Techno-Hobby

In 1985, writing for *The Editorial*, a newsletter for club editors, I analyzed the production methods, makeup, mailing, etc. of the hobby's bulletins, based on a survey of club editors I had taken not long before. One of the items looked at was how each editor actually produced his or her club bulletin.

While 74% of the editors were using typewriters, 24% were using computers. Home computing had already taken over almost a quarter of the hobby bulletin "market." Computers were just beginning to become household items, but the writing was already on the wall. Desktop publishing was the future..

In 1987, I did a follow-up survey, and in less than two years computer use for bulletin production had become the most common method employed, with almost half of the hobby's bulletins being so produced. More and more, editors were leaving behind the typewriter in favor of the new technology which offered a wealth of new options and advantages: word processing, a wide variety of font styles and sizes, unlimited clip art, and on and on.

At the same time, computer-use had begun making an impact on the hobby in other ways, as well. Collectors could now compile lists, keep track of their trades and correspondence, inventory their collections, and so forth...all at the touch of a button. Information began flooding into the hobby. And, all this information could easily be stored on storage disks that you could easily hold in the palm of your hand.

It's been almost twenty years since that last survey, and the computer "trend" has become the reality, now. All of the hobby's bulletins are now the products of computers, and the incredible pace of technological progress has been awe-inspiring, to put it mildly. Not only have computers become reasonably priced items for most households, but they continue their ever-onward evolution...always faster, always more powerful, always astounding. Storage space for information is now measured in gigabytes, and hard drives have become so big that storage disks are almost unnecessary. All of the information can be stored right on your computer *[but always make a backup!]*. The advent of portable hard drives has made backup disks obsolete in many ways. E-mail can instantaneously transfer that information to another collector on the other side of the country, or on the other side of the world. The introduction of ink jet and laser printers has resulted in letter-quality bulletins. The appearance of scanners has eliminated the necessity of the old "cut and paste" procedures that all but the youngest of editors have used. Now, the production of bulletins and newsletters is an all-in-one procedure.

And the current impact of technology is even more startling in the hobby. With on-line and internet access, membership information, collecting data, hobby help, etc. is available *at your convenience.* Changes of addresses, auction bids, letters to the Ed., articles submitted to bulletins, and much, much more...all transmitted to their proper destinations in the wink of an eye! Someday, your entire Bulletin will be coming to you through your computer...in living color no less! It staggers the imagination. Plus, more and more clubs are *slowly* putting up their own web sites, and, *of course,* Sierra-Diablo is right on the cutting edge of that, with both its roster and its bulletin posted its site.

And yet, oddly enough, as that wondrous piece of technology whirs, beeps, and hums in the background, bringing the very world into our hobby rooms, you and I will still be sitting there, lovingly shucking matchbooks and sorting out stacks of covers, just as collectors have been doing for the last 70+ years. What a great hobby this is!