the collector-to-collector social aspect of numismatics. NeoCollect, a website that I launched in 2008 that is now mothballed, enabled collectors to manage and share their collections online, comment on others' collections and items, and collaborate to form joint catalogues. It also had extensive social functionality, although this was not well marketed and so did not gain the widespread collector usage (and revenue) needed to continue. It may also have been a little ahead of its time, as a few other cloud-based collection management platforms have just recently emerged that are specifically targeted at collectors, and some provide online display functionality. Although these new sites have not yet been broadly marketed, if the social psychology that has propelled Facebook to 1.6 billion active users applies to collectors and begins to take hold, some of them may have promise. On the other hand, the privacy issues, collector psychology, and time required for a collector to create good content about his or her own collection may limit widespread adoption.

In a few other collecting categories, such as sports cards, similar sites have become popular "collector platforms" by combining the collection management/display functionality with transactional (buy/sell/trade) functionality, bridging the gap between the social and transaction dimensions, and generating some modest commission revenue. Allnumis and OmniCoin have attempted to bridge this gap within numismatics, but neither has gotten any significant traction, and certainly not for medals. Similarly, eBay has tested ways to bridge this overlap coming from the other direction – offering "collection" and social components on top of their basic marketplace services – but so far without much obvious success.

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Broader Collector Landscape

From a medal collector's standpoint, it is also useful to review the broader landscape of online collector offerings, as shown on Exhibit 2 and also found on the MCA website, for three reasons. First, several of the dealers and auctioneers who cover the sweep of art and antiques periodically surface important medallic items. Second, a few other collecting categories such as sports memorabilia are no larger than numismatics, but are more advanced in applying new information technologies to their hobby. So, there are

opportunities to explore, learn, and consider the potential applicability of these other technology approaches to numismatics. And third, looking even beyond that, some new sites – and especially some mobile apps that do not directly target collectors at all – may provide glimpses into ways that we collectors might collect, research, and engage with each other in coming years.

Sotheby's, Christie's, Bonham's, and other large auction houses occasionally offer interesting medals in their specialty auctions. Earlier this year, for example, Sotheby's auctioned "The Collection of Roy and Ruth Nutt: Highly Important American Silver", and several well-known medal collectors and dealers acquired some terrific early American medals that were listed among the silver coffee pots and so forth. Similar finds are also possible among the plethora of smaller regional, specialist, and overseas auctioneers but, until recently, it was practically impossible to know what was out there. Now, online auction aggregators such as Invaluable, LiveAuctioneers, and the-saleroom not only enable a collector to browse auctions online and then leave a bid or even bid live online, but also to search a long list of upcoming auctions for certain key

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words such as “medal”. The financial aspects of payment, fees for online bidding, shipping, and customs for overseas purchases are all still economically inefficient, but these aggregators are broadening the market and enhancing the collecting experience.

Virtual antique dealer malls like rubylane and TIAS are somewhat less important sources of medals, but still can be worth exploring periodically. Their dealers tend to have lower end and later material, and lots of it, though it is sometimes possible to find interesting pieces. Their material is curated by the participating dealers, but it appears that these malls are somewhat stuck in the middle. The better material seems to go to auction, so you find those items via the auction aggregators, while the lower end, more common items tend to be listed on eBay, which has much broader reach than any of these malls. A few of the highest end antique “malls”, such as 1stdibs, Online Galleries, and InCollect, generally offer more decorative arts than collectibles and tend to target interior decorators.

Collector search engines are a little like auction aggregators without the direct bidding functionality, but with better prices realized information. Collectors Universe (PGCS) recently launched the Collectors.com collector search engine,

but it still appears to aggregate mostly eBay items, which are aggregated on eBay already so there is no incremental value to a collector. And from a seller's perspective, they are just another layer of intermediation trying to extract a fee, so we will see whether and how this site evolves. The traditional fine art price databases such as ArtNet, ArtPrice and AskArt all seem to be migrating to the collector search engine business model. Perhaps they believe that their legacy business model will be increasingly threatened by the aggregators, not to mention the growing explosion of Internet information generally, and so they must migrate and/or broaden their offering. While these art price databases are not yet directly relevant to numismatics, they are still worth watching. Similarly, valuation guides like WorthPoint and Kovels do not have much numismatic information that cannot also be found elsewhere, but will be interesting to watch over time as well.

