

## What will philately look like in 20 years? What do you want philately to look like in 20 years?

**T**hese are two questions that Allen Kane, Director of the National Postal Museum, posed to me when I visited with him at the Museum this past March; questions that have crossed my mind every day since that meeting. These are questions in which we can all have a stake. It is a mind game for our generation to solve and to start laying the foundation for the road that will lead to that future point in time.

I can tell you up front that I do not have a ready answer but I am willing to form a group of collectors (a forum if you will) willing to take up the challenge of Allen's questions.

Let's start with some realities that are certain. Some of us will not be around in 20 years. Others will be in the late stages of life (God willing, I will be 82) and may have moved on to other endeavors. It is, however, in my mind—a worthy task, an opportunity to extend the hobby to future generations.

Here are three points that have been reoccurring in my mind that may impact on the answers:

**1. Technology has had a tremendous impact on our hobby over the past 15 years. Some even believe that it has been the saviour of philately.** In fact, it has greatly enhanced and facilitated the hobby experience. We have moved from the desk top computer, to laptops, to tablets, to the smart phone. I believe that smart phone technology is just in its infancy and will explode over the next five years and allow us to do just about everything in our lives. Harnessing this technology for the hobby could provide part of the answer.

The History Channel just aired a program titled: *101 Gadgets That Have Brought About the Biggest Changes to the World*. The smart phone was number one beating the likes of the airplane and automobile.

**2. Philatelic organizations as we have known them throughout our lives are facing declining memberships.** However, interest in the hobby remains strong. Perhaps organizations need to change and become more virtual in the way they deliver content and how they meet. As an example, look at how the face of public auctions has changed in just the past five years. As a frequent phone bidder, I find that the greatest competition today is not coming from the book, floor, agents, or other phone bidders. The majority of the competition is coming from the Internet.

**3. If the platform for the future is the Internet, how do we get people to join in and come out for a face to face experience, at annual stamp shows?** As positive as the Internet has been for the hobby, it has taken away from personal interaction. Some type of bridge will need to be developed in order to attract collectors to leave the cocoon of home.

These may just turn out to be primitive thoughts as the discussion moves down the road. They are offered up as a starting point. I hope you will join the discussion and embark on the journey with me.

*One steps into the future by travelling through the past.*

## Are You Selling?

Those of you who know me also know that we pay the highest possible prices for the specialized U.S. material we've come to be recognized for. I'm always as near as your phone—or via email. Take a look at the material you have on hand and let me know what you have for sale. (See the address, phone, and email info below.)

## Three Easy Ways To Order.

*Is there something you'd like? You may order by mail, phone, fax or Internet e-mail.*

### James E. Lee

P.O. Box 36 • Cary IL 60013-0036

E-Mail: jim @jameslee.com.

Phone: (847) 462-9130

[www.jameslee.com](http://www.jameslee.com)

