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Inventory Software for Managing Your Collection

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(Prior versions of this article appeared in The Celator, the MSNS Mich-Matist, and the GNA Newsletter.)

There are many reasons to use software to manage your collection. About a dozen products are available. What you collect and how you collect will determine which of them most closely meet your needs.

First, you need to understand your own collection. No matter what the theme, we tend to organize our material physically -- in 2-by-2s, flips, vinyl pages, folders, slabs and boxes. Software will bring all of this together conceptually.

It is a fact of life that all collectors assemble a wide range of objects. Most new collectors range far and wide chasing the objects of their curiosity: coins, banknotes, tokens, medals, checks and drafts, books. Even within seemingly narrow categories such as "Lincoln Cents" a collector can have a nice, neat set of Years and Mints in folders and a mixed tray of several high grade Proofs, errors, and low-grade duplicates. It may be that no one program meets all your needs.

Microsoft Word can be enough to get you started. Making some kind of computerized listing of your inventory is the first step to managing your collection. Many collectors begin with an Excel spreadsheet and never need more. Once you are linking multiple sheets in a workbook, you will find that your database is getting complicated. In that case, Access is usually the next tool. However, pretty soon you are out of numismatics and into programming. Now, you have a new hobby and no time for collecting.

Most off-the-shelf programs are targeted specifically to collectors of 19th and 20th century U.S. Type. They assume that you collect by Date and Mintmark. Some programs allow only two-digit 70-point Sheldon grades with only one grade per coin. You cannot assign separate grading codes to the planchet and the fields and devices on the obverse and reverse. Most programs do not recognize that a collector of Early American Copper uses "scudzy" as a grading term. Mintmarks are often only one character, not allowing CC for Carson City. Many programs assume that if you care about the catalog value of your collection that you buy retail and sell wholesale.

On the plus side, some programs have a built-in contact manager for tracking the people you buy from and sell to. Some programs give you the ability to redefine one or more fields -- or even all the fields -- so that you can reconfigure the program to meet your needs. Some are specific for ancients. If you collect Paper Money, you can find separate programs for that as well. No program is designed specifically for tokens. However, several can be reconfigured to do this.

Some of these programs for US and Canadian coins come with built-in price sheets and automatic updates. Others include a database of standard coin pictures. Others let you put your own pictures of your own coins in the files. This can be a powerful and important tool. With digital equipment, the scans can be pasted into your inventory listing as "thumbnails" that will expand to larger-than-life images when you click on them. This can make a world of difference when establishing the true market value of a significant collection. Most programs that do this let you store two images; one allows six pictures. With an image editor, you can merge several pictures in one image, of course.

All products let you generate some kinds of organized reports. Whether you want or need bar charts and line graphs of changing values is your choice. Some of these products are so devoted to prices, pricing, and price histories, that they could serve the needs of dealers as well as collectors. In fact, being designed by dealers, some of these programs deliver other powerful marketing tools.

The worst thing you can do is to take someone else's word for the suitability of a product. Reviews and advertising only tell you what someone else wants you to know. The theory of cognitive dissonance recognizes that we all have a powerful ability to rationalize what we cannot change. Once a collector is locked into inventory software, the collector will tell others that the product is "pretty good" and that it "works for me." When you hear that, run.

You need to acquire the demos, enter your own inventory, and see how you like the product. The only warning is that some demos come via the Internet and that brings the risk of downloading a virus along with the software. The best path is to contact the companies and pay for the CDs directly from them. It is a small investment. The pay-off is making the right choices for your needs. If you have two or more significant collections in different areas, you might need more than one inventory program.

Ancient Coin Collector's Assistant
Carlisle Development Corporation
P.O. Box 291
Carlisle, MA
01741

<http://www.carlisledevelopment.com/orders.htm>

Coin Elite
Trove Software
P.O. Box 218
Olathe, KS
66051

<http://www.trovesoftware.com>

Coin Keeper
Hobby Soft by Compu-Quote
6914 Berquist Avenue
West Hills, CA
91307

<http://www.compu-quote.net/>

Coin Manage
Liberty Street Software
3126 Lednier Terrace
Mississauga, Ontario
Canada L4Y 4A1

<http://www.libertystreet.com>

CoinsPlus! Platinum
DataSouth
3045 Hacienda CT
Marietta, GA
30066

<http://www.dsns.com/>

Collection Explorer

Maurizio Maccani

<http://www.worldcoinexplorer.com>

Currency Vault

BC3 Software

150 Cameron Avenue North

Hamilton, Ontario

Canada L8H 4Z3

<http://www.bc3software.com/>

Moneta

Numus

8530 Clough Pike

Cincinnati, OH

45244

<http://www.numus.com>

SmartTracker Coins

Oakley Data Services

Lion Bldg., Uttoxeter

Staffs ST14 8HZ

United Kingdom

<http://www.smartcode.com>

also available from:

Insight Software Solutions (ISS)

P. O. Box 106

Kaysville, UT

84037-0106

<http://www.wintools.com>

Village Coin

Data Village

#234, 5149 Country Hills Boulevard, NW Suite 103

Calgary, Alberta

Canada T3A 5K8

<http://www.datavillage.com>

Virtual Coin Cabinet II

Data ex Machina

PO Box 3030

Union City, CA

94587

<http://www.dataxm.com>