

Books, books and more books

Weekly Times Column

By Warren Joel

Every home in every town has a bookcase full of old books, but are they collectable? There is a large collectors' market for good books, but how do you know?

The rules for collecting books are very similar to other collectables; they need to be sought after by collectors. The subject of the book is not as important as you might think, anything from voyages to natural history, gardening to cooking and all points in between.

As a general rule they need to be first edition and as original as possible. That includes the dust cover and all the maps and prints, and it needs to be in good condition. Many times I see good books in poor order and condition. Paper is a natural absorber of moisture, and as it draws that water from the air it forms a mould on the paper. You can see this as small brown dots on the paper. This can be fixed but is expensive.

The book needs to be a limited edition or a low production number. Mass production books and novels have a low collector's value. The book you bought at the local newsagent is not likely to become a collector's item of the future.

The most valuable item in the bookcase could well be the comics you read as a child. Volume one, number one, of most of the classic comics is a collector's item; some selling for thousands of dollars.

The internet is a great place to start to try and find out what your books are worth. When you do find your book on the net, remember you are most likely looking at a retail price, not what you will get if it was sold.

Like so many areas of collecting very specialised knowledge is needed- to recognise and value rare books.

Next week: "The internet - buying and selling"

Warren Joel

Warren is a third generation auctioneer and valuer specialising in Art, Antiques and Collectables, accredited by the Commonwealth in 2002 different areas of collectables.

www.byjoel.com.au