Mobile Apps, Portals and Collection Management

Potentially most interesting among the non-numismatic collector offerings are the new mobile apps, many of which started out as apps and have only limited basic websites. They are all very much socially oriented and tend to fall into three categories – peer-to-peer collection

management and display sites, collector platforms, and marketplaces. While a few target specific collector verticals such as fine art (e.g., Artshell) and sports cards (e.g., Sportscardalbum), most are broader and many encourage you to list all of your “stuff” (e.g., Snupps). Exhibit 2 lists several of these mobile apps and Exhibit 3 represents an attempt to compare their functionality. Most have brief, entertaining explanatory videos on the home pages of their websites. Their target audiences and functionality vary, but the basic idea is the same – take a photo of something you own, upload it with a very brief description, and share that information with friends or even the entire world. For example, you can offer to buy/sell/trade, share or seek information, expound a viewpoint, build a collaborative catalogue, compare memories, etc.

At first glance this all may seem completely irrelevant to medal collecting, but it is in fact almost exactly what we do in our collecting activities all the time. Similar websites have also been developed for sports card collecting, toy cars, and other collectibles. If and when a similar website and/or app is developed for medal collectors, our hobby may evolve significantly and rapidly. The ultimate direc-

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tion may depend on whether Apple, which is following an app-centric strategy in support of its hardware sales, continues to gain ground on Google, which has been emphasizing the mobile web in support of its advertising-driven business model.

As the evolution of these auction aggregators, dealer malls, collector search engines, collector portals, mobile apps, and so forth progresses, we will see if an all-encompassing collector portal emerges for numismatics. By collector portal, I mean the single go-to, first and potentially only stop for a collector to seek transactions, information, and social engagement relevant to their collecting pursuits. At the height of the late-1990's Internet boom, a prominently sponsored and well-funded start-up called Antiques America tried to create a collector portal for the decorative arts and antiques market, but ran out of money before they gained significant traction. Within the fine art world, there are now a few art information portals such as MutualArt and Blouin ArtInfo, although none yet offer direct transaction capability. And while we do not yet have a comprehensive numismatic collector portal, Comic Art Fans, for collectors of comic art, offers an intriguing window on what a medal collector's portal might someday look like.

The two most likely platforms for such a numismatic collector portal are the grading firms such as NGC and PGCS, and the large national collector organizations like the ANA and ANS, although each might see the commercial and informational aspects of a comprehensive portal as impossibly inconsistent

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The grading firms' cash cow is their fee-based grading services. While they provide significant information and social functionality on their websites in order to enhance client engagement, they may be unwilling to distract collectors from their profitable grading services, or make significant additional investment in web/app development without an obvious near-term financial payoff. And for their part, collectors may be unwilling to become highly dependent on a commercially run portal, which could someday add onerous terms or fees, or otherwise take advantage of a monopoly position. The large national collector organizations, on the other hand, would be less likely to take advantage of their members, but might not want to host the commercial aspects of a comprehensive portal. Further, these large non-profits have been reluctant to invest significantly and have not proven themselves skilled at managing their existing information technology.

One final category of collec-

tor information technology is the collection, museum, and retail management software outlined in Exhibit 4. None is specific to numismatics, many are expensive, and some of the museum targeted software includes functions that most collectors would never use, such as fundraising contact lists, exhibition loan tracking, etc. For advanced collectors, however, a few of the recently introduced cloud-based collection management platforms may be reasonable options, such as Collectify Cloud, Collector Systems, and eHive. Some of the desktop software developed for small museums is also interesting, such as PastPerfect museum software, which is used by several thousand small museums and historical societies.

The Future of Medal Collecting? Perhaps one day we medal collectors will look back at the second decade of the twenty-first century as a watershed time, when everything about our hobby changed dramatically. Some of what the ANA, Heritage, Wayne Homren, Bob Korver and others are doing certainly point us in that direction. As other dealers, organizations, and individuals enhance their web offerings – or even emulate the websites and apps of the other, more technically advanced collecting verticals – our medal collecting pursuits may

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begin to evolve rapidly.

New applications of existing web/app concepts to medal collecting will undoubtedly continue to appear. The most exciting applications to medal collecting, however, are most likely to emerge at the intersection of that technology with other related technologies that either already exist or are in the late stages of development. For example, an individual who sees a medal at a flea market or in grandma's jewelry box can already pull out their mobile device and take a very good photo. Existing technology could be used to automatically rescale the photo to show the medal as round (if it is), crop, sharpen, and color correct it to look almost as good as the medals illustrated in some auction catalogues – and better than many. And then, optical recognition software could read and translate the legends, and go on to identify the piece as, say, a Libertas Americana medal. If the analytic algorithms are further refined, the software could identify varieties, estimate condition, and even indicate the likelihood that a particular medal is authentic.

Of course, this identification could then automatically link the owner to all sorts of historical and numismatic information about Franklin's conception of the medal, the circumstances of its production, Clodion and

Dupre, and so forth. Naturally, the individual would want to know how much it might be worth. Information on recent dealer offerings, auction results, museum and private collection holdings, and even expert valuation guides could all be synthesized into a valuation range. And what if the owner wanted to sell it? Even now, an item can be posted to a social network with representative photos, or consigned to an intermediary for sale. This listing could be matched automatically with the want list of various collectors, to set up not only a sale, but also the best win-win combination of seller and buyer available. Or, the item could be posted to an online virtual collection and displayed on the web with descriptions and other specifics, or just enjoyed privately as one might wish to keep purchase details, storage location, etc. to oneself.

In this particular example, the barriers to implementation are not technology per se, but the business model economics, digital rights (intellectual property) issues, and personal initiative. Further, with other technologies that are now being developed and refined, like machine learning and broader artificial intelligence, the possibilities become even more mind bending. One might be tempted to say that this sort of scenario would lead to a collapse of prices, as

all of those additional Libertas Americana medals make their way onto the collector market. But the opposite is perhaps even more likely as medal collecting would become less arcane and intellectually demanding. Indeed, the Libertas Americana medal used in this example has already increased in value about tenfold with its addition not long ago to the Redbook and placement at the top of the list of the 100 Greatest American Medals and Tokens. With many other medals similarly promoted with enhanced information, transaction, and social technology, more coin collectors might leave behind their more mundane collecting pursuits for the infinitely richer world of medal collecting, just as many of us did in the pre-Internet days. And who knows, perhaps a few Millennials will take up medal collecting, as medals become as easy to follow as the Kardashians or New England Patriots! As someone once said, it is dif-



Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise.



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difficult to make predictions, especially about the future. According to an article in *The Economist*, "In the early 1980s AT&T asked McKinsey to estimate how many cellular phones would be in use in the world at the turn of the century. The consultancy noted all the problems with the new devices – the handsets were absurdly heavy, the batteries kept running out, the coverage was patchy and the cost per minute was exorbitant – and concluded that the total market would be about 900,000. At the time this persuaded AT&T to pull out of the market, although it changed its mind later." In 2000, there were approximately 800 million and today there are approximately 5 billion mobile phone users worldwide.

It is exciting to speculate what medal collecting might be like in fifty or a hundred years, or even sooner, as we begin to apply twenty-first century technologies to our medal collecting activities, and then start to rethink what we collect, how we collect it, and ultimately how we enjoy it with each other. This future of possibilities will be the subject of a follow-up article in the next issue.

The preceding article was written by John Sallay and appeared as a three part series in the October, 2015; December, 2015; and February, 2016 issues of *The MCA Advisory*

Alexander Zaika Passes



Alexander Zaika, the founding president of the New Jersey Exonumia Society in 1980 and the editor of its journal, *Jerseyana*, for many years, died September 3, 2016, at the age of 97.

Al was well known as a collector of, and part time dealer in, a variety of tokens, medals and paper scrip, especially those of New Jersey about which he published numerous articles and developed catalog listings. In addition to his presidential and editorial posts with NJES, he served as its treasurer and filled several positions on a pro tempore basis when they became vacant and until a successor took over. NJES folded in 2011, victim of a declining and aging membership.

Tall and friendly, Al was a familiar figure at the annual shows of the Garden State Numismatic Association, of which NJES was a member club. At his table he displayed large, chock-full binders of tokens and medals organized by type, such as bank tokens, coal scrip and merchant good-fors. His wife Betty, who died in 1998, usually ac-

companied him to the shows and helped with setting them up. In later years Al suffered from progressive macular degeneration which weakened his vision, making show attendance difficult and requiring him to sell his collections of mostly New Jersey material. Close friends kept in touch with him, as did his family.

Al lived in Bellmawr, Camden County, New Jersey, and was retired from a career as a conductor and brakeman with the former Reading Railroad. In the 1930s he worked for the Civilian Conservation Corps building public works projects in the state of Nevada.

During World War II, he served on active duty in the 623rd Ordnance Ammunition Company of the U. S. Army in the Pacific theater, with the rank of Technical Sergeant. He earned a Good Conduct medal, a Philippines Liberation ribbon with one bronze star, an American Defense Service medal, an American Campaign medal and an Asiatic Pacific Campaign medal with three bronze stars.

Contributions in memory of Al may be made to Happy Someday, a charitable organization helping autistic children, at 14011 Park Drive, Suite 211, Tomball, TX. 77377.

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